

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2023

The Honorable Anthony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Avril Haines
U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Washington, DC 20511

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, and Director Haines:

We are writing to you today to express our concerns regarding the Russian Federation's compliance with the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and the danger its potential non-compliance poses to the future of arms control. President Biden gifted Vladimir Putin a clean, five-year extension to New START at the beginning of his administration despite concerns about the treaty, including the weakness of its verification regime and its failure to address Russia's overwhelming advantage in nonstrategic nuclear weapons. Subsequently ignoring noncompliance, specifically in the context of Russia's history of violating arms control commitments, would further undermine our own credibility in arms control.

It has been publicly reported that the U.S. and Russian Federation failed to uphold a key tenet of the treaty when it did not hold the New START Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC) in 2022. While the U.S. delegation arrived in Cairo, Egypt, the delegation from the Russian Federation canceled the meeting, stating it would no longer send a BCC delegation. Subsequently, on Tuesday, December 6, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov said,

"There's no reason now to talk about any new dates. I don't think any proposals will be made over the next few weeks, in the short term...It's just been canceled, and we won't propose any new dates."

Additionally, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov directed blame at the U.S. and its support for Ukraine in response to Russia's full-scale invasion as the reason for canceling the talks. He said,

"With regret, we state that, currently, the strategic dialogue of Russia and the US, who possess the largest nuclear arsenals, and who bear special responsibility for upholding international peace and security, is being kept in a suspended state by Washington."

Russia's unilateral cancellation of the BCC and refusal to restart New START inspections, another key tenet of the treaty, coupled with other statements by its government officials, at a minimum, raise serious compliance concerns regarding the Federation's adherence to the New START Treaty. This would occur during a uniquely dangerous time when both Russia and China are expanding and modernizing their arsenals, Iran, a state sponsor of terror, continues to expand its nuclear program, and North Korea rattles its nuclear saber.

Therefore, in addition to the annual implementation report transmitted in response to Condition (10) of the December 22, 2010, Resolution of Advice and Consent to Ratification of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, we request a special out of cycle determination on compliance by the Russian Federation to the terms of New START that addresses the following:

- Whether Russia's unilateral cancellation of the BCC, refusal to restart treaty mandated inspections, or any other issue has resulted in Russian non-compliance or material breach of the Treaty.
- Whether Russia has at any point since 2020 exceeded any New START caps and if those violations create a strategic imbalance endangering U.S. national security.
- Whether Russia has over the course of the treaty used technical compliance as a pretense to violate the spirit of the treaty.
- An assessment of the efficacy New START verification regime, to include the BCC and onsite inspections, given Russia's recent statements and actions.

This out of cycle report should be submitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

We thank you for your prompt reply to these important matters of national security and request your reply by January 31, 2023.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee



Mike D. Rogers
Chairman
Armed Services Committee



Michael R. Turner
Lead Republican
Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence