

# United States Senate

September 8, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to urge you to immediately extend our New START arms control agreement with Russia for another five years. We believe that New START, as our last remaining bilateral nuclear arms control treaty with Russia, is pivotal to reducing the chances of nuclear confrontation, and ending it now would be detrimental to our national security.

Allowing New START to expire in February would have a dangerous and destabilizing effect. Losing New START's extensive and effective verification regime would create greater uncertainties about Russia's current and future nuclear plans, intentions, and capabilities. As transparency between our mutual nuclear force structures decreases, it could undermine fundamental prerequisites of mutual deterrence and increase the risks of nuclear crises similar to those we experienced during the Cold War, like the Cuban Missile Crisis.

We agree with many of the concerns expressed by administration officials that the current treaty should be improved. For example, eventually including China into nuclear arms control talks and agreements is a worthy goal, as is the inclusion of shorter-range, nonstrategic nuclear weapons.

However, extending the current treaty would cap current Russian strategic forces until at least 2026, which would provide greater predictability and transparency as we begin to replace our own aging nuclear weapons systems. It would also allow us to continue verifying Russia's adherence to the treaty's terms and provide unique and valuable intelligence on the size, capabilities, location, and operation of Russia's strategic forces. The agreement's expiration could also lead to an expensive and ultimately unnecessary expansion in U.S. nuclear forces if we lose the important insights it provides, in addition to increased nuclear spending by other nations.

At this juncture it is unlikely significant changes to the New START treaty could be successfully negotiated, nor a new treaty ratified in the Senate, prior to the lapse of the current agreement. The best course of action would be for the United States to extend the current treaty, allowing time to negotiate with Russia, as well as China, on the contours of a new agreement. Some other justifiable concerns, such as the application of New START to new types of Russian strategic weapons, could be discussed through the treaty's existing Bilateral Consultative Commission.

Therefore, Mr. President, we urge you to use your authority to extend New START for five years and prevent us from returning to an era of destabilizing nuclear competition.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Rand Paul, M.D.  
United States Senator

/s/Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator