

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Mark Kirk
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kirk:

This letter is in response to concerns that you have expressed to Administration officials about missile defense cooperation with Russia.

Last week's elections in Russia underscore some of the reasons that the President nominated Michael McFaul to serve as our Ambassador to the Russian Federation. Specifically, he is a widely recognized expert on Russia and, just as importantly, democracy. McFaul was reported out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month, and we are eager to have him serving in this important post as soon as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to raise several issues regarding your recent observations on proposals for missile defense cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation.

NATO territorial missile defense capability has been for many years, and remains, a key element in its transformation, allowing the Alliance to meet emerging challenges and demonstrate its commitment to collective defense. In that context, NATO and Russia agreed to explore missile defense cooperation at the NATO-Russia Council Summit in November 2010. This agreement reflected the Alliance's conclusion that all parties could benefit from such cooperation, and NATO and the United States would welcome Russia as a partner in missile defense.

Iran's current inventory contains ballistic missiles that can reach Southern Europe, and its continuation of an aggressive ballistic missile development program places increasing portions of NATO and Russian territory at risk. Cooperation would enhance both Russian and NATO capabilities, and would send a powerful signal to regional actors, such as Iran, that Russia and the United States are working together to counter their missile and nuclear programs.

Cooperation would also provide the opportunity to allay Russian concerns about the capabilities of the NATO missile defense system. NATO's missile defense system will not be able to intercept Russian strategic missiles nor will it threaten Russia's strategic deterrent and its security. The United States remains committed to implementing the European Phased Adaptive

Approach to missile defense, and will not agree to any constraints limiting the development or deployment of United States missile defenses.

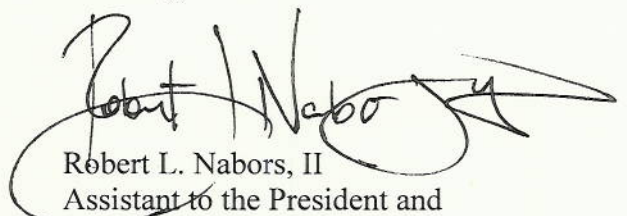
It is Administration policy that the United States will only provide information to Russia that will enhance the effectiveness of our missile defense. We will not provide Russia with sensitive information about our missile defense systems that would in any way compromise our national security. For example, hit-to-kill technology and interceptor telemetry will under no circumstances be provided to Russia.

However, in the event that the exchange of classified information with Russia on missile defense will increase the President's ability to defend the American people, U.S. deployed forces, allies, and partners, the President will retain the right to do that. These factors are the same ones that motivated the last Administration to have determined that some classified information exchange with Russia on missile defense would benefit the United States.

In those circumstances where an exchange of sensitive data with Russia would benefit the national security of the United States, the Administration will only do so contingent on an agreement regarding information handling and protection, including the prohibition of access to such information by third parties. Additionally, any Russian access to classified information would be strictly governed by U.S. National Disclosure Policy and other applicable laws, including a determination that such exchange benefits the United States. For example, you have voiced concern about the release of velocity at burnout data. Although this information is easily calculated from unclassified interceptor data, this data, like all classified data, would go through the same rigorous review process. The President has also ordered us to closely consult with the appropriate Members of Congress before the exchange of classified information with Russia.

The Administration remains committed to continuing to inform the Congress on the status and substance of discussions between the United States and the Russian Federation on missile defense matters.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Nabors, II
Assistant to the President and
Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs