

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 15, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to share our concerns about recent reports that Russian senior officials believe that our negotiators have made concessions regarding deployment of U.S. missile defenses during the negotiations of a START follow-on treaty.

Specifically, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, referring to conversations involving you and your Russian counterpart, has said that there are agreements reflecting a linkage of offensive weapons and missile defense “[i]n a legally binding form.” As you know, it is highly unlikely that the Senate would ratify a treaty that includes such a linkage, including a treaty that includes unilateral declarations that the Russian Federation could use as leverage against you or your successors when U.S. missile defense decisions are made. Since the beginning of your Administration’s negotiations with the Russians, Senators have consistently stated that they agree with your position that missile defense is simply not on the table.

We would also like to thank you for taking a significant step forward in making necessary investments in the U.S. nuclear deterrent. While the atrophy and neglect that beset the deterrent over the past decade was not your doing, as President, the safety, security and reliability of these weapons is your responsibility.

The FY11 budget request you submitted to Congress is a meaningful and necessary, though not sufficient, improvement over prior years. Ensuring the safety, security and reliability of the U.S. nuclear deterrent and extended deterrence will require at least a decade of commitment. That is why last year’s defense authorization act – specifically, section 1251 – required that the Administration submit a 10 year plan for the modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent at the same time it submits the follow-on to the 1991 START Agreement to the Senate for its advice and consent. We are hopeful your plan, and the coming Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), will show the necessary sustained commitment.


We are concerned that the \$1 to \$1.2 billion increase that was initially in the budget for the National Nuclear Security Administration and the national weapons laboratories and facilities was cut in half in the budget request. As a consequence, we understand that many necessary investments are being put off into the out years of the Future Year Nuclear Security Plan

(FYNSP). Given the likely timing of the Senate's consideration of the follow-on agreement, we believe the Administration can address this shortfall in a supplemental appropriations request or in the FY12 budget request.

We look forward to receiving your modernization plan, the minimum requirements for which are contained in a December 15th letter we, and 39 of our colleagues, sent to you. The FY11 budget, as we noted, does not contain sufficient funding for all of the matters enumerated in the December 15 letter, but we are hopeful that the 10 year plan submitted pursuant to section 1251, and the forthcoming NPR, will address these and other areas. The success of your Administration in ensuring the modernization plan is fully funded in the authorization and appropriations process could have a significant impact on the Senate as it considers the START follow-on treaty.

We look forward to working with you in our shared responsibility for the national security of the United States.

Sincerely,



MITCH McCONNELL
Senate Republican Leader



JON KYL
Senate Republican Whip