

Letter on NEW START Treaty Extension Faxed to US Congress

Written by John Hallam

Saturday, 21 December 2019 10:42 -

Faxed to:

Senate Subcttee on Strategic Forces Senator Reed 1-202-224-4680 Senator
Inhofe 1-202-228-0380

Senator Fischer 1-202-228-1325

Senator Rounds 1-202-224-7482

Senator Sullivan 1-202-224-6501

Senator Hawley 1-202-228-0526

Senator Heinrich 1-202-228-2841

House of Reps Subcttee on Strategic Forces

Jim Cooper 1-202-226-1035

Scott Desjarlais 1-202-226-5172

Liz Cheney 1-202-225-3057

Elliot Engle 1-202-225-5513

Michael Turner 1-202-225-6754

Rick Larsen 1-202-225-4420

John Garamendi 1-202-225-5914

Seth Moulton 1-202-225-5915

William Keating 1-202-225-5658

Joe Wilson 1-202-225-5658

Rob Bishop 1-202-225-5857

Mike Rogers 1-202-226-8485

Bradley Byrne 1-202-225-0562

Others

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Scott Desjarlais 1-202-226-5172

Liz Cheney 1-202-225-3057

Russian UN Mission NY

1-212-628-0252

Russian UN Mission Gva

41-22-734-4044

US UN Mission NY

1-212-415-4443

EXTEND NEW START NOW

SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

CC

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

PRESIDENT PUTIN

SECY OF STATE POMPEO

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US AND RUSSIAN DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Senator or Representative,

Dear President Trump,

Dear US or Russian Diplomatic Representative:

I am writing to urge you to take immediate action to extend the NEW START Treaty on nuclear arms limitation. This should be done, no matter what you believe ought to replace it in the longer run. Congress should adopt both H.R. 2529, and its Senate companion, S. 2394.

The NEW START Treaty is of course far from perfect. Arms limitation treaties are rarely perfect. (It is arguably however, the best treaty that could have been realistically negotiated.)

However if it is allowed to lapse without replacement in 2021, as seems to be the current

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trajectory, it is unlikely to be immediately replaced by anything better and most likely will simply not be replaced by anything at all. **This means that for the first time since the early 1970s, the US and Russia will not be subject to arms control of any kind**

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President Trump, you have suggested that instead of a 2-way US-Russia arms control framework, there needs to be a three way framework including also China. The opening of meaningful and formal talks on nuclear arms limitation with China would be an important initiative. However, while ultimately the inclusion of China in an arms control framework is important, the pursuit of this idea must not be allowed to 'sink' a US-Russia arms control framework. Rather, US-China and US-Russian arms control must be pursued in parallel and in such a manner that one is not 'hostage' to the other.

The facts are that the US and Russia account for well over 90% of all the worlds nuclear warheads, with Russia approximately 305 warheads ahead of the US in the most recent estimates. (6,490 total warheads, against 6,185 for the US – these totals include warheads that are no longer 'operational', but are held in 'reserve' whatever 'operational' means.)

After the US and Russia comes France with just under 300 submarine-based warheads, and then only China with between 300 and 250 warheads on a variety of short, medium, and long-range, delivery systems.

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While China's DF-41 missile is amongst the most powerful missiles in existence, both China's total warhead count and the number of its long-range warheads are a small fraction of US and Russian numbers. In addition, China currently has a policy of No-First-Use (NFU). No matter what caveats may be expressed about this, it is a policy the rest of the world would rightly wish them not to change. Arguably it is a policy that the US and Russia should adopt.

In the immediate to medium term however, China has clearly signaled that involvement in a US-Russian arms control framework that limits it to less than 10% of current US and Russian arsenals is simply a non-starter. This is regrettable, but the expressions of 'intense interest' that President Trump reports from China simply do not seem to be there.

The limitation of arsenals that contain more than ten times (depending how warheads are counted and on what counts as being a 'warhead') the number of warheads of China (or anyone else) must take priority over limiting Chinese capabilities. It has even been suggested that the idea of involving China has been a ploy by opponents of any kind of arms control to sabotage the entire process, so likely is the idea simply to de-rail what CAN be done, and done easily. An unrestrained US-Russian arms race lurks in the wings. It must not be allowed to come centre-stage, just because of China's understandable (though not commendable) lack of interest. Lack of restraint from the US and Russia with their much larger arsenals will not encourage China either to accept restraints, or to retain their (however questionable) policy of NFU. It will do the opposite.

At the very least, the process of evolving a 3 (or more) way arms control regime is a much longer term project. The negotiations toward it would likely be complex, difficult, fraught, and prolonged, and would involve intense attention to fine detail. In the short term it is indeed a non-starter.

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On the other hand, President Putin has clearly signaled that he wishes to extend NEW START.

This can be done at the stroke of a presidential pen (or pens).

Whatever defects NEW START might be alleged to have it does at least:

--Put a cap or caps on weapons numbers. President Trump, you have said you want a 'cap'. NEW START has a cap.

--Provide an inspection and reporting regime, so we don't have to guess or make 'worst possible case' estimates of Russian weapons numbers (which feed arms races) because we KNOW what they have.

The importance of arms control is given additional urgency by the widespread opinion amongst nuclear weapons experts and figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev and the Pope, that the current risk of a civilization-ending nuclear war is as high now, as it has ever been. A cavalier attitude to arms control whether from Russia or from the USA will feed that perception and feeds the very atmosphere of mutual threat and risk that in turn raises that risk in a circular, self-reinforcing, vicious spiral.

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A decision to extend NEW START would also do much to reverse that impression of spiraling nuclear risk.

Other critical measures that might be taken to reduce spiraling nuclear risk include a reaffirmation of the Reagan Gorbachev declaration that **'A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'**, adoption of No First Use, improved (or resumed) military-to-military communications, lowering of the alert status of nuclear weapon systems and extension of Presidential decision-making time beyond the current 7 minutes, and final implementation of the joint data exchange centre (JDEC) agreed by the US and Russia as long ago as 1998 but never actually implemented. Risk reduction measures are of existential importance.

The extension of NEW START as per Vladimir Putins recent invitation does not require extended negotiations nor complex bargaining with Congress. A growing number of Republican and Democratic members of Congress are now voicing their support for the treaty and its extension. We fully support them in doing so.

In the House, Reps. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) and Michael McCaul (R-Texas) have introduced the "Richard G. Lugar and Ellen O. Tauscher Act to Maintain Limits on Russian Nuclear Forces" (H.R. 2529) bill, which expresses the Sense of Congress that the United States should seek to extend the New START Treaty so long as Russia remains in compliance.

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In the Senate, Sens. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.) introduced a companion bill, also named the “Richard G. Lugar and Ellen O. Tauscher Act to Maintain Limits on Russian Nuclear Forces” (S. 2394). This bill expresses the same as the House bill. Congress should adopt both H.R. 2529, and its Senate companion, S. 2394. Both bills express the same, and (as we understand) will be consolidated thursday.

NEW START extension is low hanging fruit that needs to be picked. Picking that fruit would do much to reduce the risk of the unthinkable (which is all too thinkable) taking place.

Extend NEW START now.

John Hallam

Nuclear Disarmament Campaigner

People for Nuclear Disarmament

Human Survival Project

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ms-control-pact-idUSKBN1YL2LY](#)

December 17, 2019 / 6:27 PM /
Updated 38 minutes ago

U.S. Congress pressures Trump to renew Russia arms control pact

By [Arshad Mohammed](#), [Jonathan Landay](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. lawmakers of both parties are pressuring the White House to extend the last remaining restraints on U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons deployments by demanding intelligence assessments on the costs of allowing the New START treaty to lapse.

U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with Guatemala's President Jimmy Morales in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, U.S., December 17, 2019.
REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

The demands, contained in three bills that may be harmonized this week, reflect doubts about whether the Trump administration has done sufficient analytical work on how China and Russia may respond to the 2010 treaty's expiration in

February 2021.

New START restricted the United States and Russia to deploying no more than 1,550 nuclear warheads, the lowest level in decades, and limited the land- and submarine-based missiles and bombers that deliver them.

It can be renewed for up to five years if both sides agree. Moscow has offered to immediately extend

the treaty. Washington still is considering the issue.

U.S. President Donald Trump and his aides have argued that New START does not cover all Russian nuclear weapons and said they want to bring China, which they increasingly view as the primary, long-term threat, into a wider arms control framework.

Some lawmakers and arms control

experts view the proposal as a “poison pill” to kill New START, ending restraints on U.S. strategic nuclear weapons deployments, because China rejects the idea.

In May, Trump announced that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed a possible new accord limiting nuclear arms that eventually could include China.

Three days later China, estimated

to have only about 300 nuclear weapons, dismissed the idea of participating in trilateral nuclear arms reduction talks.

China's arsenal is dwarfed by those of the United States and Russia. Both are estimated to have over 6,000 deployed, stockpiled or retired (and awaiting dismantlement) nuclear warheads, according to the Federation of American Scientists.

Lawmakers, congressional aides and former officials say they are unaware of the administration conducting any formal intelligence estimates of the implications of New START's expiration either before or after Trump unveiled the idea.

Nor are they aware of extensive inter-agency deliberations on devising a negotiating stance with China, or even whether any negotiations with China have occurred.

“What we don’t want to see is ... China used as an excuse to blow up the existing, or potential extension of an agreement with Russia that contributes to international security and ... that’s very important to our survival,” Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley said at a Dec. 3 hearing.

Senator Todd Young, a Republican, on Wednesday will propose, as an amendment to unrelated Russian

sanctions legislation, a measure that would require U.S. intelligence estimates on how Russian and Chinese nuclear forces may evolve if New START expires.

The House of Representatives foreign affairs committee also plans on Wednesday to consider similar legislation sponsored by Democratic Chairman Eliot Engel and the senior Republican, Representative Michael McCaul, a congressional aide said.

Another aide, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Senate bill, originally introduced by Young and Senator Chris Van Hollen, a Democrat, was being harmonized with similar language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The latest version of the NDAA, which passed the Senate on Tuesday, also demands intelligence estimates on Russia's nuclear

arsenal in a post-New START world but does not do so for China.

If the three bills converge, the Trump administration may find itself forced to share with Congress intelligence assessments on the implications of abandoning New START and some details on its discussions with Russia and China.

The State Department did not

respond to a request for comment on the bills, whether such intelligence assessments have been done or whether the inclusion of China was a “poison pill.”

Thomas Countryman, a former acting undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, said there were limited ways to persuade China to enter into negotiations.

“You could offer to let the Chinese build up to the U.S. and Russia level (of 6,000 warheads) ... you could offer to take Russia and the U.S. down to 300. Or you could suggest to the Chinese that they stay at 300 and we’ll stay at 6,000.

“Only the second one has a chance of being accepted by the Chinese, but it’s not acceptable, unfortunately, to the Pentagon or the Kremlin,” Countryman said.

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