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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

February 16, 2012

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

Dear Mr. President:

We write to share our deep concern with reports that you specifically instructed the National Security Council to undertake a study that could result in U.S. nuclear weapons reductions of up to 80%. At a time when every other nuclear weapons state has an active nuclear weapons modernization program and many are growing their stockpiles and capabilities, it is inconceivable to us that you would lead the United States down such a dangerous plan as has been reported. We are doubly concerned that you have abandoned your pledge to support the U.S. nuclear weapons modernization program by your latest budget submission. As you know, your pledge for a long-term commitment to the modernization of our nuclear deterrent was key to the agreement to permit even the reductions under the New START Treaty, for which our Committee has yet to authorize funding.

With the divestment of U.S. conventional military capabilities under your recently announced defense strategy, the negation of your pledged modernization program in your FY13 budget request, and the growth in quantity and quality of nuclear weapons capabilities in Russia, the People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and, perhaps soon the Islamic Republic of Iran, we seek to understand the basis on which you would instruct the National Security Staff to pursue these radical reductions in U.S. nuclear forces. As you know, your former Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, General Kevin Chilton stated that, "I think the arsenal that we have is exactly what is needed today to provide the deterrent." By definition, therefore, any further reductions will undermine the deterrent that has kept this country safe since the U.S. won the Second World War in August 1945.

We are not aware of any prior case when a President has directed specific force levels as part of a review of the Nation's nuclear employment strategy. We firmly believe such review

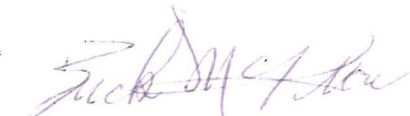
should begin and end with one question: what levels of U.S. nuclear forces are necessary to convince our enemies and adversaries that they cannot succeed in an attack on this country or its allies?

However, as we understand it, the NPR Implementation Study presently underway, which by no means is being done to implement the 2010 NPR as was suggested by Secretary Panetta, is only considering options for further reductions in nuclear forces. We are especially concerned that senior White House national security officials have suggested that such cuts may be unilateral.¹ Indeed, your own Secretary of Defense stated, "I don't think we ought to do that [cut U.S. nuclear weapons] unilaterally — we ought to do that on the basis of negotiations with the Russians and others to make sure we are all walking the same path."

We seek your assurance that in view of the ambitious nuclear weapons modernization programs of Russia, communist China, Pakistan and others, the deep cuts to U.S. conventional capabilities per the Budget Control Act, and your failure to follow through on your pledged section 1251 plan, that you will cease to pursue such unprecedented reductions in the U.S. deterrent and extended deterrent. Surely you agree that blind ideology cannot drive a matter as important as U.S. nuclear forces over reality. This will certainly be our starting point when drafting this year's national defense authorization bill.

We further urge you to direct your Administration to involve the Congress in your planning efforts. Such involvement should involve sharing the terms of reference of the NPR Implementation Study, (i.e., your PPD-11), with the Armed Services Committees, which this Committee has sought unsuccessfully for at least half a year.

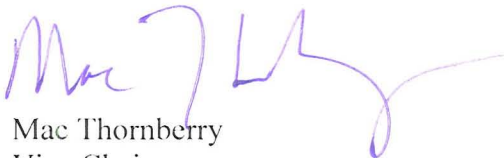
Sincerely,



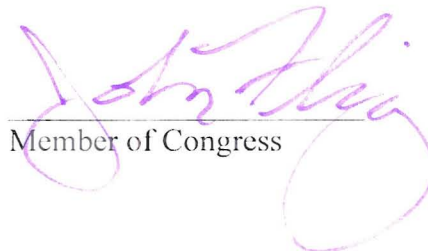
Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services



Michael R. Turner
Chairman
Strategic Forces Subcommittee



Mac Thornberry
Vice Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services



Member of Congress

¹ In April 2011, Special Assistant to the President Gary Samore told the Arms Control Association that, "there may be parallel steps that both sides could take or even unilateral steps that the U.S. could take."

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Member of Congress

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John G. Dingens VA-04
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Jim Walsh FL-01
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Walter L. Dorn MO-2
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Glen B. Ivey FL-22
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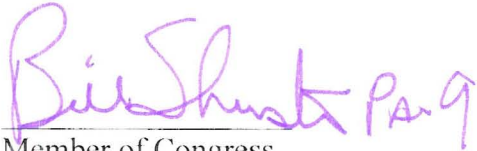
John H. Larson MN-2
Member of Congress

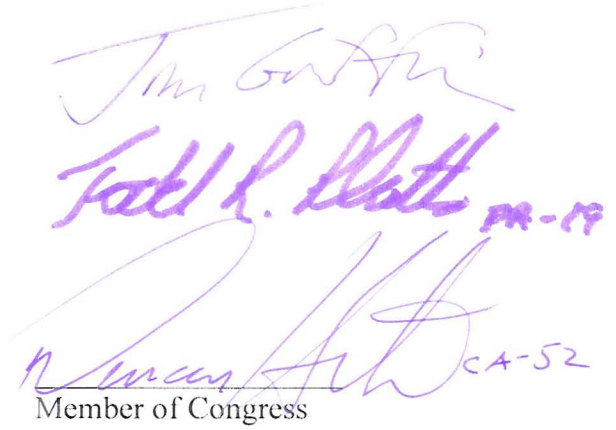
Joe Heck NV-03
Member of Congress

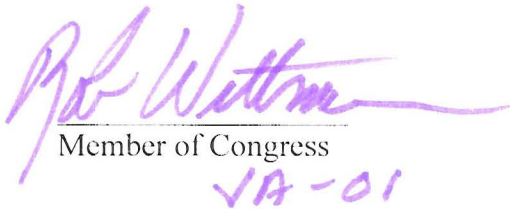
Mike Cohen CO-4
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Vicky Hartzler MO-4
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Barack

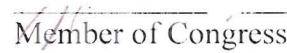

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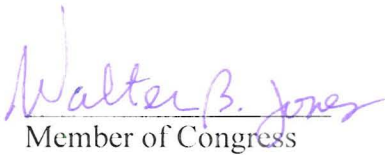

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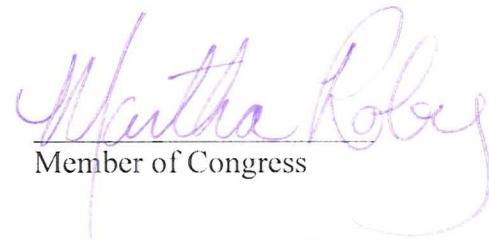

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VA-01

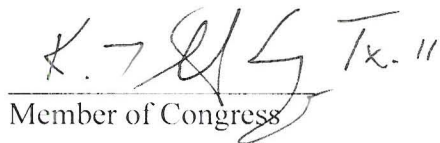

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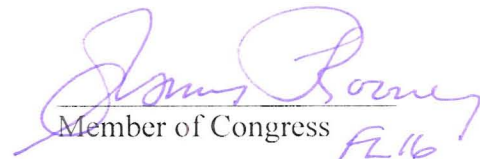

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CC: The Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Heather Higginbottom, Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget
The Honorable Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration
General Martin Dempsey, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General C. Robert Kehler, Commander, United States Strategic Command