22 February 2013

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

Dear Mr. President:

The latest North Korean underground nuclear test represents both a danger and an opportunity. The danger is obvious: One of the most unstable regimes on the planet is continuing to amass the skills and the capabilities to produce, weaponize and perhaps use the most dangerous weapons known to man. The fact that Pyongyang is doing so together with other nations hostile to us and our allies – notably, Iran – raises the possibility that the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons technologies will soon metastasize around the globe.

The opportunity this ominous turn of events offers is the chance to reconsider your pursuit of the goal of "ridding the world of nuclear weapons." It is now clear that, as a practical matter under present and foreseeable circumstances, this agenda will only result in the unilateral disarmament of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. That will make the world *more* dangerous, not less.

In our professional judgment, born of decades of experience with national security policy and practice, America's "Triad" of nuclear-armed land-based and submarine-launched missiles and bomber-delivered nuclear weapons has promoted strategic stability and discouraged proliferation. Steps that raise uncertainty about the viability, reliability and effectiveness of our deterrent will have the opposite effect.

According to published reports, you are considering further, draconian and perhaps unilateral cuts in the numbers of nuclear weapons in our arsenal. We respectfully recommend that this plan be abandoned in favor of the fulfillment of commitments you made at the time of the New START Treaty to: modernize all three legs of the Triad; ensure the safety and deterrent effectiveness of the weapons with which they are equipped; and restore the critical industrial base that supports these forces.

Doing otherwise will put our country, its allies and our peoples at ever-greater risk in a world that is, far from nuclear-free, awash with such weapons – with increasing numbers of them in the hands of freedom's enemies. It is unimaginable that that is your intention. It must not be the unintended result of your actions, either.

Sincerely,

Adm. Thomas B. Hayward, USN (Ret.), Former Chief of Naval Operations

Gen. Carl E. Mundy, Jr., USMC (Ret.), Former Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps

Adm. Jerry Johnson, USN (Ret.), Former Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Adm. James "Ace" Lyons, USN (Ret.), Former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Vice Adm. Robert Monroe, USN (Ret.), Former Director, Defense Nuclear Agency

Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney, USAF (Ret.), Former Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force

Hon. R. James Woolsey, Former Director of Central Intelligence

Hon. John R. Bolton, Former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Hon. Douglas J. Feith, Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Dr. William R. Graham, Chairman, General Advisory Committee on Arms Control, 1981-1985; Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President, 1986-1989

Lt. Gen. E.G. "Buck" Shuler, USAF (Ret.), Former Commander of the Eighth Air Force (Strategic Air Command)

Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely, USA (Ret.), Former Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army, Pacific

Rear Adm. Robert H. Gormley, USN (Ret.), Former Chief of Studies, Analysis and War Gaming, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Hon. Kathleen Bailey, Former Assistant Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

Hon. Henry F. "Hank" Cooper, Former Director of the Defense Strategic Initiative (SDI); Former U.S. Representative to the Defense and Space Talks

Hon. Samantha Ravich, Former Deputy National Security Advisor, Office of the Vice President

Hon. Troy Wade, Former Director, Defense Programs, Department of Energy

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., Former Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy

David J. Trachtenberg, Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy