

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 8, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Durbin:

In considering the Fiscal Year 2018 Defense Appropriations Bill, we strongly urge you to include language prohibiting the obligation or expenditure of funds for a research and development program for a ground-launch missile system with a maximum range capability between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. We believe the development of such a missile would call into question the United States' commitment to uphold its longstanding obligations under the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Imposing this restriction on FY18 appropriations will send a clear message to the world that the United States will work in good faith to uphold its Treaty commitments, and that we expect others to do the same.

Negotiated and signed by President Reagan nearly 30 years ago, the INF Treaty erased an entire class of nuclear weapons from the European continent. Specifically, the Treaty eliminated all nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. In the decades since, it has served as the bedrock of European security and stability. However, in recent years Russia has deployed a limited number of noncompliant missiles in violation of its Treaty obligation.

While this Russian provocation is alarming, Secretary Mattis has stated that the violations do not represent a "significant military advantage." Likewise, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Paul Selva has said that the Russians have not gained "any advantage in Europe" through the deployment of the banned missiles¹ and "there are no military requirements we cannot currently satisfy due to our compliance with the INF Treaty."² Furthermore, General Selva and the Administration have said that the Defense, Treasury, and State Departments are weighing options for a multi-pronged response to bring Russia back into compliance. We believe Congress should have the opportunity to review those options before any taxpayer funds are used to proceed with a program that could open the door to U.S. violations of the Treaty.

¹ Senate Armed Services Committee. "Advance Policy Questions for James N. Mattis: Nominee to be Secretary of Defense". (https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mattis%20APQ%20Responses_01-12-17.pdf)

² House Armed Services Committee. "Military Assessment of Nuclear Deterrence Requirements." (March 8, 2017) (https://fas.org/irp/congress/2017_hr/deterrence.pdf)

While R&D is technically allowed under the provisions of the INF Treaty, flight-testing, production, and deployment of covered missiles are not.³ Funding R&D for a missile we never intend to test or deploy is either a waste of taxpayer dollars, or a first step to a future U.S. violation of the Treaty.

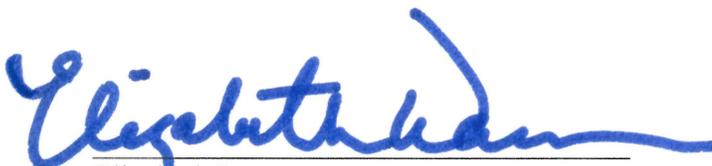
In opening the door to a future violation, we would be signaling to the Russians and our European allies that the United States is preparing to walk away from this landmark nuclear treaty. Such a signal would give Russia exactly the excuse it is looking for to accelerate its own ground-launched intermediate-range nuclear missile program without constraint. It would also fulfill another Russian goal – sowing division within the NATO alliance that, as General Selva recently acknowledged, has shown no willingness to host a ground-launched missile on European soil.

All told, R&D on a missile that has not been requested, has not been shown to be strategically advantageous, and cannot be reasonably deployed is wasteful spending and would compete with ongoing modernization and military readiness improvement efforts. Congress must also consider the fiscal ramifications of pursuing a new missile program at a time when current plans to modernize our existing strategic nuclear forces are facing a growing affordability challenge.

There is no question that we need to be tough when faced with Russian provocation – but we must also be strategic in our actions. We must ensure that the international community has absolutely no reason to doubt the resolve of the United States to uphold, in good faith, the spirit and intent of our treaty commitments. It must be made clear to the world that if the INF Treaty is broken, then the guilt for doing so rests squarely on Russia’s shoulders.

Preserving this Treaty, and bringing Russia back into compliance, will take the same “patience, determination, and commitment” that President Reagan said had “made this impossible vision [of the INF Treaty] a reality.”⁴ Until Congress is properly informed of the nature of the Russian threat, briefed on the Pentagon’s preferred military response, and confident we have the support of our NATO allies, no taxpayer money should be expended on a missile program that, if tested or deployed, would be incompatible with our Treaty commitments.

Sincerely,



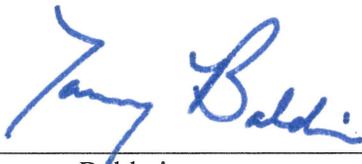
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



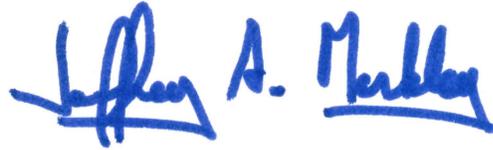
Michael S. Lee
United States Senator

³ U.S. Department of State. “Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the elimination of their intermediate-range and short-range missiles (INF Treaty)”. (Signed December 8, 1987) (<https://www.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm>)

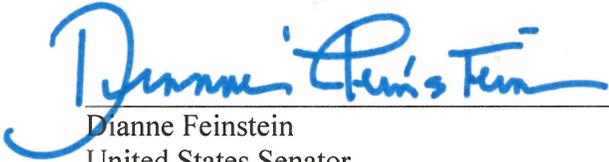
⁴ Gregory Hellman & Bryan Bender. Politico. “The other treaty on the chopping block”. (June 24, 2017) (<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/06/24/nuclear-arms-treaty-russia-trump-239923>)



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



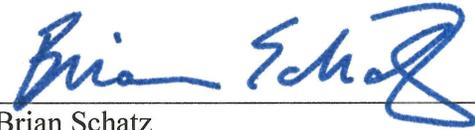
Al Franken
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



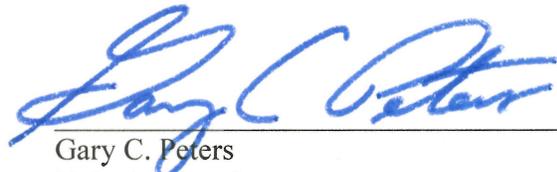
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