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One Hundred Nineteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

January 13, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs (Committee) write regarding the status of the New Start Treaty slated to expire on February 5, 2026—an Obama-era negotiated arms control agreement.

Since entering into force in 2011, the treaty has attempted to set verifiable limits on deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems, while ensuring transparency and predictability through inspections, notifications, and data exchanges.<sup>1</sup> The Russian Federation has repeatedly and blatantly violated the treaty, exploiting its terms while placing constraints on the United States.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Moscow and increasingly Beijing have expanded their nuclear arsenals without restraint or transparency.<sup>3</sup> It is long past time to recognize that the New START Treaty no longer advances meaningful nuclear arms control with the Russian Federation, nor contributes to the broader goal of international denuclearization.

In alignment with the Trump administration's commitment of nuclear risk reduction, the Committee remains alarmed by the Russian Federation's 2022 suspension of its inspection and

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, "New START Treaty" 2025, <https://www.state.gov/new-start-treaty>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Countermeasures in Response to Russia's Violations of the New START Treaty" June 1, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-countermeasures-in-response-to-russias-violations-of-the-new-start-treaty#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20had%20been,States%20its%20right%20under%20the>.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Roders and Heather Williams, *Parading China's Nuclear Arsenal Out of the Shadows*, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, Sept. 4, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/parading-chinas-nuclear-arsenal-out-shadows>.

data-exchange obligations under New START.<sup>4</sup> These actions have weakened the treaty's transparency mechanisms and raised doubts about Moscow's willingness to abide by its commitments. The Trump administration has rightly emphasized that arms control agreements are ineffective without robust verification measures and a commitment to enforcing compliance.<sup>5</sup> Further, such weak agreements offer a false sense of safety rather than actually addressing international security challenges, as seen in Moscow's Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces or INF Treaty violations and development of banned missiles for nuclear coercion.<sup>6</sup> This reflects a broader pattern of destabilizing behavior by the Russian Federation that complicates arms-control diplomacy and heightens the risks of miscalculation.

Moscow continues to develop advanced nuclear delivery systems outside the existing treaty framework. This includes the RS-28 *Sarmat* intercontinental ballistic missile; the Poseidon nuclear-powered autonomous torpedo, the SSC-X-9 *Skyfall* (*Burevestnik*) nuclear-propelled cruise missile, and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle.<sup>7</sup> Last October, Russia claimed to have successfully tested the *Skyfall*, with the nuclear-powered missile travelling over 8,700 miles for over 15 hours.<sup>8</sup> These tests reflect the ever-evolving threat environment facing the United States and its allies and partners, underscoring the need for effective and verifiable nuclear arms control.

These systems, designed to evade missile defenses and complicate deterrence planning, run counter to international counter-proliferation norms and underscore the urgency of renewed diplomacy that addresses emerging technologies and non-traditional strategic threats.<sup>9</sup> In addition to continued discussions to reduce the risk of escalation, the Committee acknowledges that sustained cooperation with partners on future missile defense arrangements, including Golden Dome, is important for strengthening U.S. national security.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the growing threats is not only emanating from Russian capabilities, but also an expanding nuclear arsenal—both strategic and tactical—with the People's Republic of China

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<sup>4</sup> Steven Pifer, *Responding to Putin's Proposal to Extend New START*, FREEMAN SPOGLI INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Oct. 2, 2025, <https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/responding-putins-proposal-extend-new-start>. 2025.

<sup>5</sup> *Nominations: Hearing before the S. Comm. On Foreign Relations*, 119<sup>th</sup> Cong. (testimony of Thomas DiNanno) Apr. 25, 2025. [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/b4cb467f-c4cd-9935-4b6c-344e331c821b/040925\\_DiNanno\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/b4cb467f-c4cd-9935-4b6c-344e331c821b/040925_DiNanno_Testimony.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Guy Faulconbridge and Maxim Rodionov, *Russia Tested Poseidon Nuclear-Capable Super Torpedo, Putin Says*, REUTERS, Oct. 29, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/putin-says-russia-tested-poseidon-nuclear-capable-super-torpedo-2025-10-29/>.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Patrycja Bazylyczk and Hannah Freeman, *Russia's Nuclear-Powered 'Burevestnik' Missile: Implications for Missile Defence*, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, Nov. 4, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-nuclear-powered-burevestnik-missile-implications-missile-defense>.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Blanchfield, *Inside Canada's New Arctic Ambition: 'This Is Not a No Man's Land.'* POLITICO, Oct. 26, 2025. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/26/inside-canadas-new-arctic-ambition-this-is-not-a-no-mans-land-00615511>.

(PRC) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In 2024, the Pentagon estimated that the PRC had over 600 operational nuclear warheads, with levels expanding to 1,000 warheads by the end of the decade.<sup>11</sup> According to recent reports, satellite imagery analysis indicates that China is rapidly overhauling a network of secret facilities used to manufacture warhead components, underscoring the pace and scale of this expansion.<sup>12</sup> Pyongyang continues to expand its nuclear weapons stockpile in conjunction with the development of its ballistic missile program in order to increase striking distance to targets, including the U.S. homeland and international military installations.<sup>13</sup> Unlike the challenges posed by Russia, there remains no diplomatic framework for arms control for the increasing nuclear threat emanating from the PRC or DPRK, making it an area that requires greater attention.

Finally, the Committee is encouraged by President Trump and the State Department's efforts to strengthen its leadership team to address these critical security challenges. The confirmation of the Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security is a positive development in ensuring the Trump administration has the necessary personnel in place to review, negotiate, and enforce current and future arms control agreements. In this role, the Under Secretary will, in part, oversee the Bureau of Arms Control and Nonproliferation (ACN) and the newly created Bureau of Emerging Threats (ET). From threats from nuclear weapons to engineered bioweapons, the ACN and ET bureaus will provide the Trump administration the necessary expertise and capabilities to address future policy challenges in the field of arms control.

The Committee stands ready to work with the Trump administration and its efforts to modernize arms-control approaches to incorporate these critical developments, consistent with President Trump's emphasis on responsible risk reduction.

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Military-and-Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2024*, Dec. 18, 2024. <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/18/2003615520/-1/-1/0/MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2024.PDF>.

<sup>12</sup> Cate Cadell, et al., *China expands nuclear warhead manufacturing capacity, research finds*, WASH. POST Dec. 28, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/12/28/china-nuclear-warhead-expansion/>.

<sup>13</sup> 2025 Worldwide Threat Assessment: Hearing before the H. Comm. on Armed Services, 119<sup>th</sup> Cong. (testimony of Jeffrey Kruse, Lt. Gen., U.S. Air Force, Dir., Defense Intelligence Agency) (May 11, 2025), [https://armedservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2025\\_dia\\_statement\\_for\\_the\\_record.pdf#page=21](https://armedservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2025_dia_statement_for_the_record.pdf#page=21).

Sincerely,



Brian J. Mast  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Keith Self  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Europe

CC:

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Rep. William R. Keating, Ranking Member  
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