

Support Efforts to Prevent a New Nuclear Arms Race and Renewed Nuclear Testing After New START

February 2, 2026

Dear Member of Congress:

With the expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) on February 5, there will be no legally-binding limits on the Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals — the world's largest.

We are very disappointed that since taking office a second time, President Trump has failed to engage Russia (or China) in what he calls "denuclearization" talks. He has also failed, thus far, to respond to a September 22 Russian proposal for Russia and the United States to respect the central limits of New START for one year. His administration has not outlined a path for talks on an agreement to supersede New START.

In July, when asked about the expiration of New START, President Trump admitted "it is a big problem for the world, when you take off nuclear restrictions." Earlier this month, in a wide-ranging interview with *The New York Times*, the president said: "If it expires, it expires."

Without new nuclear restraints, Russia and the United States could increase the size of their deployed arsenals (limited by New START to no more than 1,550 warheads) by uploading additional warheads on their existing long-range missiles. This would mark the first increase in the sizes of their deployed nuclear arsenals in more than 35 years. According to independent estimates, [Moscow and Washington could double the number of strategic deployed warheads after New START](#).

Many members of the nuclear-weapons establishment, some of whom would stand to benefit financially or who are funded by those who would, are lobbying for such a buildup.

Increases in Russian and U.S. strategic forces would further destabilize the mutual balance of nuclear terror, push China to accelerate its ongoing nuclear buildup, and open the door to an unconstrained, three-way arms race no one can win. Contrary to hype, deploying additional U.S. nuclear weapons would not change President Xi Jinping's or Vladimir Putin's fundamental deterrence calculus in a future war.

Instead, as a first step, we believe Presidents Trump and Putin should pledge not to increase the sizes of their deployed strategic nuclear arsenals and agree to resume bilateral talks on a new framework agreement to achieve further nuclear reductions. At the same time, they should also press China (as well as France and the United Kingdom) to freeze the size of their nuclear forces and engage in bilateral or multilateral arms control and disarmament talks.

Others wrongly suggest that Trump's nonexistent, unaffordably expensive, and unworkable plan for national missile defense (a.k.a. "Golden Dome") can somehow substitute for effective, verifiable nuclear arms control. It cannot. In reality, such a system will only encourage

adversaries to build up their nuclear forces — which they can do more cheaply and quickly — to ensure they can overwhelm any defenses put in their way.

Worse yet, we are deeply concerned that the president may try to follow through on his threats from late last year to resume U.S. nuclear explosive testing for the first time since 1992. This would break the global moratorium on nuclear testing and violate U.S. obligations under the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty not to conduct any test that produces a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction. A resumption of U.S. testing would set off a dangerous chain reaction of nuclear testing by other states, including Russia and North Korea.

The U.S. weapons lab directors and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) agree that nuclear test explosions are not necessary to maintain the reliability of the U.S. arsenal. If the Trump administration has evidence that other states are conducting low-yield, clandestine "hydronuclear" tests, the smarter approach would be to pursue technical talks on confidence-building measures at the former U.S., Russian, and Chinese nuclear test sites as the director of the NNSA proposed in 2023.

More nuclear weapons and more nuclear testing will not make anyone safer. For the sake of all of us, and for the next generations of Americans, the United States can and must be a part of the solution and must not take steps that worsen this existential threat.

A [2026 YouGov national opinion survey finds that 91 percent of Americans say](#) the United States should negotiate a new agreement with Russia to either maintain current limits on strategic nuclear weapons or further reduce both countries' arsenals.

On behalf of the many people we represent, as well as the many [millions of other Americans who say "nuclear weapons make the world more dangerous,"](#) we're asking you, no matter your party affiliation, to **speak up and press for a more effective approach to reducing the nuclear dangers facing America and the world.**

Sincerely,

Tanvi Kardile, President, Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

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