

Oppose or Condition the Flawed U.S.-Saudi Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation

September 22, 2026

Dear Senator/Member of Congress:

We are writing to express our profound concern about the significant proliferation risks posed by the U.S.-Saudi agreement for civil nuclear cooperation. The proposed agreement abandons longstanding nonproliferation standards supported by Republican and Democratic administrations to prevent the transfer of technologies that can be used to produce weapons-grade nuclear material and to detect clandestine weapons programs.

Specifically, the deal provides a pathway for Saudi Arabia to acquire U.S. uranium enrichment technology without the more intrusive Additional Protocol to its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in violation of Nuclear Suppliers Group standards that the United States itself has championed.

Supporting Saudi Arabia's ambition to develop a uranium enrichment program without adequate IAEA safeguards is particularly concerning given that key Saudi officials, including Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, have threatened to develop nuclear weapons to match any Iranian capability.

We recognize that U.S. civil nuclear cooperation efforts can play an important role in U.S. nonproliferation strategy, but we underscore that such engagement requires effective safeguards and limitations in all cases.

We respectfully urge you -- and all members of Congress on both sides of the aisle -- to recognize the risks and to exercise your power to reject or modify this proposed nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia. Failure to do so increases the risk of Saudi Arabia developing nuclear weapons and erodes global nonproliferation norms.

In particular, we want to underscore two major flaws of this proposed agreement:

First, the proposed Bilateral Safeguards Agreement (BSA) does not substitute for the Additional Protocol: Rather than requiring Saudi Arabia to conclude an [Additional Protocol to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA](#), the Trump administration negotiated a separate Bilateral Safeguards Agreement. Not only is the BSA insufficient to provide assurance that Saudi Arabia's nuclear program is peaceful, but it abandons the long-standing bipartisan support for requiring states to adopt the IAEA Additional Protocol as a condition of U.S. nuclear cooperation.

The Additional Protocol, which was negotiated after it became clear by the early-1990s that Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty-required comprehensive safeguards were insufficient to detect and deter determined proliferators like North Korea and Iraq, significantly increases the IAEA's ability to verify that a state's nuclear program is peaceful and provide assurance that a state is not engaged in undeclared nuclear weapons-related activities.

The Additional Protocol is now recognized as safeguards best practice. Today, some 144 states have negotiated an Additional Protocol with the IAEA, including the United States.

Unlike the Additional Protocol, which requires a state to provide access to all stages of the fuel cycle and research facilities that support a state's nuclear program, the BSA only requires the Saudis to provide additional information about, and expanded access to, sites where the U.S. is engaged in nuclear fuel cycle cooperation, like uranium conversion and enrichment.

As a result, Saudi Arabia could conduct certain nuclear activities without IAEA monitoring. For example, Saudi Arabia has already [conducted](#) some exploration of its domestic uranium resources in cooperation with China National Nuclear Corporation, which is outside the purview of its comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA and would be outside the proposed BSA.

Furthermore, the Additional Protocol allows the IAEA to request complementary access to any location to ensure the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities. The BSA contains no similar provision, suggesting that Saudi Arabia could refuse agency requests to access undeclared facilities.

Neither the IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi nor the Trump Administration has explained how the agreement will allow the agency to verify that there are no undeclared nuclear activities in Saudi Arabia. This should not be acceptable in the case of a country like Saudi Arabia that seeks the capabilities to produce fissile material and has threatened to pursue nuclear weapons.

The BSA also sets a troubling precedent. In negotiating nuclear cooperation agreements, other states may similarly seek bespoke safeguards arrangements that provide insufficient monitoring, rather than accepting the Additional Protocol.

Second, the agreement would likely lead to Saudi Arabia developing a uranium enrichment program using U.S. technologies. Once transferred, there is an increased risk Saudi Arabia could exploit uranium enrichment technology for weapons purposes. The transfer also sets a troubling precedent. The United States has never provided enrichment or reprocessing technology to a non-nuclear-weapon state and has pressed other nuclear suppliers to refrain from doing so since the 1970s.

Under the proposed nuclear cooperation agreement, the United States and Saudi Arabia would conduct a 2-year joint study on the commercial feasibility of enrichment. After the study is completed, the executive branch could decide to transfer uranium enrichment technology to Saudi Arabia. The proposed deal limits uranium enrichment to less than 5 percent, but it allows that limit to increase to 20 percent (a level that can quickly be enriched to weapons grade) after an additional study and written agreement from both sides.

The Trump administration claims that the transfer of enrichment technology will not “constitute an unreasonable risk” and maintains that the deal will advance U.S. nonproliferation interests.

Such claims are hardly reassuring. Once the United States has transferred sensitive technology to Saudi Arabia, it risks losing physical and/or institutional control of the equipment and associated design and engineering data associated with the facility. Critical information about enrichment technology may leak to the Saudis during the course of cooperative activities or as part of Saudi Arabia's mandatory declarations to the IAEA.

Without an Additional Protocol in place, the IAEA will have fewer tools to follow up on any evidence that Saudi Arabia exploited U.S. technology (or technology from other suppliers) for illicit purposes.

If Congress fails to enact a joint resolution of disapproval to block the deal it may enter into force in fewer than 90 days of continuous legislative session. Alternatively, Congress could pass a joint resolution of approval that would require that certain conditions are met before the agreement can be implemented, as Congress did in 1985 in connection with the U.S.-China agreement for nuclear cooperation.

We urge you and your colleagues to act.

Sincerely,

James Acton, Co-director, Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

Hans Blix, former Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Susan Burk, former Special Representative of the President, Nuclear Nonproliferation with the rank of Ambassador

Thomas Countryman, former Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation

Kelsey Davenport, Director for Nonproliferation Policy, Arms Control Association

John Erath, Senior Policy Director for the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

Steve Fetter, Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland* and former Principal Assistant Director for National Security and International Affairs, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

Robert L. Gallucci, Dean and Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University, and former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs

Victor Gilinsky program advisor to The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, and former commissioner of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Pierre Goldschmidt, former Deputy Director General of the IAEA and Head of the Department of Safeguards.

Mark Goodman, former Senior Scientist, Office of Multilateral Nuclear and Security Affairs, Department of State

Bonnie D. Jenkins, Ph.D., former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, and Executive Director, Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation

Laura Kennedy, former Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, Special Representative for Biological Weapons Convention Issues, and former Chargé d’Affaires at the U.S. Embassy to the United Nations in Vienna and member of the IAEA Board of Governors

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, Arms Control Association

Alan J. Kuperman, Associate Professor and coordinator of the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Project, University of Texas at Austin

Valerie Lincy, Executive Director, Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control

Stewart Prager, Professor emeritus of astrophysical sciences and member of Program on Science and Global Security, Princeton University

Laura Rockwood, former Director, IAEA Office of Legal Affairs, Non-Proliferation and Policy Making Section

Adam M. Scheinman, former Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation

Henry Sokolski, Executive Director, The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center

Sharon Squassoni, research professor at George Washington University,* formerly with the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the State Department, and the Congressional Research Service

John Tierney, Executive Director at Council for a Livable World, and former Chair of the U.S. House of Representatives National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Bruce Turner, former Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament

Frank N. von Hippel, founding co-Director, Program for Science and Global Security, Princeton University; Assistant Director for National Security, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

**Institution listed for identification purposes only.*

***Please address replies to Arms Control Association via aca@armscontrol.org*