

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 29, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write today alarmed by the reported contents of your administration's forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). If reports are accurate, your NPR would undermine decades of U.S. leadership on efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons.

Your purported plans to develop new, more usable low-yield nuclear weapons and reintroduce Cold War-era weapons systems are unnecessary to maintain deterrence and are destabilizing. Further, your reported decision to expand the conditions under which the United States might use its nuclear weapons, including to respond to a broadened range of non-nuclear attacks, is equally disturbing. Taken together, creating new nuclear capabilities and widening their possible use constitute an increase in America's nuclear warfighting capacity that will pressure other nuclear weapons states to follow suit.

Pursuing these new nuclear weapons and missions will also require additional defense spending that will divert resources away from maintaining our conventional military superiority. Yet, if reports are accurate, your Nuclear Posture Review does not address this trade off or explain how the United States will afford these additional expenditures on top of the already-unsustainable costs of modernizing our existing U.S. nuclear forces.

The Congressional Budget Office has concluded that it will cost up to \$1.7 trillion with inflation over the next 30 years to modernize, sustain, and operate our existing nuclear triad.¹ Further, the Department of Energy's FY2018 Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan makes clear that the National Nuclear Security Administration is already working beyond its nominal capacity on these modernization efforts, handling an unprecedented workload not seen since the Cold War.²

In addition to being fiscally irresponsible, your policies run counter to America's obligations under the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Indeed, reports indicate that your NPR at present hardly mentions the NPT and neglects to mention altogether our Article VI commitment to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."

¹ <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53211-nuclearforces.pdf>

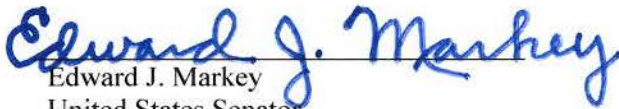
² https://nnsa.energy.gov/sites/default/files/nnsa/inlinefiles/fy18ssmp_final_november_2017.pdf


Finally, your review reportedly pays only superficial attention to the substantial threat posed by nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation. These efforts are just as important as deterring existing nuclear weapons states.

The sole purpose of our nuclear arsenal should be to deter nuclear attack against the United States, our allies and partners. Thanks to the enduring strength of our existing nuclear and conventional military forces, no one should doubt America's commitment to our own defense and that of our allies and partners around the world.

However, the reported policies outlined in your forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review increase the risk of a nuclear arms race and raise the real possibility of nuclear conflict. We strongly urge you to reconsider these policies and chart a sustainable path for our national defense. As the world's greatest nuclear power and the only nation that has ever used nuclear weapons in combat, we have a unique responsibility to continue to lead the international community towards eventual nuclear disarmament.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator


Patty Murray
United States Senator


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Tina Smith
United States Senator


Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Kamala Harris
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
U.S. Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable James N. Mattis
U.S. Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

The Honorable Rick Perry
U.S. Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585