

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 6, 2026

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write today to express deep concern about the expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and the absence of any constraints on the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. For the first time in more than five decades, there are no legally binding limits on U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces. Without an executive understanding to continue observing New START limits while a successor agreement is negotiated, global nuclear risks will continue to grow. We urge you to swiftly reach such an understanding and prevent a renewed nuclear arms race.

As of February 5, 2026, the United States and Russia no longer have a formal framework governing the deployment of their strategic forces for the first time since the 1970s. The lack of progress toward negotiating a replacement treaty—or even securing mutual commitment to abide by New START caps—is deeply disappointing, particularly given this administration's recognition of the treaty's objective of reducing nuclear risk and avoiding a new arms race.¹

New START, signed in 2010, capped each country at 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads; 800 deployed and non-deployed strategic launchers; and no more than 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and heavy bombers. It also established robust verification and monitoring procedures. Although Russia suspended its participation in those procedures in February 2023, it remained below the treaty's limits through its expiration.

In September 2025, Russia publicly indicated a willingness to continue observing New START limits for one year if the United States formally agreed to do the same. No reciprocal, time-limited understanding was reached, and New START expired without replacement. As a result, we now face a precarious strategic environment with no guardrails and no clear path forward. Prompt action is urgently needed.

While we support U.S. diplomatic engagement with Moscow to prevent a renewed nuclear arms race, we also reiterate our unequivocal opposition to Russia's illegal, unprovoked, and ongoing full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The devastation inflicted on Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure is unconscionable, and we condemn these actions in the strongest terms. Pursuing arms control does not legitimize Russia's conduct; it protects the American people from

¹ Reuters Staff. "Trump Says He Wants to Maintain Nuclear Limits with Russia." *Reuters*, 25 July 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/trump-says-he-wants-maintain-nuclear-limits-with-russia-2025-07-25/>.

catastrophic nuclear risk. Accordingly, the United States must pursue nuclear diplomacy that reduces the risk of miscalculation, escalation, and unconstrained nuclear competition.

Support for nuclear arms control has long transcended party lines. Republican and Democratic administrations alike have advanced bilateral agreements with Russia to reduce nuclear dangers even during periods of profound tension in the bilateral relationship. The American public also overwhelmingly supports these efforts. A recent poll conducted by ReThink Media and the Nuclear Threat Initiative found that 91 percent of registered voters believe the United States should negotiate a new agreement with Russia to maintain current nuclear limits or further reduce both countries' arsenals.²

With the expiration of New START, the world has entered a nuclear threat environment without precedent in the post-Cold War era. This administration now has a historic opportunity to engage Russia and other nuclear-armed states to reduce tensions and lower the risk of rapid nuclear proliferation. The stakes could not be higher. We urge you to seize this moment and pursue enforceable, verifiable arms control agreements that place meaningful limits on the world's largest nuclear arsenals.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

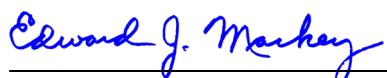
Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator

² "Americans across Party Lines Want the U.S. To Keep Nuclear Limits with Russia, New Poll Finds." *The Nuclear Threat Initiative*, 23 Jan. 2026, <https://www.nti.org/news/americans-across-party-lines-want-the-u-s-to-keep-nuclear-limits-with-russia-new-poll-finds/>.

Bill Foster

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Alex Padilla

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Peter Welch

Peter Welch
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

James P. McGovern

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Jerrold Nadler

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Dina Titus

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Rashida Tlaib

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary of State Marco Rubio