



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20318-9999

20 December 2010

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for your letter of 20 December asking me to reiterate the positions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on ratification of the New START Treaty and several related questions.

This treaty has the full support of your uniformed military, and we all support ratification. Throughout its negotiation, Secretaries Clinton and Gates ensured that professional military perspectives were thoroughly considered. During the development of the treaty, I was personally involved, to include two face-to-face negotiating sessions and several conversations with my counterpart, the Chief of the Russian General Staff, Gen Makarov, regarding key aspects of the treaty.

The Joint Chiefs and I -- as well as the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command -- believe the treaty achieves important and necessary balance between four critical aims. It allows us to retain a strong and flexible American nuclear deterrent that will allow us to maintain stability at lower levels of deployed nuclear forces. It helps strengthen openness and transparency in our relationship with Russia. It will strengthen the U.S. leadership role in reducing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. And it demonstrates our national commitment to reducing the worldwide risk of a nuclear incident resulting from proliferation.

More than a year has passed since the last START inspector left Russian soil, and even if the treaty were ratified by the Senate in the next few days, months would pass before inspectors could return. Without the inspections that would resume 60 days after entry into force of the treaty, our understanding of Russia's nuclear posture will continue to erode. An extended delay in ratification may eventually force an inordinate and unwise shift of scarce resources from other high priority requirements to maintain adequate awareness of Russian nuclear forces. Indeed, new features of the treaty's inspection protocol will provide increased transparency for both parties and therefore contribute to greater trust and stability.

The Joint Chiefs and I are confident that the treaty does not in any way constrain our ability to pursue robust missile defenses. We are equally

confident that the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense will adequately protect our European allies and deployed forces, offering the best near- and long-term approaches to ballistic missile defense in Europe. We support application of appropriately modified Phased Adaptive Approaches in other key regions, as outlined in the Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report.

I can also assure you that U.S. senior military leaders monitored very closely all provisions related to conventional prompt global strike (CPGS) throughout the negotiation process. During that process, the Russian Federation publicly declared on several occasions that there should be a ban on placement of conventional warheads on strategic delivery systems. In the end, we agreed that any reentry vehicle (nuclear or non-nuclear-armed) contained on an existing type of ICBM or SLBM would be counted under the central limits of the treaty. Importantly, the New START Treaty allows the United States not only to deploy CPGS systems but also to continue any and all research, development, testing, and evaluation of such concepts and systems. It is true that intercontinental ballistic missiles with a traditional trajectory would be accountable under the treaty, but the treaty's limits accommodate any plans the United States might pursue during the life of the treaty to deploy conventional warheads on ballistic missiles.

Further, the United States made clear during the New START negotiations that we would not consider non-nuclear, long-range systems, which do not otherwise meet the definitions of the New START Treaty (such as boost-glide systems that do not fly a ballistic trajectory), to be accountable under the treaty.

Finally, I am comfortable that the Administration remains committed to sustainment and modernization of the nuclear triad and has outlined its plans to do so in the so-called Section 1251 report to Congress, as well as a recent update to that report and a letter from Secretary of Defense Gates to Senator Lugar dated 10 December. Plans for sustainment and replacement of current ICBMs, ballistic missile submarines, heavy bombers, and air launched cruise missiles are in various stages of development, in a process that will be implemented over the next three decades and across multiple administrations.

The Administration's proposed ten-year, \$85B commitment to the U.S. nuclear enterprise attests to the importance being placed on nuclear deterrence and the investments required to sustain it – especially given the country's present fiscal challenges. The increased funding commitment, if authorized and appropriated, allows the United States to improve the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons and develop the responsive nuclear weapons infrastructure necessary to support our deterrent. I also fully support a balanced Department of Energy program that sustains the science, technology, and engineering base.

In summary, I continue to believe that ratification of the New START Treaty is vital to U.S. national security. Through the trust it engenders, the

cuts it requires, and the flexibility it preserves, this treaty enhances our ability to do that which we in the military have been charged to do: protect and defend the citizens of the United States. I am as confident in its success as I am in its safeguards. The sooner it is ratified, the better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. G. Mullen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

M. G. MULLEN
Admiral, U.S. Navy

Copy to:

The Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Dick Lugar
Ranking Member