

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your longstanding efforts to decrease the likelihood of nuclear war, to reduce the role that nuclear weapons play in U.S. security policy, and to oppose the development of unneeded new nuclear weapons. We are deeply grateful that you and President Putin have reaffirmed the principle advanced by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Your crucial efforts to establish a Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia will set the stage for further progress on nuclear arms control, reducing the risks posed by nuclear war and allowing us to focus on other critical priorities for American families.

We write today to express our grave concern that your Fiscal Year 2022 budget request for nuclear weapons does not reflect your longstanding efforts to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons. We respectfully urge you to use the forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to set a nuclear strategy that aims to limit the role of nuclear weapons in our national security, reduces unnecessary spending, and sets the stage for progress towards your recent agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin to pursue additional arms control and risk reduction measures.¹ We believe the NPR is a critical opportunity to ensure that your Administration’s proposals on nuclear weapons reflect the views you have espoused throughout your career.

As you know, the FY22 budget request for nuclear weapons contains or increases the budget for every nuclear weapons program proposed by the Trump Administration, including funding weapons that the Obama Administration opposed or sought to retire. This budget invests an estimated \$634 billion over 10 years to rebuild every delivery vehicle, every weapon and every warhead in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. For example, the Trump Administration proposed a new nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile to replace one the Obama-Biden Administration retired with the full support of the Navy.² While the Trump team initiated an analysis of alternatives for the weapon, the first development money—\$5 million for the missile, \$10 million for the nuclear warhead it would carry—remains in your budget. Notably, the acting Secretary of the Navy recently proposed eliminating funding for this program in FY 2023.

¹ White House, *U.S.-Russia Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability* (Jun. 16, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/16/u-s-russia-presidential-joint-statement-on-strategic-stability>.

² Mallory Shelbourne and Sam LaGrone, *SECNAV Memo: New Destroyer, Fighter or Sub: You Can Only Pick One; Cut Nuclear Cruise Missile*, U.S. Naval Institute News (Jun. 8, 2021), <https://news.usni.org/2021/06/08/secnav-memo-new-destroyer-fighter-or-sub-you-can-only-pick-one-cut-nuclear-cruise-missile>.

In another case, the Obama Administration committed to retiring the megaton-class B83 gravity bomb, with an explosive yield of up to 100 times larger than the bomb that devastated Hiroshima. The Trump Administration reversed that decision and kept this unneeded weapon of mass destruction.³ The FY22 budget not only keeps the bomb but triples funding for it— from \$31 million to \$99 million—in order to extend its service life.

Last year, the Trump Administration also began developing a new high-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile warhead—the W93—two years ahead of the previous schedule. This would be the first completely new warhead design in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile since the end of the Cold War.⁴ The Obama-Biden Administration and its Nuclear Posture Review specifically opposed the development and deployment of any new nuclear weapons, yet the FY22 budget request includes \$134 million for the warhead and the aeroshell that will carry it.

The budget request also proposes \$2.5 billion for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GSBD), a land-based nuclear-armed missile intended to replace the existing Minuteman missiles. The GSBD, developed under a sole source contract with Northrop Grumman, will cost \$264 billion over its life cycle.⁵ Independent assessments indicate it is possible to extend the life of the existing Minuteman III missiles beyond their planned retirement in the 2030s.

The Air Force is also acquiring a Long-Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO) from Raytheon—a new nuclear-capable, air-launched cruise missile that will be carried by B-52 and B-21 bombers—through a July 1, sole-sourced prime contract. The LRSO, with a price tag totaling \$29 billion, would be a high-speed, stealthy weapon ideally suited to conduct a nuclear first strike, which is deeply destabilizing and not required for deterrence. The Nuclear Posture Review should cancel the LRSO as an unnecessary, wasteful, and risky nuclear modernization program.

We respectfully request that you reverse the Trump Administration’s efforts to increase spending on these costly, unnecessary, and deeply dangerous nuclear weapons. Taking these initial steps to slow the development of new nuclear weapons will increase the day-to-day security of the United States and our allies, set the stage for potential progress in future talks on arms control, and save billions of dollars for more pressing needs. You rightly highlighted our most pressing security needs when you first came to office, prioritizing the need to end the COVID-19 pandemic, to address climate change, to advance racial justice, and to restore the economy. Spending an estimated \$634 billion on the U.S nuclear arsenal will only make addressing these critical priorities more difficult.

We encourage you to direct the upcoming Nuclear Posture Review to seriously assess what is truly required for U.S. security. We believe it is imperative that you provide clear direction to the Pentagon for the review that is consistent with your goal of reducing the role of

³ Stephen Young, *The Trump Administration’s Dangerous New Nuclear Policy*, Union of Concerned Scientists (Jan. 12, 2018) <https://allthingsnuclear.org/syoung/the-trumps-administrations-dangerous-new-nuclear-policy>.

⁴ Aaron Mehta, *Inside America’s newly revealed nuclear ballistic warhead of the future*, Defense News (Feb. 24, 2020) <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nuclear-arsenal/2020/02/24/inside-americas-newly-revealed-nuclear-ballistic-missile-warhead-of-the-future>.

⁵ Anthony Capaccio, *New U.S. ICBMs Could Cost Up To \$264 Billion Over Decades*, BLOOMBERG (Oct. 3, 2020) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-03/new-u-s-icbms-could-cost-up-to-264-billion-over-decades>.

and spending on nuclear weapons. We hope and expect that the Pentagon will provide you with a full range of options that can give you a real opportunity to weigh the various approaches.

As you have stated, the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear forces should be to deter a nuclear attack.⁶ There is no doubt that the current size and diversity of the U.S. nuclear weapons program exceeds what is necessary to maintain a credible deterrent. We agree with President Obama's assessment in 2013 that regardless of actions taken by other nuclear powers, the U.S. can move unilaterally to reduce its deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third below New START levels without any increased risk to U.S. national security.⁷ We appreciate your recent diplomatic efforts with Russia and we look forward to working with you to prevent a needless and dangerous nuclear arms race.

Sincerely,



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress

/s/
SUZANNE BONAMICI
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JAMAAL BOWMAN, ED.D
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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⁶ Robert Burns, *Biden would push for less US reliance on nukes for defense*, The A.P. (Sep. 21, 2020) <https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-nuclear-weapons-elections-joe-biden-russia-1299ae16f3f21db12e4a41ce2392a0f7>.

⁷ Barack Obama, *Remarks by President Obama at the Brandenburg Gate -- Berlin, Germany* (Jun. 19, 2013), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/19/remarks-president-obama-brandenburg-gate-berlin-germany>; White House, *FACT SHEET: Nuclear Weapons Employment Strategy of the United States*, Office of the Press Secretary (Jun. 19, 2013), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/19/fact-sheet-nuclear-weapons-employment-strategy-united-states>.

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