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## **Thirty Four Members of Congress Express Concern to President over Nuclear Reductions**

Washington — Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and Rep. Mike Turner, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, wrote to President Obama today, responding to reports that the White House is exploring sweeping cuts to the US nuclear arsenal. Thirty two other Members joined McKeon and Turner in calling on the White House to further involve Congress in their strategic planning.

In the letter, McKeon and Turner ask, "with the erosion of U.S. conventional military capabilities under the Budget Control Act and your recent defense strategy, the negation of your pledged modernization program in your FY13 budget request, and the growth in quantity and quality of nuclear weapons capabilities in Russia, the People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and, perhaps soon the Islamic Republic of Iran, we seek to understand the basis on which you would instruct the National Security Staff to pursue these radical reductions in U.S. nuclear forces. As you know, your former Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, General Kevin Chilton stated that, 'I think the arsenal that we have is exactly what is needed today to provide the deterrent.' By definition, therefore, any further reductions will undermine the deterrent that has kept this country safe since the U.S. won the Second World War in August 1945."

Earlier this week, the Associated Press reported that the White House was exploring strategic options that include cuts of up to 80% of America's deployed nuclear weapons, a move that would leave the United States with a smaller nuclear arsenal than China. "Our nuclear deterrent has helped keep us safe for decades," Chairman McKeon said. "We are a responsible nation that treats the awesome power of these weapons with respect. A nuclear United States is not a threat to world peace, but rather has a deeply positive impact on global security and order. We relinquish our nuclear deterrent at our own peril and that of our allies."

## LETTER:

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to share our deep concern with reports that you specifically instructed the National Security Council to undertake a study that could result in U.S. nuclear weapons reductions of up to 80%. At a time when every other nuclear weapons state has an active nuclear weapons modernization program and many are growing their stockpiles and capabilities, it is inconceivable to us that you would lead the United States down such a dangerous plan as has been reported. We are doubly concerned that you have abandoned your pledge to support the U.S. nuclear weapons modernization program by your latest budget submission. As you know, your pledge for a long-term commitment to the modernization of our nuclear deterrent was key to the agreement to permit even the reductions under the New START Treaty, for which our Committee has yet to authorize funding.

With the divestment of U.S. conventional military capabilities under your recently announced defense strategy, the negation of your pledged modernization program in your FY13 budget request, and the growth in quantity and quality of nuclear weapons capabilities in Russia, the People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and, perhaps soon the Islamic Republic of Iran, we seek to understand the basis on which you would instruct the National Security Staff to pursue these radical reductions in U.S. nuclear forces. As you know, your former Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, General Kevin Chilton stated that, "I think the arsenal that we have is exactly what is needed today to provide the deterrent." By definition, therefore, any further reductions will undermine the deterrent that has kept this country safe since the U.S. won the Second World War in August 1945.

We are not aware of any prior case when a President has directed specific force levels as part of a review of the Nation's nuclear employment strategy. We firmly believe such review should begin and end with one question: what levels of U.S. nuclear forces are necessary to convince our enemies and adversaries that they cannot succeed in an attack on this country or its allies?

However, as we understand it, the NPR Implementation Study presently underway, which by no means is being done to implement the 2010 NPR as was suggested by Secretary Panetta, is only considering options for further reductions in nuclear forces. We are especially concerned that senior White House national security officials have suggested that such cuts may be unilateral. Indeed, your own Secretary of Defense stated, "I don't think we ought to do that [cut U.S. nuclear weapons] unilaterally - we ought to do that on the basis of negotiations with the Russians and others to make sure we are all walking the same path."

We seek your assurance that in view of the ambitious nuclear weapons modernization programs of Russia, communist China, Pakistan and others, the deep cuts to U.S. conventional capabilities per the Budget Control Act, and your failure to follow through on your pledged section 1251 plan, that you will cease to pursue such unprecedented reductions in the U.S. deterrent and extended deterrent. Surely you agree that blind ideology cannot drive a matter as important as U.S. nuclear forces over reality. This will certainly be our starting point when drafting this year's national defense authorization bill.

We further urge you to direct your Administration to involve the Congress in your planning efforts. Such involvement should involve sharing the terms of reference of the NPR Implementation Study, (i.e., your PPD-11), with the Armed Services Committees, which this Committee has sought unsuccessfully for at least half a year.

Sincerely,

**Members of Congress**

Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, *Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee*

Mac Thornberry, *Vice Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee*

Michael Turner, *Chairman of Strategic Forces Subcommittee*

Roscoe Bartlett

Doug Lamborn

Todd Young

Trent Franks

Bobby Schilling

Frank LoBiondo

Austin Scott

Scott Rigell

Joe Wilson

J. Randy Forbes

Jeff Miller

Todd Akin

Allen West

John Kline

Joe Heck

Mike Coffman

Vicky Hartzler

Bill Shuster

Tim Griffin

Todd Platts

Duncan Hunter

Rob Wittman

Mo Brooks

Mike Rogers

John Fleming

Walter Jones

Martha Roby

Mike Conaway  
Steven Palazzo  
Rob Bishop  
Tom Rooney

cc:

The Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense  
The Honorable Heather Higginbottom, Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget  
The Honorable Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration  
General Martin Dempsey, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
General C. Robert Kehler, Commander, United States Strategic Command

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