

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 24, 2018

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mattis,

We write to express our grave concern that the Trump Administration is notifying Russia that the United States intends to unilaterally withdraw from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, without any notice to or consultation with Congress, even as our committees had requested a briefing on these issues. If this action is taken, it would risk an arms race, would jeopardize the security of our allies in Europe and Asia, and would significantly undermine U.S. leadership on arms control.

The precipitous step of President Trump's intent to notify Russia of the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty, which was announced over the weekend, discards the results of the Administration's own extensive review to determine an appropriate response to Russia's violation of the Treaty. Ten months ago, the Administration announced an integrated response that included diplomatic, military, and economic measures. At the time, we supported this approach and expected to receive details about how the strategy would be executed. Regrettably, we have not received any information on this effort and are unaware of any significant steps the administration has taken to press Russia to return to compliance with the INF Treaty.

Instead, the Administration is opting for a dangerous approach that threatens a nuclear arms race and abandons effective diplomacy to preserve a vital arms control agreement. As you know, the INF Treaty, alongside New START Treaty, forms the basis for our strategic relationship with Russia. These treaties have been crucial tools to help preserve U.S. and European security and reduce the risk of nuclear war with Russia by ensuring mutual transparency and stability of both the U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles. They have also provided the framework enabling insight into Russia's forces and on-site inspections to verify compliance. We will neither support, nor enable, a precipitous course of action that increases the risk of an unconstrained nuclear arms race.

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Withdrawing unilaterally from the INF Treaty would play directly into Putin's hands. It would benefit Russia, not the United States or its allies. Russia would be free to expand deployment of its Treaty-violating missile systems without any legal constraint or fear of international condemnation under the Treaty. And Russia will muddy the waters by shifting the blame to the United States for what was until now a clear Russian violation.

In addition, we have seen no validated military requirement for withdrawing from the INF Treaty and deploying INF-range missiles. There has been no Department of Defense decision on testing or deploying ground-launched INF-range missiles that would require or justify withdrawing from the INF Treaty.

Withdrawal also risks needlessly dividing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and further undermining U.S. leadership and reliability as a stable and predictable partner on matters involving European security. Sowing division within NATO will undermine both U.S. and European security. There has been no effort to take into account the views of our allies and consult with them on this dangerous action. Instead, three other governments were simply confronted with this decision. The two most recent NATO Defense Ministerial communiques have stressed the need to bring Russia back into compliance. In its July 2018 Brussels Summit Declaration, NATO countries stated: "The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty has been crucial to Euro-Atlantic security and we remain fully committed to the preservation of this landmark arms control treaty." The precipitous and rash decision to withdraw from the Treaty directly contradicts the agreed-upon objective to hold Russia accountable for its violation while attempting to preserve the Treaty.

Furthermore, the Administration failed to take any effective actions to try to bring Russia back into compliance, including using the dispute resolution mechanism in the INF Treaty, or other diplomatic and economic measures. In an attempt to press the Trump Administration to take some meaningful action against Russia that would have held it accountable for violating the INF Treaty and might have pressed it back into compliance, the House version of the National Defense Authorization bill for Fiscal Year 2019 required the President to impose sanctions on Russia. Unfortunately, these requirements were dropped from the final bill due mainly to strong opposition from the White House. Given the dire consequences of a nuclear arms race for our national security and that of our European allies, we oppose any unilateral withdrawal from the INF Treaty, and urge a more deliberate and coordinated approach to hold Russia accountable without undermining U.S. security.

We expect a full explanation of why Congress was not even informed of such a decision, and an explanation of why the Administration has chosen to take such precipitous, ill-advised – and potentially reckless -- action, rather than working with our allies to increase pressure on Russia to return to compliance under the Treaty.

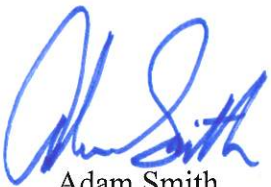
In addition, we request that prior to taking any action pertaining to the INF Treaty and the New START Treaty, you provide us answers on the following matters:

- An assessment of the implications, in terms of the military threat to the United States and its allies in Europe, of Russian deployment of intermediate-range cruise and ballistic missiles without restriction. Would the United States need to pursue additional technologies or programs to offset the additional Russian capabilities? If so, what types of technologies or programs and at what cost?
- An assessment of the implications, in terms of the military threat to the United States, of Russian deployment of strategic nuclear weapons without restriction and without U.S. right to conduct inspections in the event of New START Treaty expires without an extension.
- The status of the Administration's December 2017 announcement of an integrated approach to push Russia back into INF Treaty compliance.
- Measures short of withdrawal, including economic, military and diplomatic options that would increase pressure on Russia for violating the INF Treaty.
- The status of all consultations with allies pertaining to the INF Treaty – and U.S. commitment to closely consult with allies on a plan to develop a joint path forward to maintain international security and stability.
- The Administration's assessment of the impact that INF Treaty withdrawal and New START expiration could have on the long-term U.S.-Russia strategic stability.

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Given the precipitous and unexpected announcement in the past few days of a planned U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, we request that you personally brief our members when we return to Washington, DC the week of November 13. In the meantime, we request a written response to our questions no later than November 2.

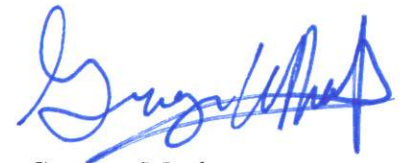
Sincerely,



Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



Eliot Engel
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Gregory Meeks
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Europe and Eurasia
House Foreign Affairs
Committee