

Letter - Oppose 2018 Nuclear Posture Review

Sending Office: Honorable Earl Blumenauer
Sent By: Kelsey.Aulakh@mail.house.gov

Deadline: COB on **Tuesday, February 20**

Cosigners: Holmes Norton, Khanna, DeFazio

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in opposing the approach taken in the administration's **2018 Nuclear Posture Review**. If implemented, the policies contained in this review will likely increase tensions with Russia and other major world powers, while making our country less secure.

Calling for the addition of new weapons and weapons capabilities to our arsenal and expanding the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy imposes significant economic burdens and undermines decades of United States leadership to prevent the use and spread of nuclear weapons.

We hope you will join us in stating our commitment to maintaining the security and safety of the United States and its allies, while exerting congressional authority to ensure sensible spending on our country's nuclear weapons programs. To sign on, please email Kelsey Aulakh (Kelsey.Aulakh@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Blumenauer's office.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

Letter text:

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you with deep concern regarding your administration's Nuclear Posture Review. If implemented, these policies will likely increase tensions with Russia and other major world powers, while making our country less secure. Calling for the addition of new weapons and weapons capabilities to our arsenal and expanding the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy imposes significant economic burdens and undermines decades of United States leadership to prevent the use and spread of nuclear weapons. We oppose this approach and will continue to support maintaining an effective nuclear deterrent without wasting taxpayer dollars, inciting a new arms race, or risking nuclear conflict.

The Nuclear Posture Review further expands the arsenal far beyond what is required to maintain a credible deterrent. Specifically, the review proposes new low-yield warheads on Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs), reducing the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons without offering convincing arguments as to why this would enhance deterrence. Indeed, the fact that a country may lack the ability to distinguish between high- and low-yield SLBMs makes this new capability more likely to lead to miscalculation and nuclear conflict. The review also declares that the United States will maintain the B83 – the last megaton warhead in our arsenal – until a “suitable replacement is identified,” though the warhead had previously been scheduled for retirement. Additionally, the review proposes a new Submarine-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM) to replace a system that was taken out of service by President George H.W. Bush. Taken together, this pursuit of additional weapons that have already been deemed unnecessary for deterrence is unjustified.

Moreover, the Nuclear Posture Review raises several questions about how we can sustain and upgrade our nuclear arsenal under the current budgetary projections. As you know, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the cost of maintaining and modernizing our existing arsenal will be at least \$1.7 trillion, with inflation, during the next 30 years. The new weapons proposed in the review will likely further increase these dramatic costs, more than doubling the percentage of the military budget that is spent on nuclear weapons in the coming decades. This is an ineffective use of taxpayer dollars. The Nuclear Posture Review fails to explain how the United States will pay for these increases in spending without endangering aspects of our conventional military by diverting resources away from other critical national security priorities.

We are also troubled by the policy contained in your Nuclear Posture Review expanding the number of scenarios under which the United States might consider the use of nuclear weapons. Suggesting that the United States may use nuclear weapons first in response to a major conventional or cyberattack sets a dangerous precedent. This policy would increase the risk of miscalculation in a crisis that could lead to nuclear war.

Finally, your administration's review rejects decades-long efforts to strengthen the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and undermines global stability. The Nuclear Posture Review makes no mention of Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which obligates the United States, as one of the signatories, to move in the direction of nuclear disarmament. In that context, on February 5, 2018, the New START arms control agreement between the United States and Russia entered into effect. However, the Nuclear Posture Review fails to take a position on extending the treaty. The Nuclear Posture Review also states that the United States will not seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), despite having signed the CTBT along with 182 other states. This failure to recognize effective nonproliferation efforts weakens the international consensus, damages United States' credibility and puts us at risk of starting a new arms race.

The approach taken in this Nuclear Posture Review is dangerous. We are deeply concerned that the proposals laid out in the review support nuclear proliferation for purposes other than deterrence, misuse our country's resources, and may increase the risk of nuclear conflict. We will work to maintain the security and safety of the United States and its allies, while exerting congressional authority to ensure sensible spending on our country's nuclear weapons programs.

Sincerely,