

United States Senate

May 27, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. President,

We write to commend your efforts to end free-riding by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in global institutions, including and especially your stance that nuclear arms control treaties which constrain the United States must also include the People's Republic of China (PRC), and to urge you to forcefully respond to recent nuclear blackmail by the CCP and the PRC against Americans and the American homeland.

You and your administration have long insisted that Cold War-style arms control regimes which place limits on the United State but do not include the PRC as a party, pose acute risks to American national security. You have sought to bring China into those regimes or to exit them.

In October 2018 you were asked about building weapons prohibited by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and said "if China is doing it, and we're adhering to the agreement, that's unacceptable," and in August the U.S. withdrew from the INF. In December 2019 you announced that you were working with Russian President Putin to ensure that an envisioned nuclear arms control treaty "will include China." Last month Secretary of State Pompeo conveyed to Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov that "any future arms control talks must be based on President Trump's vision for a trilateral arms control agreement that includes both Russia and China," according to a State Department statement.

The Chinese have responded to these overtures with steadily escalating nuclear blackmail.

Earlier this month the editor of The Global Times, a CCP outlet, published that China "need[s] a bigger nuclear arsenal to suppress U.S. strategic ambition and impulse against China," that the arsenal should contain at "at least 100 DF-41 strategic missiles" capable of delivering up to 10 nuclear warheads per missile to the continental United States, and that even outside of overt conflict China would use its arsenal to coercively "shape the attitudes of American elites towards us."

Our intelligence community judges that the Chinese intend to make good on these threats of nuclear blackmail. In May 2019 Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency Ashley said that "China is likely to at least double the size of its nuclear stockpile in the course of implementing the most rapid expansion and diversification of its nuclear arsenal in China's history" and that in just 2018 "China launched more ballistic missiles for testing and training than the rest of the world combined."

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These statements and assessments make clear that China is in defiance of its international nuclear obligations, including its obligation pursuant to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.”

China’s refusal to meet its obligations pursuant to the NPT endangers not just to America’s military security but also to our diplomatic goals. The United States has long led the world in trying to reduce global nuclear stockpiles. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) confirmed that “the United States remains committed to its efforts in support of the ultimate global elimination of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons,” but noted that “[w]hile the United States has continued to reduce the number and salience of nuclear weapons, others, including Russia and China, have moved in the opposite direction.”

In the meantime, of course, as the NPR explicitly emphasized, the U.S. can and must “have modern, flexible, and resilient nuclear capabilities that are safe and secure until such a time as nuclear weapons can prudently be eliminated from the world.”

Mr. President, our nuclear deterrent has been and remains the ultimate protection against a nuclear attack on the homeland, it deters aggression by nuclear-armed aggressors by ensuring they know cannot escalate their way out of failed attacks, and through extended deterrence we are able to reassure global allies and bolster their security.

We applaud the enormous progress you have made in rebuilding that deterrent after years of neglect, both directly and by untangling the U.S. from outdated treaties that disproportionately advantage our adversaries. We urge you to continue doing so, and remain committed to providing your administration with the authorities and resources necessary to bring the PRC into existing or new arms control regimes, ensure that the U.S. is not subjected to limits that do not constrain our adversaries, and regain and retain nuclear preeminence.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator