

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 15, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

From the earliest days of your Presidency, you clearly conveyed your commitment to curbing the spread of nuclear weapons around the globe. In your 2009 speech in Prague, you made it clear the United States would put an end to Cold War thinking and “reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy.” Our country’s economic and national security depend on our leaders making smart decisions about how to best protect Americans at home and abroad from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Yet we are concerned about the Administration’s current proposal to build a new nuclear air-launched cruise missile, a new weapon that does not reflect our current national security needs. The proposed new cruise missile is a significantly altered version of the existing air-launched cruise missile. This clearly violates the policy laid out in your Administration’s 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, which states that programs to maintain nuclear weapons “will not support new military missions or provide for new military capabilities.” Indeed, this new cruise missile appears to be designed specifically for improved nuclear war-fighting capabilities. That is a dangerous direction for our nuclear deterrent and counter to the goals you set out in Prague.

In fact, building a new nuclear cruise missile would make our country less safe. Nuclear-armed cruise missiles are destabilizing because it is impossible to distinguish conventional from nuclear versions. This could result in dramatic escalation and potential devastating miscalculations in a conflict with another nuclear-armed state.

The Administration has already committed to extending the life of the B61 gravity bomb for decades and to developing a new, nuclear-capable, stealthy, long-range bomber. These capabilities, combined with existing nuclear and conventional options, make the new cruise missile redundant.

We understand that the Administration currently plans to develop as well as buy 1,000 to 1,100 new cruise missiles. Current government and independent estimates put the cost of the missile and warhead at \$20 to 30 billion to build, and the cost could climb even higher in the event of unanticipated cost growth. This is just one small part of a spending plan on nuclear weapons that could exceed \$1 trillion over the next thirty years, which, if implemented, would take funds from higher priority national security needs.

Outdated and unnecessary nuclear weapons are relics of the past. We should not revive and waste money on the security tools of the past and rob future generations who will have to bear the burden of this useless spending.

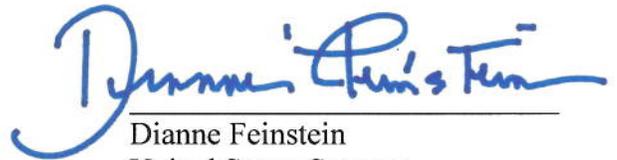
Former Secretary of Defense William Perry recently explained: canceling the new nuclear cruise missile “would reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use and be a historic practical step in the direction of a world without nuclear weapons.”

We urge you to reaffirm your commitment in Prague and cancel the new nuclear air-launched cruise missile. Your Administration should instead focus on capabilities that keep our economy and defense strong while reducing the role of nuclear weapons.

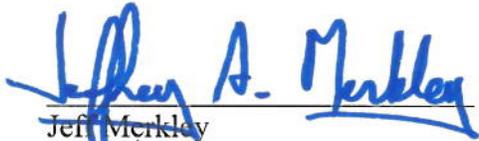
Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



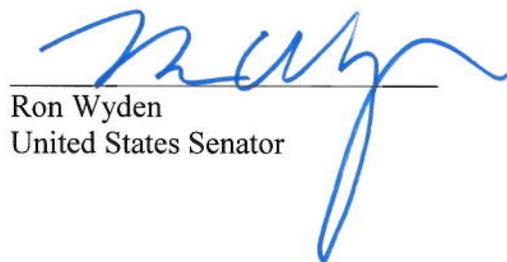
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



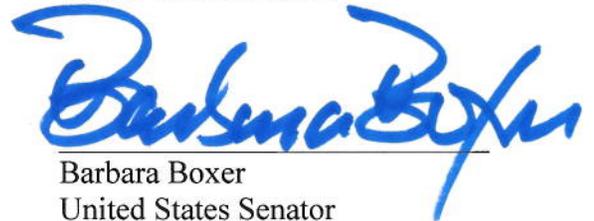
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator