

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 25, 2025

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

Resuming U.S. nuclear testing, as you have proposed to do, would be a mistake of radioactive proportions. Your own advisors state that neither Russia nor China is conducting nuclear tests and that the U.S. has no need to resume. Undeterred by the facts, you appear to be doubling down on this reckless path, saying that Russia and China are conducting nuclear tests in secret. Reports of such tests are unconfirmed and, even if true, would not justify renewed U.S. nuclear testing. For the good of U.S. and global security, I strongly urge you to refrain from any nuclear testing.

On November 2, 2025, you announced that the United States is “going to test nuclear weapons like other countries do,” despite providing no concrete evidence other countries are conducting nuclear tests.¹ Neither the United States, Russia, nor China has conducted a confirmed nuclear test since 1996, almost 30 years ago. That was when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which bans all nuclear tests worldwide and has garnered the support of 187 nations. The only nation that has conducted nuclear tests this century is North Korea, universally regarded as a rogue state.

Your own nominee to run the U.S. Strategic Command, Navy Vice Admiral Richard Correll, recently told Congress that “neither China nor Russia has conducted a nuclear explosive test.”² Your Energy Secretary Chris Wright said that the U.S., which has not conducted a nuclear test in Nevada for 33 years, does not wish to resume such tests.³ Brandon Williams, your head of the National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees nuclear weapons, said we don’t need to conduct nuclear tests.⁴

The United States has already conducted more nuclear tests than all other nations combined. We spend \$25 billion annually on the Stockpile Stewardship Program, which maintains nuclear weapons without explosive nuclear testing, utilizing room-size supercomputers, the world’s most powerful X-ray machine, and a laser system the size of a sports stadium. No other nation has such an extensive array of tools for non-nuclear testing.⁵

¹ Norah O’Donnell, *60 Minutes Interview with President Trump*, CBS News (Nov. 2, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/read-full-transcript-norah-odonnell-60-minutes-interview-with-president-trump>.

² Jack Detsh and Joe Gould, *Resuming nuclear testing is not as easy as you think*, Politico (Oct. 30, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/30/hurdles-nuclear-testing-00630407>.

³ David E. Sanger and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, *Trump Doubles Down on Nuclear Tests. His Energy Secretary Differs*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 3, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/03/us/politics/trump-nuclear-tests-energy-secretary.html>.

⁴ William J. Broad, *Nuclear Testing Not Advised, Trump’s Nominee Says in Senate Hearing*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 8, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/science/nuclear-testing-nnsa-williams.html>.

⁵ David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, *Trump’s Call to Resume Nuclear Testing After Decades Revives a Cold War Debate*, N.Y. Times (Oct. 30, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/30/us/politics/trump-nuclear-testing.html>.

Deterring adversaries and safeguarding U.S. national security requires strength, clarity, and smart strategy, not actions that would needlessly undermine the global nonproliferation regime or advantage our competitors.

A return to explosive nuclear testing would embolden our adversaries. China has conducted only 45 nuclear tests; the United States has done more than 1,000. China, which has been expanding its nuclear test site, could seize the opportunity to conduct nuclear tests to develop more sophisticated weapons.⁶ Russia would, too. On November 5, 2025, Russian President Putin announced that his country would return to nuclear testing if the United States does.⁷

Renewed nuclear testing would throw gasoline on the arms race fire. A U.S. decision to conduct explosive tests could also encourage partners and allies to reconsider their own restraint, weakening decades of global nonproliferation cooperation that has benefited U.S. security and strengthened our collective position vis-à-vis China and Russia.

Confronted with the fact that no other nation is conducting nuclear tests, you said that Russia and China are conducting nuclear tests in secret and people “just don’t know about it.” “You don’t necessarily know where they’re testing,” you said. “They test way underground where people don’t know exactly what’s happening with the test.”⁸

You have suggested that Russia and China are conducting small nuclear tests that are hard to detect, sometimes referred to as ‘hydronuclear’ tests, in violation of U.S. policy and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.⁹ Reports of such tests from 2019 raise concerns, but they are unconfirmed.¹⁰ Even if true, they would not justify renewed U.S. nuclear testing.

Make no mistake—small nuclear tests are still nuclear tests. Even one small U.S. nuclear test would give Russia and China the green light to conduct many large nuclear tests that would be much more useful for the development of new nuclear weapons that could pose a threat to U.S. national security. A much better response to any uncertainty around Russian and Chinese activity would be to seek greater transparency of test sites, including inspections of underground testing facilities.¹¹

With no need to resume nuclear testing, it appears that the root cause of this entire kerfuffle is your confusion about what a nuclear test is and is not. Russia recently tested two new missiles—called Poseidon and Skyfall—that are designed to evade U.S. missile defenses. But

[cold-war.html](#).

⁶ Cate Cadell, *China rapidly expands nuclear test site as Trump revives Cold War tension*, Wash. Post (Nov. 17, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/11/17/china-nuclear-test-site-lop-nur/>.

⁷ Vladimir Soldatkin and Mark Trevelyan, *Putin orders proposals on possible Russian nuclear test*, Reuters (Nov. 5, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/putin-orders-proposals-resumption-nuclear-testing-2025-11-05/>.

⁸ Norah O’Donnell, *60 Minutes Interview with President Trump*, CBS News (Nov. 2, 2025).

⁹ William J. Broad, *The Forgotten Nuclear Weapon Tests That Trump May Seek to Revive*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 24, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/24/science/hydro-nuclear-testing-trump.html>

¹⁰ David E. Sanger and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, *Trump Doubles Down on Nuclear Tests. His Energy Secretary Differs*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 3, 2025).

¹¹ Daryl G. Kimball and Carol Giacomo, *Managing an Arsenal Without Nuclear Testing: An Interview with Jill Hruby of the U.S. Nuclear Security Administration*, Arms Control Association (Dec. 2023), <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-12/interviews/managing-arsenal-without-nuclear-testing-interview-jill-hruby-us-national>.

there were no nuclear warheads on these missiles. You apparently mixed up the testing of *missiles* that deliver nuclear weapons to their targets and the testing of the *nuclear bombs* that those missiles carry. Russia did not test nuclear bombs.

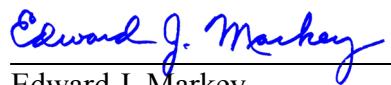
Accordingly, I am compelled to ask whether you are proposing to resume U.S. nuclear testing with the intention of initiating a new nuclear arms race, or whether your statements reflect a misunderstanding of the difference between missile tests and nuclear explosive tests. As horrific as it sounds, it seems that you may be on the verge of undermining U.S. and global security just so you don't have to admit that you were wrong.

Considering my serious concerns, I request that you respond to the following questions in writing by December 15, 2025:

1. What evidence do you have to support your claim that Russia and China are conducting secret nuclear tests?
2. If your Administration resumes nuclear testing, how large (in kilotons of nuclear yield) would these tests be, how many would you conduct, where would you conduct them, and when?
3. What steps would the United States have to take to resume nuclear testing? When is the earliest that tests would resume? How much would it cost for the United States to resume testing and how would those costs be covered?
4. What would be the purpose of new U.S. nuclear tests? What, if any, technical information would be gained?
5. Given that Russia has announced that it will resume nuclear testing if the United States does, how would the United States respond to new Russian nuclear tests?
6. If China resumes nuclear tests in response to U.S. tests, how useful, in terms of gaining confidence in its current warhead designs or in new designs, would additional tests be for Beijing?
7. What would be the impact of renewed U.S. nuclear testing on the testing programs of North Korea, India, and Pakistan?
8. If the United States resumes nuclear testing, would it also continue the Stockpile Stewardship Program? If so, why?

I appreciate your prompt attention to my concerns.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator