

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write as a group of Members of Congress to express concern over recent reports of a potential agreement between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that could involve civil nuclear cooperation and provide the Kingdom with a pathway to a nuclear weapon.

Saudi Arabia has, on numerous occasions, expressed its interest in acquiring nuclear weapons. Such a development would be highly destabilizing for the Middle East and could lead other states to reconsider their nuclear options. As is the case with Iran, preventing nuclear proliferation in Saudi Arabia should be one of the Trump administration's highest priorities. It is therefore greatly concerning to learn that the Administration is pursuing an agreement that, without proper safeguards, could enable Saudi Arabia to produce a nuclear bomb. Given Riyadh's nuclear ambitions, we urge the Administration to include the strongest possible "gold standard" non-proliferation measures in any nuclear cooperation agreement. Giving Saudi Arabia nuclear technology without the strongest safeguards is a recipe for disaster.

Saudi Arabia's interest in becoming a nuclear-armed state is no secret. In 2018, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman vowed that "if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible."¹ More recently, in 2023, the Crown Prince stated that if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, "we have to get one."²

Congressional concern about nuclear cooperation with Saudi Arabia has a long, bipartisan history. In your Senate career, you were among the most consistent voices warning that Saudi Arabia's refusal to adopt these standards—and its statements indicating an intent to match Iran's nuclear capabilities—warranted a firm U.S. policy response.

During the first Trump administration and following the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi by agents of the Saudi government in October 2018, you said — as a U.S. Senator — that the United States "should suspend all talks" on a nuclear cooperation agreement "until the Saudi government agrees to the 'gold standard' requirements."³ You and Sen. Markey

¹ Warren P. Strobel et. al., *Saudi Arabia, With China's Help, Expand Its Nuclear Program*, Wall St. J. (Aug. 4, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-with-chinas-help-expands-its-nuclear-program-11596575671>.

² Kelsey Davenport, *Saudi Push for Enrichment Raises Concerns*, Arms Control Ass'n (Nov. 2023), <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-11/news/saudi-push-enrichment-raises-concerns>.

³ Press Release, Senators Markey and Rubio, and Reps. Sherman and Yoho Reintroduce Bipartisan, Bicameral Legislation to Block Saudi Arabia's Nuclear Weapons Ambitions (Feb. 28, 2019),

then introduced legislation that would require any nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia to meet the gold standard — a blanket prohibition on enrichment and reprocessing of nuclear material — and secure an affirmative vote of approval from Congress.⁴

On April 13, 2025, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said that the Administration has revived talks with Saudi Arabia to give it access to U.S. nuclear technology and potentially allow it to enrich uranium. “We’ve not reached the details on an agreement, but it certainly looks like there is a pathway to do that,” Wright said, adding that further details would come “later in the year.” “The issue is control of sensitive technology. Are there solutions to that that involve enrichment here in Saudi Arabia? Yes.”⁵ The Biden administration pursued similar talks with Riyadh in the context of an Israel-Saudi “normalization” agreement and possible U.S. security commitments.

Given Saudi Arabia’s nuclear intentions, it would be irresponsible for the United States to reach a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Riyadh that does not include the gold standard. A typical US “123 agreement” under the Atomic Energy Act prohibits a partner country from enriching or reprocessing nuclear material acquired from the United States (without further agreement), but that country may do so with technology and nuclear material acquired from other sources.⁶ The stronger protections of the gold standard would prevent that. Agreeing to weaker nonproliferation measures with Saudi Arabia would undermine the existing global nonproliferation regime and exacerbate tensions across the Middle East.

As part of any gold standard agreement, the Administration must also ensure that Riyadh adopts and implements the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Additional Protocol. The Additional Protocol, which allows for widespread inspections of nuclear and nonnuclear facilities and has extensive reporting requirements, is considered to be an essential tool for detecting illicit nuclear weapons activities.⁷

We are also deeply concerned by credible reporting on Saudi Arabia’s ongoing cooperation with the People’s Republic of China on ballistic missile development. This cooperation represents a direct challenge to nonproliferation norms and poses strategic risks to both regional stability and U.S. national security.

The Atomic Energy Act requires your Administration to keep the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs committees informed of any new or amended agreements for peaceful nuclear cooperation.⁸

<https://www.markey.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senators-markey-and-rubio-and-reps-sherman-and-yoho-reintroduce-bipartisan-bicameral-legislation-to-block-saudi-arabias-nuclear-weapons-ambitions>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Vivian Nereim, *U.S. Revives Talks With Saudi Arabia on Transfer of Nuclear Technology*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 13, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/13/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-nuclear-talks-trump.html>.

⁶ Paul K. Kerr & Mary Beth D. Nikitin, *Nuclear Cooperation with Other Countries: A Primer*, CRS (Mar. 28, 2025), https://ussen-my.sharepoint.com/personal/freddy_noch_markey_senate_gov/_layouts/15/doc.aspx?sourcedoc={1ca62834-6d91-4bcc-b178-71db34873600}&action=edit

⁷ The International Atomic Energy Agency, U.S. Dept of State, <https://www.state.gov/iaea/> (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

⁸ Atomic Energy Act of 1954, 42 U.S.C. § 2153(e), <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/10/f38/Atomic%20Energy%20Act%20of%201954%20%28AEA%29%20in%20U.S.C..pdf>.

We request that you ensure compliance with this statutory directive so that, should the United States reach a 123 agreement with Saudi Arabia, Congress will be best positioned to review it and consider whether to pass a resolution of disapproval, as the Act authorizes.⁹

To help us better understand how the Administration intends to prevent Saudi Arabia from pursuing a nuclear weapons capability in the context of a U.S. civil nuclear cooperation agreement, please respond to the following questions in writing by December 1, 2025:

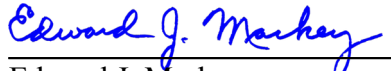
1. Does the Administration intend to inform the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs committees if and when a 123 agreement is reached with Saudi Arabia?
2. In negotiations with Saudi Arabia, is the Administration seeking a 123 agreement with “gold standard” protections? If not, why not?
3. Will the Administration require Saudi Arabia to implement the Additional Protocol? If not, why not?
4. What nuclear technology is the Administration planning to provide to Saudi Arabia, who will provide it, when will it be transferred, and under what terms? Who will pay for the technology and how much will it cost?
5. Is the United States considering constructing and operating a uranium-enrichment facility on Saudi soil? If so, under what terms?
6. What is the status of negotiations towards diplomatic normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel? Please describe the U.S. involvement, including the roles played by the White House, the Department of State, and the Department of Energy.
7. Is the United States still considering defense guarantees or commitments for Saudi Arabia in exchange for normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel? If so, please provide details for each defense guarantee or commitment.
8. Is improvement of Saudi Arabia’s repressive human rights record an element of the negotiations? Will any agreement include provisions that address and seek to improve upon Saudi Arabia’s human rights and civil liberties practices? If so, please outline them. If not, why not?
9. Will the United States require Saudi Arabia to cease all defense cooperation with the People’s Republic of China on ballistic missile and nuclear technology as a part of any agreement to share nuclear technology? If not, why not?

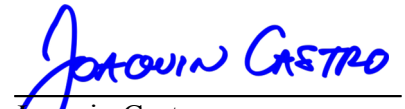
We urge the Administration to include the strongest possible non-proliferation measures in any nuclear cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia. The security of the United States and

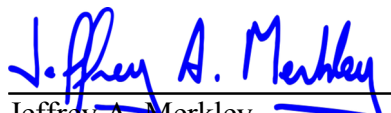
⁹ *Id.*

our allies in the Middle East depends on it. Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

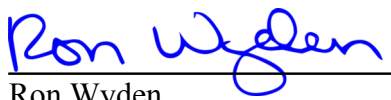
Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

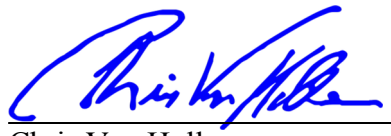

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

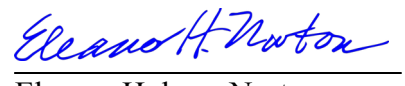

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Greg Casar
Member of Congress


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Dina Titus
Member of Congress


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

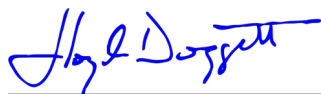

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress


Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

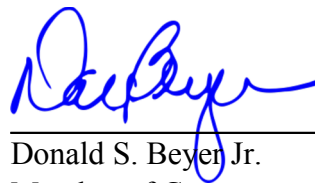

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress


Andre Carson
Member of Congress


John Garamendi
Member of Congress



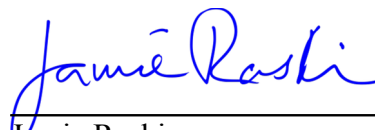
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress