

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rubio:

On February 5, 2026, the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the United States and Russia will expire. Unless a new agreement is in place by that date, there will be no legal limits on U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces, reversing decades of work to reduce the risk of nuclear war. With time running short, we urge the Administration to continue adhering to New START's central limits on deployed warheads and to actively engage with Russia on a successor treaty. Russia's recent offer to continue adhering to New START limits presents an opportunity for an interim understanding that would allow time to reach a new agreement and help to prevent a dangerous and costly arms race between the United States and Russia.

For five decades, every American president, from Richard Nixon to Joe Biden, has supported the U.S.-Russia nuclear arms control process. This long-standing, bipartisan effort has enjoyed high approval ratings among the American public, who recognize the dangers of nuclear proliferation and of nuclear miscalculation by the world's two largest nuclear powers.

The Trump administration has a historic opportunity to work with Russia to respect the limits of New START using existing technical means of verification. Given the time it would take to negotiate a new treaty, an executive understanding that both sides will adhere to New START limits would help to reduce uncertainty in this interim period.

Russia recently proposed an executive understanding to extend New START's limits. On September 22, 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "Russia is prepared to continue adhering to the central numerical limits under the New START Treaty for one year after February 5, 2026."¹ Putin added that "this measure will only be viable if the United States acts in a similar manner and does not take steps that undermine or violate the existing balance of deterrence capabilities."²

President Trump has recently spoken about the dangers of New START's expiration. When asked about New START in July, President Trump said "that's not an agreement you want expiring. We're starting to work on that."³ "It's a problem for the world," Trump said, referring to New START's expiration, "when you take off

¹Andrew Osborn, Vladimir Soldatkin, and Jonathan Landay, *Putin Offers Trump One-Year Extension to Nuclear Weapons Treaty*, Reuters (Sept. 23, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-offers-trump-temporary-nuclear-arms-control-deal-that-would-extend-status-2025-09-22/>.

² *Id.*

³ *US plans to engage with Russia to discuss prospects of nuclear disarmament — Trump*, Tass (July 25, 2025), <https://tass.com/world/1994415?emci=c78ed43e-bb97-f011-b484-6045bdeb7413&emdi=ec860193-be97-f011-b484-6045bdeb7413&ceid=9316698>.

nuclear restrictions, that's a big problem.”⁴ Earlier this month, in reference to adhering to New START for an additional year, President Trump said: “It sounds like a good idea to me.”⁵

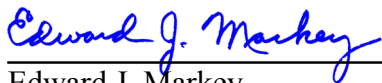
We strongly urge the Administration to reach an executive understanding to ensure that both Washington and Moscow continue to adhere to New START’s limits. Although an informal agreement to abide by New START is the strongest interim approach, we believe it is in the best interest of both of our nations to also pursue formal mechanisms aimed at preventing a nuclear arms race. An unconstrained arms race would make the United States less secure and increase the risks to global security.

New START enhances U.S. national security by placing legal limits on all Russian-deployed intercontinental-range nuclear weapons. The United States and Russia agreed in 2021 to extend the treaty through February 5, 2026, but in February 2023, President Vladimir Putin announced Russia was “suspending” its implementation of the treaty.

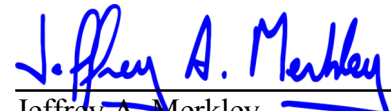
Let us be clear: Putin's illegal invasion of, and brutal war against, Ukraine is unacceptable. We unequivocally condemn Putin's attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, abductions of children, and nuclear saber rattling. These actions are antithetical to our democratic ideals and to international law. Yet, as we did during the Cold War, we must come to the table to bring the world back from the precipice of nuclear catastrophe.

We urge your prompt response to this letter and would also like to repeat our request from February that the Department of State provide a briefing on the Administration’s plans for New START adherence and negotiations in a timely manner.⁶ Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *President Trump Speaks to Reporters Upon Departure to Norfolk, Virginia*, C-SPAN (Oct. 5, 2025), <https://www.c-span.org/program/white-house-event/president-trump-speaks-to-reporters-upon-departure-to-norfolk-virginia/666741>

⁶ Letter from Senator Edward J. Markey et al to Secretary of State Marco Rubio (Feb. 19, 2025), https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/new_start_letter_to_state1.pdf



Rand Paul
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



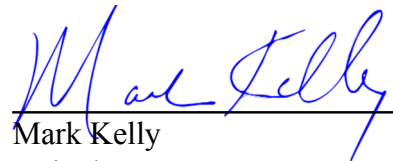
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



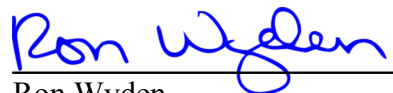
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



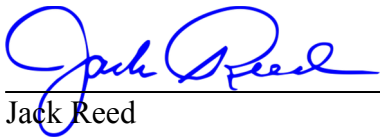
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



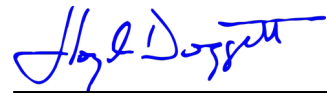
Bernard Sanders
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Ron Wyden
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Lloyd Doggett
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