

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 13, 2016

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President-elect of the United States of America
Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Mr. President-elect:

Looking toward your inauguration as President, we seek new opportunities to strengthen American national security. We are particularly concerned that comments calling into question the United States' tradition of defending U.S. allies and opposing nuclear weapons proliferation could reverse longstanding U.S. policies. Our enduring system of alliances and nuclear nonproliferation policy are pillars of U.S. and global security. We urge you to strengthen these pillars of U.S. foreign policy by unequivocally assuring our allies of your commitment to their defense and affirming your opposition to the spread of nuclear weapons.

Our obligation to deter attacks against our allies in Europe and Asia is enshrined in mutual defense pacts such as the North Atlantic Treaty that established NATO, and the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. These and other defense agreements represent the most visible signal of the U.S. commitment to global peace.

It is important that U.S. defense guarantees be clear and unequivocal. While we agree that it is essential for our allies to spend more on their defense, U.S. security guarantees should not be conditioned on additional monetary compensation, as that would undermine U.S. extended deterrence by weakening the perception that the U.S. is committed to meeting our mutual defense obligations. Furthermore, many of our allies in both Europe and Asia make significant efforts to defend themselves against adversaries that also seek to challenge the United States, thus bolstering our own national security.

Countries such as Japan and South Korea depend on U.S. guarantees to deter threats to their security while forswearing the acquisition of independent nuclear arsenals. Strengthening America's assurances of military protection to these and other non-nuclear allies reduces incentives for them to launch nuclear weapons programs of their own. Weakening our security guarantees could prompt these and other countries to reconsider their nonproliferation commitments.

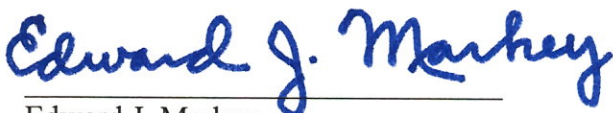
A decision by U.S. allies to pursue nuclear weapons would endanger the global nonproliferation regime by triggering a cascade of nuclear proliferation that could include some of our adversaries. Nuclear weapons acquisition by U.S. allies would also exacerbate the risk of accidental nuclear conflict and could increase pressure for preventive attacks by adversaries.

That would significantly increase the risk of the United States being dragged into a nuclear war and undermine our security commitments around the globe.

These existential risks to U.S. and global security are why administrations from both parties have long supported the extension of U.S. defense guarantees to vulnerable allies, while firmly opposing the spread of nuclear weapons. Any change in U.S. policy to support nuclear acquisition by countries such as Japan, South Korea, and even Saudi Arabia would represent a drastic reversal of a longstanding bipartisan consensus that is meant to keep the world safe from nuclear war.

For more than seventy years, the United States has helped to construct and maintain the institutions of global peace. Among the most important of these institutions are defensive alliances such as NATO, as well as the multilateral treaties comprising the nonproliferation regime. We urge you to affirm that the United States will continue to support these institutions. In doing so, you would strengthen the legacy of American Presidents, both Democratic and Republican, and reinforce the foundations of international security.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator