

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2010

The Honorable John Kerry
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
439 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We deeply appreciate your efforts to hold a number of hearings in order to carefully examine the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty currently before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Considering the history of past arms control treaties, the number of hearings being held on New START seems appropriate. However, we are concerned by a recent press release announcing your intention to move the treaty out of committee before the August recess.

We believe that a full and open debate on the substance and implications of this Treaty is necessary and that should determine when the committee votes on this treaty. If the Senate moves according to the announced schedule, the ratification process would be one of the quickest in the history of arms control treaties – faster than START I and even the Moscow Treaty, which was significantly less complex than New START.

Also a month ago, we sent a letter requesting a number of witnesses that would help fully vet this treaty. Some of the proposed witnesses support the treaty and some do not. Unfortunately, the recently announced series of hearings does not adequately address the request we made. According to your press release and subsequent hearing notices, only two of the nine witnesses we requested would appear before you seek to vote the treaty out of committee.

Further, the Senate has not received the National Intelligence Estimate, the State Department Verifiability Assessment, nor the five State Department Compliance Reports. These reports are crucial to understanding the real world implications of the New START Treaty. The 2005 Compliance Report alone highlighted a number of direct violations of START I by the Russians. For five years and two administrations we have not seen a single report to confirm if Russia has improved its transparency with the United States and is completely honoring its treaty obligations.

In addition, both the Senate Armed Services Committee and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence will need to hold hearings on this treaty and submit their own reports to the Foreign Relations Committee. Even if we receive these reports quickly, it leaves little time for serious and thoughtful consideration of what may be in them.

Finally, we have still not received the full negotiating record nor answers from any administration witnesses regarding the questions for the record that many of us submitted. Both the record as well as responses to our questions would be helpful in making scheduled hearings more fruitful, but are especially critical to timely consideration and voting.

We take very seriously the role of advise and consent for treaties that the Senate – and especially our committee – has in this process. And given these outstanding issues, we believe talk of scheduling a business meeting is premature. We encourage you to work with us to make sure this treaty is fully understood and vetted, and ask that you wait to schedule a business meeting on this treaty until after everyone has testified and members have had a reasonable amount of time to review all the reports, documents, and answers.

Thank you for your patience as we analyze this complex Treaty. We appreciate your assistance with this matter and look forward to working with you to schedule a business meeting at the appropriate time.

Sincerely,

Jan E. Riesel

Jim Claitor

Jim DeMint

James R. Cooper

John Barrasso

Legislative

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