

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 3, 2018

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

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you to express our serious concerns regarding your announced intention to pull the United States out of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

Withdrawal from the INF Treaty, which has been a cornerstone of the European security architecture for over thirty years, was announced without any notice or consultations with the Senate, much less a path toward Senate advice and consent to the withdrawal. This was despite multiple opportunities to explain the rationale for this decision, including a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on arms control and Russia held only a few weeks prior to your announcement. In that hearing, senior officials from the Department of State and the Department of Defense provided no indication that a decision to withdraw was even imminent, nor that U.S. forces envisioned any military operational benefit from near-term withdrawal.

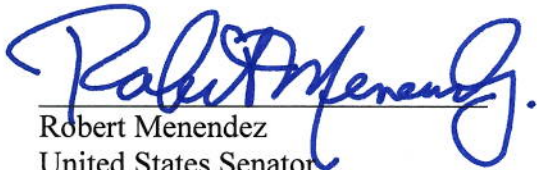
We are concerned about Russia's ongoing violation of the INF Treaty, and believe Russia must return to compliance and fulfil its obligations. While we understand the challenges of getting Russia to reverse its violation of the INF Treaty, the Administration's sudden decision to withdraw unilaterally is a political and geostrategic gift to Russia. It takes the focus away from Russia's transgressions and malign behavior and instead feeds a narrative that the United States is willing to shred our commitments unilaterally without any strategic alternative. Additionally, it allows Russia to expand the production and deployment of its intermediate range missile system, the 9M729, which will further menace Europe.

The United States withdrawal from the INF Treaty also threatens to exacerbate tensions in our relationships with European allies, particularly those in NATO. This decision, taken without coordination with foreign partners, once again shows an eagerness to take unnecessary unilateral actions over the objections of our closest allies to the serious detriment of European security and stability. A spokesperson for EU High Representative Federica Mogherini condemned the U.S. withdrawal from INF, noting "the world doesn't need a new arms race that would benefit no one and on the contrary would bring even more instability." Other leaders from major European allies echoed these sentiments, expressing deep concern that in withdrawing from the INF Treaty the United States was moving toward an unconstrained nuclear arms race with Russia.


Given the lack of strategic forethought and planning apparent in the hasty decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty, we believe it is important for the U.S. government to re-emphasize the integral nature of effective arms control as a part of nuclear deterrence and strategic stability. In fact, our nuclear defense planning and modernization programs are contingent on the arms control architecture the United States has diligently built over many decades. The decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty suggests that you may take a similarly dangerous approach and renege on other key arms control agreements, such as New START, which would only serve to diminish international security further and potentially necessitate vast increases in nuclear spending. We do not believe that the degradation of our arms control agreements that have provided strategic stability for decades serves U.S. security interests or those of our allies and partners.

Moving forward, before taking steps to withdraw or suspend participation in the INF Treaty, we urge you and your administration to engage with Congress on the implications of this step for strategic stability and our relations with European and Asian allies. We also ask you to consider once again the importance of arms control within the context of U.S. and international security.

Sincerely,


Robert Menendez
United States Senator


Jack Reed
United States Senator


Mark R. Warner
United States Senator