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May 13, 2011

The Honorable Rose Gottemoeller
U.S. Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance

The Honorable Sergey I. Kislyak
Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States

Honorable Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador,

We contact you to urge that the United States and Russia continue under the New START treaty the practice from the expired START treaty of releasing to the public aggregate numbers of delivery vehicles and warheads and locations.

Doing anything less would be a serious step back that would undercut international nuclear transparency and efforts to broaden the nuclear arms control process to other countries.

We have studied the treaty text and there is nothing in the provisions that prohibits the two countries from releasing to the public aggregate numbers of delivery vehicles and warheads and locations.

Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of Article VII govern the public release of data.

Paragraph 5 establishes the right of the United States and Russia to release to the public data and information obtained during the implementation of the treaty following agreement within the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC). Each side is free to release information about its own forces without agreement.

Paragraph 6 establishes that specific information, including geographic coordinates relating to data provided in Part Two of the Protocol to the Treaty, unique identifiers on ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers, site diagrams of facilities provided by the Parties pursuant to the Treaty, as well as coastlines and waters diagrams provided by the United States and Russia, may also be released to the public if agreed by the two countries within the framework of the BCC.

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Paragraph 7 establishes that regardless of the requirement pursuant to Paragraph 5 for agreement within BCC about release of information to the public, the United States and Russia may release to the public the aggregate number of deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers; the aggregate number of warheads on deployed ICBMs, warheads on deployed SLBMs, and nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers; and the aggregate number of deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, deployed and non-deployed SLBM launchers, and deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) released to the public twice each year under START did not include diagrams of facilities but included a detailed breakdown of aggregate numbers of delivery vehicles, accountable warheads and locations. The provisions of New START give the United States and the Russian Federation the right to release the same type of information to the public.

Releasing the aggregate numbers and locations to the public during the START treaty greatly contributed to international nuclear transparency, predictability, reassurance, and helped counter rumors and distrust.

Both governments have stated their intention to seek to broaden the nuclear arms control process in the future to include other nuclear weapon states. Involving other nuclear weapon states in the arms control progress will be a lot harder if the two largest nuclear weapon states decide to decrease international transparency of their nuclear forces under New START.

We therefore urge the United States and the Russian Federation to continue the long-held tradition of releasing aggregate numbers of delivery vehicles and warheads and locations under the New START treaty. Any decrease in public release of information compared with START would be a step back.

Sincerely,

Linton Brooks, Senior Advisor, Center for Strategic & International Studies
Former Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, chief U.S. negotiator for the START treaty

Charles Ferguson, President, Federation of American Scientists

Hans M. Kristensen, Director, Nuclear Information Project, Federation of American Scientists

Jack Matlock, Adjunct Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University
Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs on the National Security Council Staff

William J. Perry, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution
Former U.S. Secretary of Defense