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U.S. House of Representatives

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November 4, 2011

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Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

As you continue your important deliberations on reducing the nation's deficit, I wanted to correct some erroneous information that has been provided to you regarding the cost of our nation's nuclear deterrent.

On October 11, 65 Members of Congress sent a letter to each of you claiming that we "spend over \$50 billion a year on the U.S. nuclear arsenal," and calling on "the Super Committee to cut \$20 billion a year, or \$200 billion over the next ten years, from the U.S. nuclear weapons budget." This \$50 billion per year figure is incorrect—and, when coupled with the cuts proposed by the October 11 letter, deeply harmful to a fully informed and accurate debate.

The correct figure is approximately \$21.4 billion per year. Therefore, the requested cuts of \$20 billion per year would effectively amount to unilateral and immediate nuclear disarmament by the United States. These proposed cuts would therefore have, I'm sure you'll agree, catastrophic impacts to our national security and global stability.

As chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, I have direct responsibility for oversight of the nation's nuclear weapons programs. I am therefore intimately familiar with these matters. President Obama's annual "Section 1251 Report" to Congress outlines the administration's plans for sustaining, operating, and modernizing the triad of nuclear delivery vehicles, the stockpile of nuclear warheads, and the research and production infrastructure that support them. The most recent Section 1251 Report outlines an expected spending plan by the Department of Defense of \$125.8 billion over the next ten years, and expected spending by the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration of \$88 billion over ten years. Therefore, the total spending planned for nuclear weapons from FY12 through FY21 is approximately \$214 billion.

Misleading information on this matter has been published by private groups seeking elimination of nuclear weapons, and I believe it is detracting from our debate. On November 2, I conducted a Strategic Forces Subcommittee hearing with a witness panel consisting of the key administration officials responsible for our nuclear weapons. I asked them about the accuracy of the information on nuclear weapons spending published by these groups. This is what our witnesses had to say:

Mr. Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security:

"The 1251 report makes clear that the total for the Department of Defense and NNSA will cost approximately \$200 billion over the next 10 years, not the \$600 plus billion or so that some are claiming."

Dr. James Miller, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy:

"Mr. Chairman, as you know the Section 1251 Report that was submitted by the administration included our best estimate of the total costs [of] the amount of a nuclear enterprise and the delivery systems from FY12 through FY21. That estimate was \$125.8 billion for the delivery systems and about \$88 billion for the NNSA related costs. And my math suggests that that is... a little over \$200 billion over that period, close to \$214 billion."

Referring to the cost estimates published by advocacy groups that described the total cost of nuclear weapons over ten years as \$600 billion or \$700 billion, Dr. Miller said:

"I've had an opportunity to look at some of the materials that were referenced in the cost estimates just before coming over here and I—without giving this more time than it deserves—suffice it to say there was double counting and some rather curious arithmetic involved."

General C. Robert Kehler, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command:

"I, too, agree with the 1251 report and the \$200-plus billion that it documented for the need to both sustain and modernize...the nuclear enterprise over the next 10 years."

The testimony of these officials is clear: planned spending to sustain, operate, and modernize our nuclear forces and their supporting infrastructure is far less than the levels claimed in the letter you received on October 11.

Furthermore, the witnesses made it clear in the hearing that the administration continues to support full funding for these efforts in FY12—even in the face of the tremendous fiscal pressure. Indeed,

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President Obama himself made a strong pledge to Congress in a December 2010 letter to several senators, when he said:

"I recognize that nuclear modernization requires investment for the long-term...That is my commitment to the Congress – that my Administration will pursue these programs and capabilities for as long as I am President."

I hope this information is useful to you and your colleagues on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction as you continue your work. Should you desire any additional information on nuclear weapons spending, programs, and modernization efforts, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL R. TURNER
Chairman, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
House Armed Services Committee

cc: The Honorable James Miller, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
The Honorable Thomas D'Agostino, Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration
General C. Robert Kehler, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command
The Honorable Edward J. Markey
The Honorable Louise M. Slaughter
The Honorable Michael E. Capuano
The Honorable Barney Frank
The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
The Honorable Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
The Honorable Jan D. Schakowsky
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The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
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The Honorable Gregory W. Meeks

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The Honorable Rush D. Holt
The Honorable John Lewis
The Honorable Bob Filner
The Honorable Jim P. McGovern
The Honorable Edolphus Towns
The Honorable Mike M. Honda
The Honorable Lynn C. Woolsey
The Honorable Danny K. Davis
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
The Honorable Sam Farr
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