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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

May 23, 2012

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC

Mr. President,

As you know, there is profound interest on the subject of you and your Administration's efforts to enter into an agreement with the Russian Federation on the subject of U.S. missile defenses. These efforts were the subject of considerable debate during the recent consideration of H.R. 4310, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013.

Specifically, there is still a great deal of concern about what you meant when you were overheard during a recent meeting in Seoul with Russia's former President, Dmitri Medvedev, that after this election, your "last election," you "would have greater flexibility" to make a deal with Russia concerning U.S. missile defenses.

One of your aides, Mr. Nabors, wrote to me stating "[i]t is no secret that this effort [referring to the effort to negotiate an agreement with Russia about U.S. missile defense] will be more complicated during election years in both the United States and Russia." The inference is that the American people may not like the deal your Administration is planning to negotiate. If that is the case, why make it at all?

What is it you and your administration are concerned the American people would object to in such a deal with Russia? Would it be limitations, unilateral or bilateral, with Russia on the speed, range, or geographical deployment of U.S. missile defense interceptors?

Of like concern is your apparent belief that U.S. missile defenses are a hindrance to further U.S. nuclear arms reductions. At present, your Administration is conducting what's known as the NPR Implementation Study, which press reports indicate could recommend up to 80 percent reductions in U.S. nuclear forces, on top of the unilateral U.S. reductions your Administration just negotiated in the New START treaty. This review is being conducted in total secrecy, without any information having been shared with the Congress. Many in Congress, me included, are deeply troubled that you may be willing to further trade or give away U.S. missile defenses to get closer to your goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

You may be able to put to rest such concerns if you would simply direct your Administration to share with the Congress the draft agreements that have been offered to Russia. For example, according to President Putin in a March 2, 2012 interview with *RIA-Novosti*:

“They [referring to your Administration] made some proposals to us which we virtually agreed to and asked them to get them down on paper...They made a proposal to us just during the talks, they told us: we would offer you this, this and that. We did not expect this, but I said: we agree. Please put it down on paper...We were waiting for their answer for two months. We did not get it, and then our American partners withdrew their own proposals, saying: no, it’s impossible,” he added.

This is not the first such reference to a secret deal the Obama Administration offered to Russia. The Russian newspaper *Kommersant* reported last October that it obtained the copy of a deal that was to be agreed to at the May 2011 G8 summit in Deauville, France.

Mr. President, the unwillingness of your Administration to provide copies of these draft agreements to the Congress does nothing to resolve concerns about just what your Administration is prepared to offer to Russia regarding U.S. missile defenses after your “last election.”

After all, it was not that long ago that your Administration unilaterally withdrew from the plan to build the European Third Site in Poland and the Czech Republic just to earn goodwill from Russian Presidents Putin and Medvedev during the negotiations of the New START treaty. Additionally, your signing statement earlier this year that you would treat section 1244 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 as non-binding, is troubling in that this provision, which you signed into law, only seeks to protect classified U.S. missile defense information from disclosure to Russia or those to whom it proliferates, like the Islamic Republic of Iran and Syria.

I encourage you to direct your Administration to provide to the Congress the draft agreements provided to the Russian Federation. Such transparency would be the best way to resolve concerns in the Congress about your statement to President Medvedev – “[t]his is my last election...After my election I have more flexibility” – about your intentions for missile defense. And, I can see no reason why you wouldn’t provide to the elected representatives of the American people that which you and your Administration have provided to President Putin, President Medvedev and others in their government.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Turner
Chairman, Strategic Forces Subcommittee
House Armed Services Committee

cc: The Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton, Secretary of State
Mr. Thomas Donilon, Assistant to the President for National Security