

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 13, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As you continue your work to finalize a conference agreement on the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we write in strong support of provisions included in the Senate bill to authorize the administration's FY17 nuclear modernization request.

The effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent is rooted in the flexibility of the nuclear triad, its reliability, and its ability to stay ahead of the capabilities of our adversaries. North Korea's recent nuclear test and its ongoing efforts to develop the ability to strike the United States and our regional allies should remind us that our adversaries are as determined as ever to advance their nuclear capabilities.

We recently called upon Secretary Carter and Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James to provide an assurance that the Department of Defense (DoD) continue to advance existing modernization programs as expeditiously as possible, including approving critical milestones for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program and the Long Range Stand Off (LRSO) cruise missile program. We note that the Department subsequently approved Milestone A for both the GBSD and LRSO programs.

Moving forward, we have also called upon the DoD to preserve a robust program of nuclear modernization across the next five-year defense plan, and to continue articulating the value of strategic deterrence and the need for nuclear modernization in light of a wide array of strategic challenges facing the United States and our allies.

However, it is also critical for Congress to do its part. We appreciate your ongoing work to ensure our nation retains a safe, reliable and effective deterrent for decades to come, and again express our strong support for those efforts within the FY17 NDAA.

Sincerely,



JON TESTER
U.S. Senator



JOHN HOEVEN
U.S. Senator



HEIDI HEITKAMP
U.S. Senator



STEVE DAINES
U.S. Senator



MICHAEL ENZI
U.S. Senator



JOHN BARRASSO
U.S. Senator