

10 November, 2010

Hon. Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Harry and Mitch:

As former members of the U.S. Senate long interested in the national security and committed to our institution's unique responsibility for ensuring it, we wanted to express our serious concern about an initiative that would have ominous implications for both: The idea of seeking the Senate's advice and consent to the New START Treaty during the coming lame-duck session.

As you know, the Framers charged the Senate with a singular and momentous responsibility. Mindful that international treaties could have the effect of impinging upon or otherwise altering the Constitution, they required that the ratification of such accords receive the Senate's advice and consent. So solemn was this duty, so necessary the quality-control it was meant to provide, that fully two-thirds of the Senate must concur for a treaty to be ratified.

Such arrangements were clearly designed with the expectation that Senators would take the time to deliberate carefully the approval of treaties. That is most especially true of nuclear arms control agreements like the New START Treaty that could materially affect – and potentially seriously diminish – the common defense of this country and its people.

Never before in the history of the U.S. Senate has the ratification of a strategic arms treaty been considered in a lame-duck session. This precedent should be followed with respect to New START, as well.

That is so for a number of reasons. For one thing, the treaty has serious problems – for example, it would leave the Russians with far more nuclear weapons (when their ten-to-one advantage in “tactical” arms is factored in). This accord will also impinge upon our missile defenses and it cannot be adequately verified. And the Senate cannot possibly fulfill its responsibilities to evaluate these and other shortcomings with New START in the short time available during the coming lame-duck session.

Finally, given the far-reaching implications of the New START Treaty, it would be wholly inappropriate for a Senate made up of many members whose replacements have just been

elected to deny the latter the opportunity to advise and consent to an accord that will be implemented on *their* watch. It is hard to imagine, moreover, that the three Senators who are expected to be seated in time for the lame-duck session will be in a position to make informed decisions about this treaty. That is especially the case since, in such circumstances, they would be denied the opportunity to participate in or closely study the hearings on the treaty held to date, let alone the more comprehensive and balanced reviews that are in order but have yet to be conducted.

For all these reasons, we call on you to ensure that the controversial New START Treaty is considered in accordance with the regular order in the course of the 112th Congress.

Sincerely,

Bill Armstrong, U.S.S.

Rick Santorum, U.S.S.

Jim Talent, U.S.S.

Norm Coleman, U.S.S.

Conrad Burns, U.S.S.

Slade Gorton, U.S.S.

Hank Brown, U.S.S.

Malcolm Wallop, U.S.S.

George Allen, U.S.S.

Roger Jepsen, U.S.S.

Don Nickles, U.S.S.

Steve Symms, U.S.S.

Bob Smith, U.S.S.