

August 22, 2019

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chair
House Armed Services Committee

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chair
Senate Armed Services Committee

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee

Dear Members of Congress:

As religious leaders, we write to offer reflections on provisions related to nuclear disarmament and the New START Treaty in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Our concern for nuclear weapons is rooted in our faith's commitment to protect human life and dignity. The full body of U.S. bishops generically reiterated in 2015: "The use of weapons of mass destruction or other means of warfare that do not distinguish between civilians and soldiers is fundamentally immoral. The United States has a responsibility to work to reverse the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and to reduce its own reliance on weapons of mass destruction by pursuing progressive nuclear disarmament." Similarly, the National Association of Evangelicals Board of Directors expresses its "deep concern about the threat of a nuclear holocaust and urges our national leaders to rededicate their efforts to obtain a meaningful arms control agreement that will scale down the nuclear arms race."

President Ronald Reagan declared in his inaugural address of 1985, "We seek the elimination one day of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth." The United States and Russia possess over 90% of the world's nuclear warheads. This fact makes it particularly important for our nations to build on the New START Treaty and its robust verification measures in reducing nuclear armaments. Language supported by members of both parties was incorporated into the House version of the NDAA (Sec. 1240A - Reports Relating to the New START Treaty). There is the sense of Congress supporting extension of the New START Treaty unless Russia is in material breach of the Treaty or the Treaty is replaced with a more robust one with equal or greater constraints, transparency and verification measures. There are also a number of reporting requirements that will contribute to informed national dialogue and appropriate Congressional oversight. As NDAA (HR 2500 and S 1790) moves to Conference Committee, we hope this language will be carefully considered and incorporated into the final bill.

Please be assured of our prayers as you work on prudent nuclear disarmament measures related to the extension of the New START Treaty and other steps toward a world without nuclear weapons.

Sincerely yours,



(The Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
Chairman, Committee on
International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Rev. Dr. Leith Anderson
President
National Association of Evangelicals