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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

August 1, 2007

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The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Samuel Bodman
Secretary of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice, and Secretary Bodman:

This letter is in response to the Joint Statement issued by the Secretaries of Defense, State and Energy entitled "National Security and Nuclear Weapons: Maintaining Deterrence in the 21st Century" delivered to Congress on July, 24, 2007. We are troubled by the implications of the statement and want to reiterate our policy concerns expressed in the House-passed Energy and Water Development bill for fiscal year 2008. We emphasize that these concerns, and our specific requirements for a post-Cold War reassessment of our nuclear stockpile and weapons complex, are not new and have been our bipartisan position for the past several Congresses.

As Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee that provides funding for the U.S. nuclear weapons program, we are responsible for making the funding decisions that maintain the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile. In the President's fiscal year 2008 budget request, the Administration put forward an aggressive program for developing a new nuclear weapon under the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) proposal. Our bipartisan response to that proposal was clearly articulated in the House-passed fiscal year 2008 report language. In short, the House language stated that it is premature at this time to develop a new nuclear weapon under the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) proposal and directed the Executive Branch to develop a comprehensive post-Cold War nuclear strategy that can garner bipartisan support and be adopted by the Administration and Congress to guide our future nuclear weapons policy decisions.

Despite the dramatic international shifts since the end of the Cold War, including the breakup of the Soviet Union and emergent proliferation concerns with rogue states, the United States has yet to develop a modern nuclear weapons policy that addresses the changed global circumstances. The House language spelled out a three-part planning sequence necessary to develop a revised post Cold War nuclear weapons strategy, including: (1) a comprehensive nuclear defense strategy based on projected global threats; (2) clearly defined military requirements for the size and composition of the nuclear stockpile derived from the nuclear defense strategy; and (3) alignment of the military requirements to existing and estimated future needs of the nuclear weapons complex.

Although the transmittal letter signed by the three Secretaries described the Joint Statement as "the U.S. national security policy with respect to nuclear weapons," the Joint Statement reads as a description of the status quo: it failed to address any of the key issues raised in the fiscal year 2008 House-passed bill and report. Instead of a serious attempt to meet the planning requirements for the future nuclear weapons stockpile and nuclear weapons production complex, the document was a reiteration of the Administration's budget justification for the Reliable Replacement Warhead and Complex 2030 initiative. In fact, the Joint Statement goes so far as to imply that RRW is the only available option for addressing the concerns about the existing stockpile of legacy nuclear weapons. Particularly troubling is the direct link between a resumption of nuclear testing and the provision of funding for RRW:

"Delays on RRW also raise the prospect of having to return to underground nuclear testing to certify existing weapons."

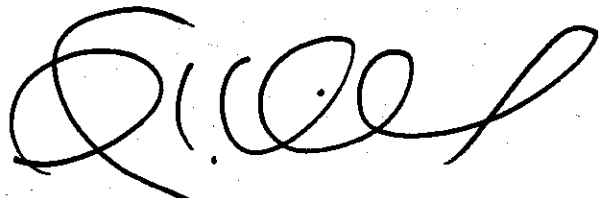
It is irresponsible for the Administration to make such an assertion. The implications that such a direct linkage between the need to resume underground testing and failure to fund the fiscal year 2008 RRW request is incautious. There is no record of congressional testimony or reports sent to Congress by the Administration claiming that the safety, security, or reliability of the existing legacy stockpile is on a performance cliff such that a resumption of testing to verify performance of the warheads would be a necessity.

We are disappointed the Administration has dismissed the higher-level policy concerns raised during the course of our hearings this spring and the requirements included in the House-passed bill and report. Although, we welcome an open and candid discussion on the role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. national defense strategy, it is time for the Administration to move past empty rhetoric and enter into a constructive dialog with Congress on this vital issue.

Sincerely,



David L. Hobson
Ranking Minority Member



Peter J. Visclosky
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development