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An Independent Nonprofit Aerospace Organization

December 14, 2015

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members,

The United States Air Force has provided the capability for long range bombers with cruise missiles to hold targets at risk in complicated air defense environments since the Cold War. No administration, either Republican or Democrat, has sought to diminish the capability provided by the combination of long range bombers coupled with air-launched cruise missiles. All have seen the importance of stand-off and deterrence, and have sustained this national requirement.

Over the past six years, the need to improve and continue the US Long Range Stand-Off (LRSO) capability has been extensively analyzed by the Department of Defense (DOD), and this administration has also concluded it is a necessary capability. Congress affirmed this decision in the Resolution of Ratification while passing the New START Treaty in 2010 and has funded the missile and warhead every year since, supporting DOD's efforts to develop this next-generation capability. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter recently testified that an effective, modern, safe, secure nuclear deterrent is absolutely critical, and the highest priority for DOD.

US capability needs and our allies' concerns are both addressed by LRSO capability. There is no question the deterrence provided by United States nuclear forces assures allies and provides them confidence in the ability of the United States to deter attacks.

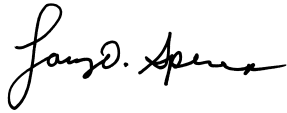
The current stand-off capability of the Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) is essential to the continued nuclear deterrent role of the bomber leg of the Nuclear Triad. Funding its replacement, LRSO, is particularly important given the advanced air defenses of our adversaries. Without a sustained bomber stand-off capability enabled by a modern cruise missile, the bomber leg of the triad will be increasingly at risk.

We do not agree with the recent suggestion that cancellation of the current US plan to buy 1000 nuclear-capable air-launched cruise missiles will inspire other countries to stand down their nuclear forces and lead to a global ban, and there are no signs the long-established military requirement for a nuclear-capable

standoff cruise missile has diminished. Instead, maintaining a strong LRSO capability provides the most non-proliferation incentive by convincing allied countries they do not need to develop their own nuclear weapons.

The LRSO-enabled bomber in the nuclear Triad provides the President with a flexible and credible demonstration of US willingness to execute military force when necessary to counter adversaries around the world who choose to threaten our security interests. This capability, along with a modern intercontinental ballistic missile force and submarine-launched ballistic missiles, provide the solid nuclear deterrence we have enjoyed for decades as well as critical flexibility in the current strategic environment. Congress must stay on track to fully fund LRSO.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry O. Spencer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" being more prominent.

Larry O. Spencer
President
Air Force Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Barrett". The signature is more stylized and compact than the one on the left, with the last name "Barrett" being more prominent.

Mark A. Barrett
Executive Vice President
Air Force Association