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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
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Dear Mr. President:

Once again you and your Administration have offered up America's missile defense shield as a bargaining chip. Just this weekend, Secretary of State John Kerry flew to China and offered to remove our recently added defenses in the Pacific to encourage them to counter the increasingly belligerent tone and actions by North Korea. This is the same failed strategy that your Administration offered up to the Russians in exchanged for reining in Iran. If it failed to work then, how could it possibly work now?

At a time when our missile defense system is the only defense that we have to the threat from North Korea, and the emerging threats from Iran, I am greatly concerned that your missile defense strategy is languishing, resulting in increased risk to the United States, increased cost to the taxpayer and needless alienation of our allies. Our enemies around the world have sought nuclear weapons and missile technology, yet your Administration has consistently reduced missile defense funding, abandoned previous Bush Administration strategies that sought to respond to these emerging threats and has compromised the implementation of missile defense programs, while seeking elusive Russian approval of the right of the United States to defend itself.

Your Administration has most recently abandoned your own missile defense strategy, known as the Phased Adaptive Approach, in favor of a stopgap measure of finally placing the additional ground-based missiles in Alaska that you had previously cancelled. Although I welcome the Administration finally completing the missile field which you attempted to close, this has me even more concerned that your Administration has no plan to reasonably respond to the real and foreseeable threats from North Korea and Iran.

Unproven Technologies

From your initial announcement of the Phased Adaptive Approach, I was gravely concerned that your new missile defense strategy relied upon unproven technologies. The SM3-2B missile, which still does not exist and upon which you based defense of the United States in 2020, was acknowledged by then-Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) as a "paper system." Initial analysis today suggests that the SM3-2B will not be available within the time period you specified and that the missile would be unsuitable for the defense of the continental United States. The previous U.S. missile defense strategy relied upon proven technologies. Your shift to unproven technologies greatly increased the cost and risk associated with responding to emerging threats and has resulted in needless delay.

Abandoning our Allies

In addition to placing the United States at greater risk, your haphazard approach to a missile defense

strategy has significantly alienated the United States' European allies. Your Administration's abrupt cancelation of the Bush Administration missile defense commitments, and now the abrupt cancellation of your own Missile Defense commitments, have left our allies abandoned in the face of domestic criticism and Russian opposition. Our relationship with the Polish government has yet to fully recover from the affront of abruptly abandoning the missile defense commitments to that key ally. I am concerned that your Administration may repeat the same relationship-straining affront with our Romanian allies.

When your Administration clumsily rolled out the abandonment of the Bush Administration's planned Third Site, many voiced concern that your Administration did not value the importance of a commitment made by the United States. Your Administration responded that commitments made by the United States could still be relied upon; insisting that the Bush plan was the wrong plan. Now we have the Obama Administration having walked away from the Missile Defense commitments of the Obama Administration. I am concerned that your Administration may have made it more difficult to obtain future cooperation for important missile defense deployment and implementation.

Using our Nation's Security as a Gambling Chip

Your Administration has repeatedly downplayed the emerging threats from Iran and North Korea. In adopting the Phased Adaptive Approach, your Administration publicly stated that the potential ICBM threat from North Korea and Iran would not arrive until 2020, providing ample time for the invention of an SM3-2B missile. The intelligence community has never walked away from its initial public assessment that North Korea and/or Iran could represent a threat to the continental United States from ICBM attack as early as 2015, and possibly sooner. Not surprisingly, new unclassified estimates indicate that today the United States may be at risk from such an attack, contrary to your Administration's assertion that the threat is "slow to emerge."

Your Administration's policy was viewed as a gamble then and the American people should not be shocked that your Administration has now admitted as much. Dr. James Miller, Undersecretary for Defense Policy, recently stated on behalf of your Administration, "I think it was – at the time, based on the intelligence assessment that we had, it was a good bet." A bet? No Administration should be gambling with our national security. I am concerned that your administration does not recognize that we have no margin of error in responding to the potential threats of a nuclear and ICBM armed North Korea and Iran.

Underfunding of Missile Defense

Your Administration has consistently underfunded missile defense. While using the pursuit of the unproven technologies of the Phased Adaptive Approach as an excuse to underfund Ground Based Missile Defense, your Administration also underfunded the Phased Adaptive Approach. The House of Representatives has consistently sought to add funding to the missile defense programs, while your Administration and the Democrat-controlled Senate have repeatedly cut and reduced funding. As a result of this underfunding, these programs will now experience exorbitant cost increases to implement the Bush Administration's missile defense strategy in Alaska that you had previously abandoned.

Russian and Chinese Approval of Defense of the Homeland

In abandoning proven technologies to protect the homeland and in abandoning our allies, your Administration routinely cites its attempts to achieve an agreement with the Russians concerning United States missile defense. Our missile defense systems or policies should not be used as bargaining chips in pursuit of an elusive Russia reset policy. In addition, our ability to protect ourselves from the emerging threats of North Korea and Iran should not be subject to Russian approval. This policy has failed to engage Russia and has failed to dissuade Iran. So why is your Administration now repeating a failed policy initiative by offering to China the same deal in trying to dissuade North Korea?

No Quid Pro Quo

Although your Administration claims to be pursuing negotiations with the Russians concerning missile defense, no apparent achievements on behalf of the United States are evident. However, Russian demands appear to be winning. Frequently, the Administration states that you did not receive any quid pro quo for abandoning the Bush Administration's Ground Based Missile Defense site intended for Poland. I agree, since your Administration appears to have received no concessions from the Russians for abandoning the Polish site. Of concern is that, similarly, your Administration appears not to have received any concessions from the Russians for the announcement that Phase Four of the Phased Adaptive Approach has been abandoned. So far, your Administration has abandoned both the Bush plan and the Obama plan for forward-basing missile defense architecture intended for the protection of the United States. And yet, your Administration continues to negotiate with the Russians and now has added the Chinese. I am greatly concerned that the United States interests are not being served by your Administration continuing these unproductive and poorly executed negotiations that will significantly reduce our missile defense capability. I ask that you immediately inform congress of the substance of your offers to the Russians and the Chinese to abandon and weaken our missile defense systems.

A Failed Strategy

Mr. President, your recent announcement to abandon Phase 4 of the Phased Adaptive Approach leaves the United States without an articulated missile defense strategy. This deficiency is compounded by the effects of the Administration's clumsy handling of our relationship with our NATO allies. I ask you to address the damage done to our relationships with our NATO allies as a result of your Administration's failed missile defense strategies.

In addition, I am concerned that the Administration's failure to recognize the significance of the emerging threats from North Korea and Iran places the United States at risk. I ask that you immediately inform Congress of the effects of the abandoned and failed Phased Adaptive Approach and of your plan to complete the Bush Administration's Alaska missile defense strategy. Further, since completion of the Alaska Missile Field alone is insufficient for full protection of the United States, I am calling upon you to support the site selection and completion of an East Coast Missile Field to complement the Alaska site.

Mr. President, the world is not becoming a safer place. Offering to weaken our defenses in hopes of irrational nations suspending their weapons programs is not an effective security strategy. Simply put – these offers are of greater benefit to our adversaries and to the detriment of the American people.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress