

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

March 31, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to urge your administration to increase the dismantlement rate of retired nuclear weapons.

We now have a backlog of retired nuclear weapons awaiting dismantlement that will take well over a decade to eliminate, and this backlog will only grow as your arms control efforts, including the follow-on agreement to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), take hold. Accelerating the rate of nuclear dismantlement must be a priority, as it both strengthens nuclear security at home and advances our non-proliferation agenda abroad.

The bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States concluded in its final report that “terrorist use of a nuclear weapon against the United States or its friends and allies is more likely than deliberate use by a state.”<sup>1</sup> Our priority, therefore, should be to reduce the size and vulnerability of our nuclear arsenal such that it maintains a minimum credible deterrent for as long as necessary. Dismantlement is an essential part of this effort, enabling the safe removal and processing of sensitive nuclear material to neutralize its explosive potential.

Last April in Prague you pledged to “take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons.” Our nuclear dismantlement program is a necessary component of any reduction in our arsenal, offering irreversible proof to the international community of our commitment to disarmament. The accelerated disposition of weapon components, machinery, and special nuclear material is an important symbolic step that will help us build momentum around your non-proliferation agenda in advance of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference later this spring.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has the capacity to increase the rate of dismantlement. The NNSA informed our offices that without building any new facilities, increased funding alone could help increase the dismantlement rate by up to 50% over the fiscal year 2010 projections for eliminating the backlog. We request your support for shifting a greater

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, *America's Strategic Posture*, p. 8 (2009).

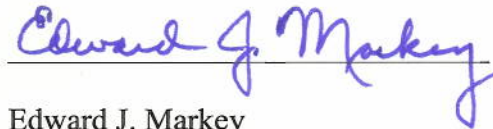
proportion of the NNSA's significant funding increase in your budget request towards increasing the rate of dismantlement.

We thank you for the leadership that you have shown on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation issues, and urge you to consider giving greater priority to the dismantlement process as part of your nuclear security agenda.

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
Member of Congress

CC:

Thomas D'Agostino  
Administrator  
National Nuclear Security Administration