

U.S. Rep. Gallagher, Colleagues: Demand clarity on discussions over ground-based missiles

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – As first reported by [Defense News](#), Rep. Mike Gallagher led a group of House Republicans in writing to President Biden to demand answers about whether the administration is considering re-imposing limits on U.S. ground-based missiles in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. The letter comes after China and Russia issued a joint statement calling on the U.S. to, “abandon its plans to deploy intermediate-range and shorter-range ground-based missiles in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe,” and after U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman recently said that putting restrictions on ground-based fires was “worth considering.”

In part, the members write, “In light of this broad and bipartisan support for ground-based missiles, it is unconscionable that your administration may be considering re-imposing limits on American ground-based missiles. Given Russia’s extensive track record of cheating on its INF Treaty commitments, there is zero —repeat zero—reason to expect Russia would comply with a new agreement. As a result, any future bilateral limitations would in practice represent unilateral disarmament.”

The letter, which was also signed by Reps. Mike Rogers (R-AL), Michael McCaul (R-TX), Michael Turner (R-OH), Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Doug Lamborn (R-CA), Vicky Hartzler (R-MO), Liz Cheney (R-WY), Mark Green (R-TN), Scott Franklin (R-FL), Pat Fallon (R-TX), also requested answers to a number of questions, including:

- Considering Russia’s long-standing violation of its commitments under the INF Treaty, what evidence is there that Russia would abide any more closely to a follow-on agreement?
- Have you proposed or will you propose to the Russian Federation, any limitations on ground-launched missiles of INF ranges in the Indo-Pacific? If so, have you asked the People’s Republic of China to join in these negotiations?

- How will the Army and the Marine Corps, whose modernization goals both rely on the development of long-range precision fires, be impacted by any new or modified INF Treaty? How would these consequences impact the ability of the Department of Defense to meet the forthcoming National Defense Strategy?

Click [HERE](#) to view the letter, or read the text below:

Dear President Biden,

In a deeply troubling joint statement on February 4th, Russia and China called on the United States to “abandon its plans to deploy intermediate-range and shorter-range ground-based missiles in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe.” This was not the first time that the Russian side has raised intermediate-range missiles as a potential bargaining chip amid their ongoing and renewed aggression in Ukraine.

Unfortunately, it is far from clear that this outrageous demand will be met with the outright dismissal that it deserves. During a January 10th press briefing on the U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman stated, “The Russians addressed the concerns that we had that led to the ultimate demise of the [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF)] treaty...that is something worth considering and seeing whether, in fact, reciprocal actions can be taken that increase our security.” We are gravely concerned that any attempt to resurrect the INF Treaty or reimpose limitations on ground-launched missiles would catastrophically undermine American national security, encourage Russian aggression, and advance a flawed view of security that sacrifices peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

As you know, on December 4, 2018, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that Russia was in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty. This finding was supported by six consecutive annual warnings from the State Department, beginning under the Obama-Biden administration in 2014, that Russia was in violation of its obligations under the Treaty. The material breach determination was unanimously supported by our NATO allies, who concluded: “Russia has developed and fielded a missile system, the 9M729, which violates the INF Treaty and poses significant risks to Euro-Atlantic security. We strongly support the finding of the United States that Russia is in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty.”

Following the material breach determination, Secretary Pompeo provided six months’ notice of the United States’ intent to withdraw from the Treaty. On August 2, 2019, the United States formally withdrew from the Treaty. Given the Russian material breach, this outcome was both overdue and inevitable. Under the Treaty, the United States was pricing itself out of the fires competition by unilaterally

limiting its ability to field ground-launched missiles, particularly since 95% of the Chinese ballistic and cruise missile stockpile fell into INF ranges.

The 2021 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community highlighted the danger posed by Chinese long-range capabilities to U.S. and allied forces:

“The PLA Navy and PLA Air Force are the largest in the region and continue to field advanced long-range platforms that improve China’s ability to project power. The PLA Rocket Force’s highly accurate short-, medium-, and intermediate-range conventional systems are capable of holding US and allied bases in the region at risk.”

Consequently, in the Treaty’s aftermath, ground-based missiles of all ranges have played a critical role in the nation’s future defense plans, including under your administration. Significantly, “Long-Range Fire Capabilities” were one of only ten defense priorities explicitly highlighted in your administration’s FY 2022 discretionary budget overview. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth has singled out long-range precision fires as the service’s highest modernization priority, citing “the need to address the Anti-Access/Area Denial challenges that we face in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific.”

Operational commanders are united behind the urgent need for long-range fire capabilities. In March 2021 testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, then-Indo-Pacom chief Admiral Phil Davidson outlined his requirement for “highly survivable, precision strike fires featuring increased quantities of ground-based missiles and improved air and long-range naval fires capable of ranges of over 500 km.” As Admiral Davidson further emphasized in the hearing:

“The expansion of ground-based fires enables the maneuver of our maritime and air forces because what you get is the requirement for much more intense search for offensive capability out of any adversaries’ intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance network. We want to make our adversaries work harder to find our stuff and defend against it. That’s what deterrence is about, it’s about imposing costs.”

General Tod Wolters of U.S. European Command agrees. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in April 2021, General Wolters called long-range precision fires “tremendously important” to his ability to maintain deterrence in Europe and praised the Marine Corps’ Long-Range Precision Fires and the Army’s PrSM system as “great contributions” to his operational flexibility as a Combatant Commander.

A major bipartisan report from the Center for a New American Security, pursuant to Sec. 1254 of the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, found the U.S. must “Develop and deploy mobile and relocatable land-based launchers for long-range

cruise, ballistic, and hypersonic weapons in the Indo-Pacific.” The report’s lead author, Ely Ratner, served as your Deputy National Security Advisor during the Obama-Biden administration and currently is your Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs.

In light of this broad and bipartisan support for ground-based missiles, it is unconscionable that your administration may be considering re-imposing limits on American ground-based missiles. Given Russia’s extensive track record of cheating on its INF Treaty commitments, there is zero—repeat zero—reason to expect Russia would comply with a new agreement. As a result, any future bilateral limitations would in practice represent unilateral disarmament.

If extended to the Indo-Pacific, these limitations would render inoperable the Marine Corps’ new Force Design, which is entirely predicated on the ability of small teams of Marines to deploy long-range fires in contested littorals. They would also cancel the Army’s top modernization priority as described by Secretary Wormuth. The consequences would be deadly. Without the ability to amass large numbers of distributed and affordable missiles, a future war in the Indo-Pacific would be over before it began. It is not an exaggeration to say peace in the Indo-Pacific—not to mention the lives of countless American service members—hangs in the balance. Given the urgency of the situation, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

- Considering Russia’s long-standing violation of its commitments under the INF Treaty, what evidence is there that Russia would abide any more closely to a follow-on agreement?
- If Russia does agree to geographical limitations on ground-launched missiles, what verification and compliance measures will you propose to monitor and enforce such agreement?
- Will Russia be required to verifiably eliminate its INF-range missiles, launchers, and other associated equipment?
- Have you proposed or will you propose to the Russian Federation, any limitations on ground-launched missiles of INF ranges in the Indo-Pacific? If so, have you asked the People’s Republic of China to join in these negotiations?
- Prior to tabling this proposal in Geneva, what European allies did you consult on this proposal?
- Have you consulted with allies in East Asia on any decision to limit the deployment of ground-based missiles?
- Will you commit to bringing any agreement involving limitations on ground-launched missiles to the Senate for ratification?
- How will the Army and the Marine Corps, whose modernization goals both rely

on the development of long-range precision fires, be impacted by any new or modified INF Treaty? How would these consequences impact the ability of the Department of Defense to meet the forthcoming National Defense Strategy?

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter of American national security. We respectfully request your prompt reply by February 25, 2022.