

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2023

The Honorable Jake Sullivan
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear APNSA Sullivan:

We write to you today to follow-up on our classified correspondence from earlier this year and to further highlight concerning reports that Russia's state-owned nuclear energy corporation, Rosatom, is helping the People's Republic of China (PRC) acquire enough weapons grade plutonium to fuel its strategic nuclear breakout.¹ Beyond fueling the PRC's strategic nuclear breakout, which in 2021 then-U.S. Strategic Command commander Admiral Charles Richard called "breathhtaking",² Rosatom helps fuel Putin's war efforts in Ukraine. We call on the Administration to view this cooperation for what it is, a direct threat to U.S. security and more evidence that Russia and China are working in tandem against the United States. The Administration should use all tools at its disposal to stop Rosatom and the PRC's dangerous cooperation.

Russia's role in China's nuclear energy program is well documented. Rosatom opened an office in Beijing in 2016 and partnered extensively with the PRC's China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) on major projects, worth billions.³ On May 19, 2021, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin tuned in via video link to witness the commencement ceremony of two of the countries' major nuclear energy cooperation projects, the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant and Xudabao Nuclear Power Plant.⁴

Russia and the PRC's nuclear cooperation goes much farther than just civilian projects. Rosatom now appears to be supplying equipment and highly enriched

¹ Jonathan Tirone, *China's Imports of Russian Uranium Spark Fear of New Arms Race*, BLOOMBERG, Feb. 28, 2023.

² Mark B. Schneider, *The Number of Chinese Nuclear Warheads*, REAL CLEAR DEFENSE, April 27, 2021.

³ *Rosatom opens offices in Beijing and Dubai*, NUCLEAR ENGINEERING INTERNATIONAL, Apr. 12, 2016, available at <https://www.neimagazine.com/news/rosatom-opens-offices-in-beijing-and-dubai-4862520>

⁴ *Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin Witness the Ground-breaking Ceremony of China-Russia Nuclear Energy Cooperation Project*, EMBASSY OF PRC, May 19, 2021, available at http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgyw/202105/t20210520_9014771.htm.

uranium (HEU) for the PRC's CFR-600 sodium-cooled fast breeder nuclear reactors,⁵ which will produce plutonium, fissile material critical to the PRC's nuclear breakout. Russian deliveries of HEU to the PRC are slated to begin this year.⁶ The Department of Defense's 2022 report to Congress on the Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China noted the key role that increased weapons-grade plutonium production is key to the PRC nuclear program, stating: "The PRC is also supporting this expansion by increasing its capacity to produce and separate plutonium by constructing fast breeder reactors and reprocessing facilities." The DoD report also cites the CFR-600 reactors, and notes that each will be capable of producing "enough plutonium for dozens of nuclear warheads annually."⁷ This buildup puts the PRC in violation of Article VI of the NPT, requiring states to make good faith efforts to cease an arms race and to engage in good faith arms control negotiations. Make no mistake, the PRC and Russia's actions constitute an acceleration of their on-going arms race.⁸

Rosatom's threatening activities are not only limited to helping the PRC develop nuclear weapons. There are also credible reports that "Russia's state nuclear power conglomerate has been working to supply the Russian arms industry with components, technology and raw materials for missile(s)" enabling the Russian military to commit crimes against humanity by murdering Ukrainian civilians.⁹ Specifically, a letter from a Rosatom department chief, dated October 2022 shows the state nuclear company offering to provide goods to Russian military units and to Russian weapons manufacturers that are under sanctions.¹⁰

Despite these malign activities, Rosatom's position in the global market is only getting stronger. The longer we wait to act, the more difficult it will be to address Rosatom's nefarious and malign dealings.¹¹ Putin uses these funds to fund his war machine and keep his favorite weapons programs on schedule. In short, every dollar and euro that Rosatom brings in directly finances the death and destruction we see in Ukraine, China's nuclear weapon expansion, and is a direct threat to the American way of life.

⁵ David Vergun, *Russia Reportedly Supplying Enriched Uranium to China*, U.S. DEP'T OF DEFENSE, Mar. 8, 2023, available at <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3323381/russia-reportedly-supplying-enriched-uranium-to-china/>.

⁶ *Rosatom eyes supplying nuclear fuel for China's new fast neutron reactor*, RUSSIAN NEWS AGENCY, Jan. 10, 2019, available at <https://tass.com/economy/1039341>.

⁷ China Military Power Report, *2022 Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, U.S. DEP'T OF DEFENSE, available at <https://www.defense.gov/CMPR/>

⁸ Brooke Singman, *Top House Republicans urge Biden to create strategy to combat China's nuclear build-up*, FOX NEWS, Jun. 8, 2021.

⁹ Catherine Belton, *Russia's state nuclear company aids war effort, leading to calls for sanctions*, THE WASHINGTON POST, Jan. 20, 2023.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Jonathan Tirone, *Russia's Grip on Nuclear-Power Trade Is Only Getting Stronger*, BLOOMBERG, Feb. 14, 2023.

To this end, we were heartened to see the Administration take steps to sanction three Rosatom subsidiaries on February 24, 2023.¹² Additionally, we implore more senior administration officials to speak out publicly against this behavior, such as Assistant Secretary of Defense Plumb did when he stated "It's very troubling to see Russia and China cooperating on this...They may have talking points around it, but there's no getting around the fact that breeder reactors are plutonium, and plutonium is for weapons. So, I think the [Defense] Department is concerned. And of course, it matches our concerns about China's increased expansion of its nuclear forces as well, because you need more plutonium for more weapons."¹³

These actions do not begin to scratch the surface as to what needs to be done, however. Stronger action is required and it needs a whole-of-government approach. We ask that you use all the tools at your disposal, such as the full application of sanctions, export controls, and diplomacy, to stop Putin from using Rosatom to challenge U.S. interests across the globe.

We appreciate your attention to this important issue and request a briefing on the administration's Rosatom strategy no later than April 17, 2023.

Sincerely,



Mike D. Rogers
Chairman
Armed Services Committee



Michael McCaul
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee



Michael R. Turner
Chairman
Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence

CC: Secretary of State, The Honorable Antony Blinken

CC: Secretary of Defense, The Honorable Lloyd Austin

CC: Secretary of The Treasury, The Honorable Janet Yellen

CC: Secretary of Energy, The Honorable Jennifer Granholm

CC: Secretary of Commerce, The Honorable Gina Raimondo

CC: Director of National Intelligence, The Honorable Avril Haines

¹² Fact Sheet, *The United States Takes Sweeping Actions on the One Year Anniversary of Russia's War Against Ukraine*, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, available at <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-takes-sweeping-actions-on-the-one-year-anniversary-of-russias-war-against-ukraine/>.

¹³ [Note 5](#), *supra*.