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H.R. 872

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A LETTER IN WRITING EXPRESSING HIS DEEP CONCERN ABOUT H.R. 872, THE "NATIONAL SECURITY REVITALIZATION ACT".

FEBRUARY 14, 1995.—Referred jointly to the Committees on International Relations, National Security, and Intelligence (Permanent Select) and ordered to be printed

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THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, February 14, 1995.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I am writing to express my deep concern about H.R. 872, the "National Security Revitalization Act". This bill represents an assault on the authority of the President as Commander in Chief and, by destroying the capacity for U.N. peacekeeping, would force us into a choice between acting alone or doing nothing when international crisis arise.

The bill contains numerous flawed provisions that are simply unacceptable.

First, by effectively eliminating U.S. payments for our share of U.N. costs and by encouraging other nations to do the same, H.R. 872 would end U.N. peacekeeping overnight. The elimination of U.N. peacekeeping would damage U.S. interests. While the U.S. must remain prepared to act alone when our vital interests are threatened, we must also preserve the ability to share risks and burdens with other nations where that is the most appropriate response to international dangers. Of the more than 60,000 U.N. peacekeepers currently deployed in trouble spots around the world, less than one thousand are Americans.

The option of collective action through the United Nations has been available to every U.S. President since Harry Truman. As successive Administrations of both parties have found, U.N. peacekeeping can be one of the best forms of burdensharing. U.N. missions in such places as the Golan Heights, Kuwait, Cyprus, El Salvador and soon in Haiti serve important U.S. interests by protecting our allies, checking aggressors, deterring regional conflicts, and promoting democracy. H.R. 872 would deny the President the flexibility to employ this cost-effective tool to protect and advance U.S. interests.

Second, this bill would infringe upon my constitutional authority as Commander in Chief to determine the appropriate command and control arrangements for U.S. forces serving around the world. While I will never relinquish command authority over U.S. forces, as Commander in Chief I must retain the flexibility to place U.S. troops temporarily under the operational control of allied officers of another nation when it serves our interests, as the U.S. has done from the Revolutionary War to Operation Desert Storm. By restricting that authority, H.R. 872 would undercut our ability to mobilize the international community to respond to threats.

Third, by requiring specific Congressional authorization before the President can dispatch even a single U.S. soldier to a U.N. mission, H.R. 872 hinders our ability to react swiftly and proportion-

ately to regional security threats. The likely result is to impel the U.S. to act alone more often.

Fourth, this bill alters the steady course we and our Allies have set toward the expansion of NATO. As I have said many times, NATO's expansion is inevitable and will strengthen stability in Europe for all countries—NATO members and non-members alike. At our initiative, the Alliance is now developing the principles to be applied in considering potential new members and will present its initial conclusions this fall to members of the Partnership for Peace. H.R. 872 would unilaterally and prematurely declare certain countries as qualified for NATO membership, writing into law distinctions that could discourage reformers in countries not named and encourage complacency in countries that are. The legislation could actually slow and complicate the expansion process by generating disagreement with our Allies and by sowing instability in the region whose security we seek to bolster.

Fifth, H.R. 872 seeks to commit the United States to an accelerated deployment of a National Missile Defense (NMD) system that would cost many tens of billions of dollars and could only be fielded if we abrogate or amend the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Such a costly undertaking would divert defense resources from higher priority mission areas, including readiness and theater missile defenses. By threatening the ABM Treaty, this plan would also put at risk continued Russian adherence to the START I Treaty and its ratification of the pending START II Treaty—treaties which together will remove from deployed status two-thirds of the strategic nuclear warheads which threatened us when the Cold War ended. Finally, there is simply no need to embark on an accelerated NMD deployment plan at this time. The NMD technology readiness program proposed in my FY 1996 budget request ensures that we can respond in a timely fashion should a long-range missile threat to the U.S. homeland materialize sooner than our intelligence community now forecasts.

In addition, H.R. 872 would slow the pace of U.N. reform by mandating withholdings of U.S. payments to the U.N. until the recently-established U.N. inspector general meets several new and unworkable requirements. Finally, at a time when my Administration is successfully cutting the size and cost of government, this bill would create a new National Security Commission that would duplicate work already being done properly by the Department of Defense and Congress.

H.R. 872 is simply bad national security policy. It would limit the United States' flexibility to respond to international crisis and to protect U.S. interests. It would undermine the President's constitutional responsibility to conduct U.S. foreign policy and act as Commander in Chief. It could set us on a collision course with some of

our closest allies. It would undercut U.S. leadership abroad. It would place U.S. forces at greater risk by forcing us to act unilaterally or not at all.

I urge Congress to defeat H.R. 872.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

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