

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Hearing on “Preventing a Nuclear Iran”
May 15, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The Committee will come to order. Today we meet to discuss Iran’s growing nuclear threat and U.S. and allied efforts to stop it. For this Committee, there is no higher priority.

This Committee last heard from Undersecretary Sherman and Undersecretary Cohen in October 2011. Since that time - thanks to the bipartisan work of this Committee - several sanctions aimed at Tehran’s financial life line have been implemented, many of them over the objections of the Administration. Iran has seen its oil revenue drop by 40 percent. Official inflation has climbed to 30 percent; with unofficial estimates being twice as high. Well done. But not enough.

In the year and a half since our witnesses last appeared, the International Atomic Energy Agency tells us that the total installed centrifuges at the facilities at Natanz and Fordow have increased from approximately 8,500 to more than 15,700 – an increase of 85 percent.

Some of these centrifuges are more advanced; perhaps five times as powerful as earlier models. A key facility is buried deep below a mountain. Iran continues to stonewall the IAEA on its development of nuclear explosive devices. It doesn’t take a nuclear physicist to comprehend Iran’s intentions: developing a nuclear arsenal.

I am convinced that Tehran will continue on this path until the sanctions bite so bad the regime must relent or face upheaval. That is where we need to get.

Meanwhile, Iran works to undermine governments in the region and around the globe. Iran’s support is keeping the brutal Assad regime afloat. It has resupplied Hezbollah with at least 25,000 new rockets. In recent years, there have been Iranian-sponsored attacks or plots in Bulgaria, India, Thailand, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Kenya – and here, in Washington, D.C. I’d hate to see an Iran emboldened by a nuclear weapon.

There are also real concerns about Iran’s interaction with North Korea. Earlier this year, the Committee heard testimony that Iran and North Korea had signed a “scientific cooperation agreement” – the same type Pyongyang signed with Syria before building their reactor, destroyed by Israel. But it is not just the sharing of missile and nuclear technology that has us concerned. It is the sharing of a diplomatic playbook. Even the head of the United Nations has recognized that Iran – like North Korea – will use talks as a cover to build a bomb.

From day one, the Obama Administration has reached out to the Iranian regime. Unfortunately, that hand has been met with more centrifuges, more missiles, and more stonewalling. We don’t yet seem to realize that this regime – which beats and imprisons its own people – is determined to keep its nuclear program.

So I am convinced – as are 325 of my colleagues – that only when the Iranian leadership truly feels a choice between maintaining power and the bomb does our diplomacy have a chance to succeed.

That is why Ranking Member Engel and I have introduced H.R. 850, the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act, to continue to turn up the economic and political heat on the regime. We look forward to moving this legislation out of Committee next week.

It's cliché to say the clock is ticking. I just hope we are able to act before the clock stops ticking. I'll now turn to Ranking Member Engel for his opening remarks.