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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Committee on Foreign Affairs Hearing:
“Oversight of U.S. Sanctions Policy”
September 13, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

“This morning, the committee continues to examine the administration’s use of sanctions authorized by Congress to address threats from hostile states, including Iran, North Korea and Russia.

As I noted at our last hearing, no matter how tough the language of our sanctions bills, they are only as strong as their enforcement.

That’s why I’m glad we are joined today by two administration officials directing our teams on the front lines of this fight. Assistant Secretaries Singh and Billingslea, your assessments and your leadership are critical. I know I speak for all the members of this committee in saying that I appreciate the magnitude of the threats you deal with every day.

But the question is, ‘are we doing enough?’

Congress has acted in a bipartisan way to provide the administration with new tools to combat, disrupt and deter those who would do America harm. The Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act empowered the administration with some of the most potent weapons yet.

And to its credit, the administration has acted. Since January 2017, more than 200 Russian individuals and entities have been designated for sanctions under CAATSA and other existing laws. Hundreds of millions of dollars in assets have been blocked.

That said, we should be doing more to hold Putin accountable for his aggressive acts, including attacks on our democracy. The administration should use authorities included in Section 228 of CAATSA to cast a wider net. Those still engaged in significant business with designated Russian individuals and entities need to pay a price, as the law prescribes.

We cannot expect Vladimir Putin and his corrupt associates to change their behavior in Syria, Ukraine or anywhere else until we prove we will hold them to account. I can’t understand why action has not been taken, for example, against the Russian entities that provide material support to Iran’s Mahan Air.

This sanctioned Iranian airline reportedly transports weapons and personnel to Syria, and still maintains routes with St. Petersburg and Moscow. We should be examining and designating the

Russian individuals and companies that support Mahan with maintenance, ticketing services, cargo sales and more. This is low-hanging fruit.

In the months ahead, the committee will continue to work with the administration on this and other sanctions policy, including implementation of the executive order announced yesterday regarding election interference. And we'll be watching to see that another tranche of sanctions is imposed against Russia later this year for its use of a military-grade nerve agent on British soil in March. Putin will certainly be looking for any signs that the U.S. is wavering.

And that goes for North Korea too. I'm very concerned that our 'maximum pressure' campaign is faltering. Kim appears to be using talks, as he has time and again, to probe for weaknesses and buy time. When our messages are confusing or contradictory, we shouldn't be surprised when others, like Beijing, reportedly resume importing North Korean coal.

Sanctions are not a silver bullet. They don't work alone or instantly. They are best done with others and can be overdone, harming the wrong people. But when deployed thoughtfully and consistently, sanctions are powerful diplomatic tools.

Our goal here is to leverage America's economic might to peacefully end urgent threats to our national security. If we're going to succeed, the administration needs to fully utilize the tools Congress has provided."