

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Hearing on “Examining Nuclear Negotiations: Iran After Rouhani’s First 100 Days”
November 13, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This hearing of the Committee will come to order. Today we evaluate the Obama Administration’s nuclear diplomacy with Iran.

Last week, world powers and Iran held a second round of negotiations in Geneva. These are historical talks with a potentially profound impact on our national security. The Administration is looking to negotiate an “interim agreement,” in which Iran commits to placing some limits on its nuclear program for six months, in exchange for immediate and significant sanctions relief; with reportedly as much as \$50 billion in frozen oil revenues being released.

Fortunately, this deal wasn’t reached in Switzerland. Some U.S. allies believed the Iranian commitment was insufficient. Of great concern, the proposal failed to adequately address Iran’s heavy water reactor, would allow Iran to continue to enrich uranium, and even continue building centrifuges. The French foreign minister warned of a “fool’s game.” There is growing concern in Congress that the outlines of this agreement do not meet the standards needed to protect the U.S. and our allies.

Central to these talks is the issue of uranium enrichment and reprocessing. These technologies can produce the explosive material needed for a nuclear bomb. Indeed, that’s why Iran wants them. And that’s why multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions have reiterated the demand that all of Iran’s enrichment activities – regardless of their purpose - must be suspended. On this question, the world has spoken, decisively.

But the Obama Administration envisions permitting Iran to enrich to low levels. Regardless of the name, “low enriched uranium” and “medium enriched uranium” are close to weapons-grade “highly enriched uranium.” That’s because the effort needed to produce weapons material eases as you advance. Nonproliferation experts tell us that while medium enriched uranium is nearly weapons-grade, low enriched uranium still represents seven-tenths of the effort.

Of course, Iran continues to assert that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) grants it the so-called “right” to pursue these dangerous technologies. Yet, we must remember – and insist – that the Treaty was designed to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Simply because a nuclear activity can be used for peaceful purposes does not mean that an NPT member has an unconditional right to pursue or acquire it, let alone a country that has actively deceived the international community and violated its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) nuclear safeguard agreements. Iran can have peaceful nuclear energy – but not with the access to technology that could be used to advance a weapons program.

There is the question of sanctions, which have been painstaking developed by Congress over many years. Sanctions have battered the Iranian economy, not just because of their depth and breadth, but because of the market forces at play – international companies, seeking to avoid their web, steer clear of Tehran. As one witness has written, Iran sanctions have been as much “psychological as legal.” The easing of sanctions – no matter how minor they may seem, and the Geneva sanctions relief was not minor could deflate these forces, eliminating our leverage.

Sanctions have forced Iran to the table; we should build upon this success with additional measures – like those now pending in the Senate - to compel Iran to make meaningful and lasting concessions. The Iranian regime hasn’t “paused” its nuclear program, why should we pause our sanctions efforts, as the Administration is pressuring Congress to do? Only when the Iranian regime is forced to decide between economic collapse or compromise on its rush to develop a nuclear weapons capability, do we have a chance to avoid that terrible outcome.

I’ll now turn to the Ranking Member for any opening comments he may have.