

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on
“Verifying Iran’s Nuclear Compliance”
June 10, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This hearing will come to order. This morning we are focused on Iran’s efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability, and how to stop it.

International negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program are coming down to the wire. Indeed, in an urgent push, senior Administration officials are sitting with the Iranians today in Geneva.

Yet critical differences remain, including the status of Iran’s enrichment capability, technology key to developing a nuclear weapon. Iran’s stated desire is to increase from its roughly 19,000 centrifuges today to *over 50,000*. The future of Iran’s “plutonium bomb factory” at Arak remains unclear. Iran continues to stonewall international inspectors on its past bomb-making work. And just the other week, the country’s Supreme Leader characterized the requirement that, as part of a final agreement, Iran limit its ballistic missile program as “a stupid, idiotic expectation.” Meanwhile, Iran continues its support for terrorism abroad, quest for regional domination, and abysmal human rights record at home. A nuclear-capable Iran would be a national security disaster.

While the sides may sound far apart, the Obama Administration will push very hard to reach a deal before the July 20th negotiating deadline, and this Committee may soon be asked to judge a “comprehensive agreement.” Central to this would be evaluating the verification measures needed to ensure Iran can’t cheat. What types of conditions should U.S. negotiators be demanding? What are the limits of verification? How does the IAEA’s reliance on Iran’s cooperation impact its work? Some cite the adage “trust, but verify.” In this case, there certainly can’t be any trust. The question today is, can there be verification?

These questions are sharpened by the fact that Iran’s leaders have invested massive resources and decades of effort into their nuclear program. Enrichment facilities were built in secret - a *violation* of its agreement with the IAEA. One was even dug into a mountainside on a military base. As one witness will testify, “when it comes to [Iran’s] nuclear program, they have a history of deception, covert procurement, and construction of clandestine facilities that are acknowledged only when revealed by the government’s adversaries.”

This dangerous regime has tied its prestige to its nuclear ambitions, and they are not peaceful. Given Iran's record of clandestine activity and intransigence, clear consequences for violating transparency and cooperation requirements must be spelled out – with zero tolerance for cheating.

An immediate test of Iran's willingness to cooperate rests with the IAEA's attempts to clarify evidence the international observer group has on the "potential military dimensions" of Iran's program. For several years, Iran has refused to provide explanations or information to the IAEA on past bomb efforts. This includes the Parchin military base, where Iran has gone to great lengths to eliminate all traces of any clandestine activities, including demolishing buildings and removing large areas of soil.

Iran's willingness to come clean on its past weapons program should be an acid test for Western negotiators. We must ask, what good is striking an agreement – and removing sanctions; our only leverage – if Iran keeps a capacity to secretly build nuclear bombs?

Unfortunately, U.S. negotiators have already made a key concession that will complicate the task of verifying Iran's nuclear commitments. The interim agreement of last year would allow Iran to maintain a "mutually defined enrichment program." This program could give Iran cover to develop a covert weapons program, as technically speaking, the ability to produce low-enriched uranium is perilously close to that needed for a nuclear weapon.

If Iran is left with the capacity to enrich, a break-out race to a weapon will be a permanent threat – a threat that undoubtedly would increase as sanctions are eased and the world turns its attention elsewhere. That's especially troubling, given how Iranian leaders have spoken of Israel as a 'one-bomb country.'

Many on the Committee are very troubled that the Obama Administration has us on track to an agreement that leaves Iran as a permanent nuclear threat to the region - and to us. Today's hearing will be this Committee's latest warning against this ill-considered course of action.

I'll now turn to the Ranking Member for his opening comments.