

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on
“Iran Nuclear Negotiations: From Extension to Final Agreement?”
July 29, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This hearing will come to order. This afternoon we assess the past six months of nuclear diplomacy with Iran, and ask if a viable agreement is achievable by November 24th.

The Administration – along with the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany—has been seeking to negotiate a “long-term comprehensive solution” to Iran’s nuclear program since last fall. With these negotiations, Iran has agreed to limit its nuclear program in return for some sanctions relief. Should a final agreement be reached, it would permit Iran to maintain “a mutually defined enrichment program” and be treated like any other “non-nuclear weapon state party to the [Nonproliferation Treaty].”

At the outset of these negotiations, the Administration *aggressively* pushed back on Congressional attempts to give our negotiators more leverage with added sanctions, to go into force should negotiations fail. The legislation that Ranking Member Engel and I authored – and was passed with 400 votes – would have given Iran’s leadership a choice between compromise and economic collapse. We’ll never know if that prospect would have made a difference over the past six months. But we do know that talks haven’t accomplished much to date without this pressure. Indeed, just days before the recent deadline, the Iranian Foreign Minister was “offering” an Iranian freeze of its current 19,000 centrifuges “for several years.” Is the status quo the best Iran is offering after six months of negotiations? A status quo, by the way, that has Iran enriching more uranium.

The Committee has continued its intense focus on Iran, holding a series of hearings. Among the challenges:

- Nonproliferation specialists told us that even if the number of Iran’s centrifuges were drastically cut to 4,000 - Tehran would still have a “breakout” capacity of just 3 months. Of course, Iran’s Supreme Leader is pushing for some *190,000* centrifuges.

- Experts stressed that an effective verification regime would require measures that go *well beyond* those in the standard “safeguards agreement” and the Additional Protocol.
- Former U.S. and IAEA officials noted that failing to understand the “possible military dimensions” of Iran’s nuclear program would make it impossible to verify that Iran’s nuclear program is completely peaceful in nature. It took *17 years* for the IAEA to conclude that South Africa’s nuclear program was entirely peaceful, and that was *with* the cooperation of its government. Iran is mightily resisting this critical transparency; and
- Former Secretary of State Clinton warned this weekend that “any enrichment [inside Iran] will trigger an arms race in the Middle East.”

Also, many don’t realize that any limits placed on Iran’s nuclear program as part of the “comprehensive solution” will expire. In this respect, the “final” agreement is just another interim step; with the real final step being the treatment of Iran as “any other” non-nuclear weapon NPT state. That means: no sanctions; no restrictions on procurement of nuclear items, and certainly no restrictions on the number of centrifuges it can spin or the level to which it may enrich uranium. With such status, Iran could enrich on an industrial scale—claiming the desire to sell enriched uranium on the international market, as does France. Iran could also enrich uranium to levels near the weapons grade —claiming the desire to power a nuclear navy. That’s what Brazil is doing.

Of course, Iran isn’t France or Brazil. That was evident when the Committee examined Iran’s behavior across the board:

- We heard from one former Iranian political prisoner that at least 750 people have been executed in Iran without due process in the past year.
- Today, Tehran’s work is on full display, as hundreds of rockets have rained down on southern Israel. It is Iran that provides the funding, weapons, and training to Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups.
- As one former intelligence official testified, “Iran’s nuclear program is just the tip of a revolutionary spear that extends across the world and threatens key U.S. interests.”

Ambassador Sherman – you have your work cut out for you. I’m not sure how we reach an agreement that advances U.S. national security given Iran’s deep commitment to an extremely dangerous nuclear program. One thing is clear: come November and no deal? There will be additional sanctions.

But as the Administration charts its course, I trust that you will be in close touch with this Committee. That’s especially important given the significant changes to our Iran sanctions policy that are to be considered. As you know, Mr. Engel and I recently sent a letter to the President – signed by 340 of our colleagues – expecting such close coordination. America is stronger when we work together.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for any opening comments he may have.