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Opening Statement – Chairman Ed Royce
Nuclear Agreement with Iran: Can't Trust, Can We Verify?
April 22, 2015

This hearing will come to order. Today we continue our consideration of a possible final nuclear accord with Iran. Earlier this month, the Administration and our negotiating partners announced the “framework” of a final agreement that is to be hammered out by the end of June.

In announcing its outlines, President Obama declared that this agreement is “based on unprecedented verification.” However, *all* of the essential elements of this inspection regime *still* need to be negotiated.

The ink wasn't even dry on this month's announcement – and the chants of “Death to America” led by the Supreme Leader were still fresh - when he asserted that Tehran wouldn't allow international inspectors access to its military facilities. And this weekend, the Deputy Head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps reiterated, “They will not even be permitted to inspect the most normal military site *in their dreams.*”

The Administration has shrugged off such comments as Iranian domestic spin. But the issue of inspections and verification will be central to how Congress judges any final agreement. Will inspectors have quick, unimpeded, go-anywhere, anytime access? Who can they interview; what documents can they review; can they take environmental samples? Does the IAEA have the qualified manpower and resources to take this on? Can the framework's “limited” centrifuge research and development restriction really be verified?

Iran's long history of clandestine activity and intransigence prevents the U.S. from holding *any* trust whatsoever in Iran. Indeed, deception has been a cornerstone of Iran's nuclear program since its inception. So when it comes to negotiating an inspections regime over the next two months, the U.S. must gain ground, not retreat.

A key piece of verification includes Iran coming clean on its past bomb work. That elementary step *still* has not happened despite its long overdue commitment to international inspectors to do so. The IAEA remains concerned about signs of Iran's military-related activities; including designing a nuclear payload for a missile. Iran hasn't even begun to address these concerns. Last fall, over 350 Members wrote to the Secretary of State expressing deep concerns about this lack of cooperation. Yet the framework agreement is vague on this critical verification step.

Intrusive inspections are even more critical when you consider a recent Department of Defense study. It points out that the U.S. capabilities to locate undeclared nuclear facilities or covert nuclear programs are “either inadequate, or more often, do not exist.”

And critically, that study also reminds us that, “verification...is principally the *political judgment* to which monitoring and other means contribute.” The IAEA and its inspectors will play an essential role in monitoring Iran. But it will ultimately be up to the Administration and its negotiating partners, which includes Russia and China - likely acting through the UN Security Council or another international body - to decide whether Iran is complying with its commitments. This is another weak link.

If Iran is caught cheating, will this or the next Administration be prepared to call them out? I'm not confident. Why? Because during the interim negotiations, when Iran was caught testing an advanced supersonic centrifuge, it faced *no* consequences. To hear the Administration explain it, this was probably just the work of a low-level employee who wasn't acting on orders from above.

As one witness will testify, international inspectors can be no tougher than the countries that back them. The history of arms-control inspections is that they are easy for political leaders to tout as a solution, but are difficult to fully implement. What looks good on the white board often fails in the real world.

Even if verified, as one witness will note, this agreement still puts Iran on the path to being an *accepted* nuclear weapons threshold state. And beginning in ten years, the Administration's lauded one-year break-out period begins to fall away and Iran will be able to enrich on an industrial scale. At the same time, Iran's Revolutionary Guard is advancing its ballistic missile capability – under orders from the Supreme Leader to “mass produce.”

In announcing this framework agreement with Iran, President Obama boldly declared that “If Iran cheats, the world *will know*.” Today we'll hear from former top weapons inspectors and nonproliferation experts to learn what it would take for that audacious assertion to be credible.

I'll now turn to the ranking member for any opening remarks he may have.