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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA)**, Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Fueling Middle East Turmoil
December 2, 2015

(As prepared for delivery)

This hearing will come to order. Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is on a roll.

In recent weeks, the IRGC has tested a new long-range ballistic missile in violation of U.N. sanctions and released video of dozens more staged in an underground bunker. The IRGC's Quds force has stepped up efforts in support of the murderous Assad regime in Syria. And by all accounts, it appears the IRGC has prevented international investigators from accessing the information needed to conclusively finish a report on the "possible military dimensions" of Iran's nuclear program.

From nuclear proliferation to support of international terrorism to human rights abuses – the IRGC has made Iran the global menace it is today. The IRGC is responsible for squashing democracy movements at home, spreading the Iranian regime's revolutionary ideology abroad, and sparking turmoil throughout the Middle East. Its forces operate independent of Iran's regular army, answering directly to one man: Iran's Supreme Leader.

While most understand the role of the IRGC in fueling conflict throughout the region, its hidden grasp on the Iranian economy is just as important. Controlling some 20-30 percent of the Iranian economy, the IRGC has been labelled Iran's "most powerful economic actor" by the U.S. Treasury Department, which has noted its deep reach into "critical sectors of Iran's economic infrastructure." The IRGC's largest business is its construction arm, which controls over 800 affiliated companies and billions in assets. These activities in turn fund Iran's ballistic missile program, military activities, and regional aggression.

Of course none of this appears to disqualify Iran from receiving sanctions relief under a nuclear deal that allows Iran to keep a path to a weapon. Within months Iran could have access to tens of billions in new cash. This "stimulus package" for the Supreme Leader will only strengthen the IRGC – and as trade restrictions with Iran loosen – increase its access to dual use technology for its military and missile programs.

An IRGC with more cash means more threats to the United States and our allies and partners. Even when Iran sanctions were fully in place, estimates indicated Iranian support to the Assad regime in Syria totaled \$6 billion annually. IRGC support on the ground— combined with Russian air support — worsened the already horrible conflict in Syria, drawing in foreign fighters and giving ISIS room to grow.

And more resources for the IRGC also promises to create problems in Iraq and Yemen – where the Guards are backing Shia militias responsible for violence against Iraq's Sunni minority and Houthi rebels fighting Saudi forces in Yemen. This, combined with Iran's continued support for

terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas that have attacked the United States and Israel, have made the Guards a major source of instability in the region.

In selling its flawed nuclear deal to Congress, Secretary Kerry testified that there would be no let up on Iran's terror and destructive regional behavior. But actions speak louder than words. We have yet to see any effective strategy from the Administration to push back against the IRGC's regional advances, which have emboldened Iran and undermined our allies. This morning we'll hear from our witnesses on what such a strategy might look like, and how Congress can help.

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