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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Committee on Foreign Affairs Hearing:
“Confronting the Iranian Challenge”
May 8, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Later today, the president will announce whether he intends to keep the United States in the Iran nuclear agreement. This is earlier than expected.

Over the past six months, the Trump administration has urged France, Germany and Britain to help address the full range of threats posed by the Iranian regime. U.S. negotiators have rightly pushed for fixes to the deeply flawed agreement – including stronger inspections, new sanctions on Iran’s ballistic missiles program and a solution to the deal’s sunset problem.

Addressing these serious shortcomings is a must to keep Iran from threatening the United States and our allies with a nuclear weapon. As I’ve said, this agreement’s fundamental flaw is that it trades temporary restrictions for permanent sanctions relief.

Today, this committee will examine the decision before the president. As the members of this committee know, I opposed the nuclear deal. And so did a bipartisan majority of the committee.

Why? Because the Obama administration ditched its key goals. The deal does not shut off Iran’s path to a nuclear weapon. It does not allow inspectors “anywhere, anytime, 24/7 access.” It does not stop the regime’s pursuit of intercontinental ballistic missiles. And it gave Tehran an infusion of cash to support more of its terrorist activities around the world.

That said, I believe the best path forward at this point is to continue pushing to fix these flaws as we enforce the hell out of the deal. The Obama administration has put us in a tough spot. Roughly \$100 billion was given to Iran. At least \$1.7 billion of that was an apparent cash ransom payment, stacked on pallets and flown – against the advice of the Justice Department and other officials – to the Iranian regime. Much of this has likely found its way into the hands of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Tearing up the nuclear deal will not recover this cash. That toothpaste isn’t going back into the tube. It also won’t help galvanize our allies into addressing Iran’s dangerous activities that threaten us all. I fear a withdrawal would actually set back these efforts. And Congress has heard nothing about an alternative.

Last week’s move by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to unveil Iran’s secret nuclear-weapons archive reminds us all what is at stake. Despite its repeated denials, Iran had a comprehensive program to design, test and build a nuclear weapon.

Of course, this begs the question: what is Iran hiding today? Shouldn’t we have better inspections? Remember, the deal’s existing restrictions expire in the short years ahead. The key restriction – the ability to quickly enrich uranium – begins to phase out in less than eight years.

We should be able to get an agreement with the Europeans to fix these serious flaws. I understand we've made encouraging progress in recent weeks. If we don't have an agreement today, let's double down on diplomacy and get a deal in the weeks ahead. The Europeans need to get to "yes."