

**Secretary of State Mike Pompeo  
House Iran Hearing Opening Statement  
February 28, 2020**

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, thank you for having me today.

I'm just back from a trip that included stops in Saudi Arabia and Oman, where the grave threat the Islamic Republic of Iran poses to us, our allies and partners, and the Iranian people themselves is crystal clear.

Here are the facts:

- Iran is the world's number one state sponsor of terrorism – and anti-Semitism.
- Iran and its proxies are responsible for the death of hundreds of Americans in Iraq, including an American contractor, Nawres Hamid, on December 27th.
- Its forces, and the militias it supports, prop up Syria's Bashar Assad, undermine democracy in Lebanon and Iraq, and steal humanitarian aid in Yemen.
- Speaking of Yemen, the Iran-backed Houthis have launched hundreds of missiles and armed drones at civilian targets in Saudi Arabia – where 80,000 Americans live and work – since the start of this conflict.
- Hours after I visited our troops at Prince Sultan air base on February 20th, Iran-backed Houthi forces launched an attack aimed at the port city of Yanbu.
- Iran is responsible for downing a civilian airliner in January. 176 people were killed. The regime lied about that tragedy, and still hasn't turned over the black box.

- The Iranian regime slaughtered at least several hundred of its own people, with reports of up to 1,500, during the protests last November. Many millions more have suffered since the Revolution began more than 40 years ago.
- The regime just rigged an election – yet again denying the Iranian people the free and fair elections they’ve sought for 41 years. More than 7,000 candidates that didn’t get the regime’s seal of approval were banned from running. What a tragedy.

But don’t take it from me about how loathsome and destructive this regime is. Listen to the anger and frustration the Iranian people are expressing on social media, on the streets, and at the polls. And even further to the point: look at the popular protests against the Iranian regime’s influence in Iraq and Lebanon.

Iranians, and those impacted by the regime, are thankful the United States are finally holding their oppressors accountable.

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The Trump Administration will neither appease nor tolerate the enormous national security threat Iran poses to the United States and to our friends and allies.

Our maximum pressure campaign is aimed at reducing these threats, and convincing Iran to change its behavior.

I want to specifically address our strike on Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani. He was the regime’s top terrorist and the mastermind of the killing of innocent Americans, Syrians, Iraqis, and many others. Removing him from the battlefield was a de-escalatory measure.

His death reduced the risk to our personnel overseas, and made clear we are willing and able to impose costs on our adversaries if they threaten or attack us.

I know that, sadly, some American troops were injured during Iran's retaliatory ballistic missile attack on al-Asad air base. The limited nature of Iran's counterattack, however, indicates that Iran's leadership is not eager to escalate a military confrontation.

They know if we fight, they will lose. That's deterrence.

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Our maximum pressure campaign doesn't just entail military deterrence.

The JCPOA bankrolled the regime's murderous campaigns of terror and destabilization.

We've reversed that appeasement and imposed the most aggressive economic sanctions campaign in history to deprive the regime of at least \$50 billion in revenue.

Diplomatically, we've rallied allies and partners to ban Mahan Air – a courier of regime weaponry and personnel around the Middle East.

In part due to our efforts, Colombia, Honduras, Kosovo, Paraguay, and the UK have declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization in all its aspects.

That's real American leadership.

Going forward, we will sustain our pressure until Iran behaves like a normal nation.

We will continue to protect the American people and American interests by any means necessary.

We will continue to impose costs on the regime for its campaigns of carnage.

And we will work with our allies and partners for a more stable and secure Middle East.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.