

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
MENA and TNT Joint Subcommittee Hearing entitled: Implementation of the Iran
Nuclear Deal
Tuesday, January 28, 2014

The picture that was painted was that Iran would agree to modest limits on its enrichment capabilities, increased International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring, the cessation of manufacturing centrifuges and it would not fuel the Arak heavy water reactor. In exchange, Iran would receive an easing of sanctions on its oil sales and the suspension of certain sanctions on the import of precious metals and exports from Iran's auto and petrochemical sectors.

No doubt President Obama will tout this deal as the ultimate achievement for diplomacy and peace, while excoriating those of us who have the temerity to say: Hey wait a minute, I don't trust the Iranian regime. Let's have a backup plan to increase sanctions on Iran if it's found to be acting unfaithfully - which as history has shown, it is not out of the realm of possibility.

But though the announcement was made in November, it wasn't until one week ago, on January 20th, that the technical details were agreed upon and finally implemented. The most glaring deficiency with this interim deal is its lopsidedness: Iran got a sweetheart deal and the rest of the world is not any safer from an Iranian bomb than before.

Our closest ally and friend in the region, the democratic Jewish State of Israel, has been very concerned with what this deal means for its security from the get go; and other countries in the Gulf region feel slighted by our approach to this issue.

But let's set aside the dangerous precedent this sets for the rest of the world and the bridges that we have burned with allies to reach this agreement - remember, this agreement doesn't even live up to the obligations set forth by the UN Security Council resolutions on Iran, and is far from our policy of disarmament from only ten years ago - and focus on what Iran is allowed to do.

Iran is allowed to keep its nuclear weapons program infrastructure intact and will still be allowed to enrich. Sure there are caps to the enrichment and it will have to convert some of its uranium to oxide, but Iran will maintain the ability, knowhow and proficiency that if it decides to break the agreement, it can continue toward breakout capability with only a minor setback in the timetable.

It's a shame that we have seemingly acquiesced to Iran's demand that it has some sort of right to enrich. Iran had long ago abandoned all claims to a right of enrichment when it decided to conduct a covert nuclear program and was in violation of its international obligations under the NPT and other treaties. It therefore must not be allowed to enrich, and I fear that by starting out where the P5+1 did here, Iran will never be pushed off of this stance in a final comprehensive agreement.

The interim deal focuses on the nuclear aspect and falls short on Iran's weaponization efforts and its ballistic missile program, which it now has more time to advance, and there is nothing in the interim agreement that allows for International Atomic Energy Agency access to Iran's military sites.

And for me, that's really the crux of the issue here: time. From announcement to implementation, two months time has passed. This gave the regime plenty of time to continue to make advancements while the parties hashed out all the technical details.

I don't believe this was by mistake on their part, as Rouhani is an expert in delay tactics and double talk. In the two months after Secretary Kerry's press conference in Geneva, Tehran has announced that: it had made advances in its ICBM technology; it had designed a new generation of uranium centrifuges and was ready to manufacture them, and; that it would continue construction at its heavy water reactor in Arak.

I envision a scenario in which Iran may comply with this agreement for six months, but even if Iran does violate the terms of the agreement, the joint commission that is established in the final document has murky authority at best to conduct oversight, enforce compliance or impose strict consequences. There is no mechanism that allows for adjudication of violations in this deal, and that is very troublesome.

Bottom line: as long as the infrastructure is in place for Iran to continue its nuclear program, the threat that it can create a nuclear weapon will always be all too real – and that where P5+1 monumentally failed in this interim agreement. And with Rouhani and Zarif stating just last week that Iran would not dismantle any part of its nuclear program under any circumstance, it leaves me fearing what the Administration will accept in a final comprehensive agreement.

I look forward to hearing our experts' testimonies, and the views of my colleagues.