

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
MENA and TNT Joint Subcommittee Hearing entitled: Iran's Support for Terrorism
Worldwide
Tuesday, March 4, 2014

Last November, President Obama announced that the P5+1 and Iran had come to an interim agreement over Iran's nuclear program. Though lauded by the Administration as a big step forward, it refuses to allow the full details to be made public.

I've viewed the text – as have many others on our panel here today – and I don't see any reason for it to remain a state secret other than that the Administration doesn't want the American people to see how badly we got suckered.

The Joint Plan of Action is a lopsided bad deal for the United States and for our allies like the democratic, Jewish State of Israel, and Iran continues to take advantage of it every day. And that is the crux of the problem here; The Administration is asking us to trust it that it can ensure that the Iranian regime plays by the rules, when 35 years of proves otherwise.

So today we are taking an in-depth look at exactly who we are dealing with as the Administration seeks to make deals with the Iranian regime. The hearing will focus on perhaps the most critical fact that I think has been downplayed, and even ignored, throughout this nuclear deal process – and that is the fact that Iran is the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism.

Iran is one of only four countries designated by the United States as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST). The other three: Syria, Sudan and Cuba. In order to be designated an SST, a country must have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terror, and that is a major part of Iran's foreign policy.

Recently we have seen Iran support terrorist acts in Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, and even right here in Washington, D.C., as an Iranian plot to assassinate the ambassador of Saudi Arabia was uncovered.

Then there is Iran's involvement in Latin America; Iran's presence there has grown rapidly and now poses a very serious threat to our national security. In fact, last year, I convened a hearing on the Iran-Syria nexus and Ambassador John Bolton testified that the largest Iranian diplomacy facility in the world is in Caracas, Venezuela, because that is where Iran launders its money.

Yet even though all the evidence pointed to the contrary, the State Department issued a report that claimed that Iran's influence in Latin America was waning; Dr. Levitt, you testified at the time that the report was incomplete, full of faulty assumptions, and that the proper people did not seem to have been consulted before the report was issued. This is very troubling, indeed, especially this year - the 20th anniversary of the AMIA bombings on the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that left 85 dead and hundreds more wounded.

It is very troubling because it shows that the Administration either doesn't have the full grasp of how dangerous Iran really is, or it is choosing to be willfully ignorant of the situation. And this of course doesn't even include Iran's support for terrorist activity and pro-Iranian armed forces in the Middle East.

Iran's proxy, Hezbollah has been wreaking havoc throughout the region for decades, and has been responsible for numerous attacks, especially its incessant and deadly attacks aimed at Israel. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Qods Force have cultivated and supported terrorist activities worldwide, providing money, arms, material and fighters for terrorist groups all over the map.

Most notably Iran, through the IRGC, the Qods Force, and Hezbollah, has been instrumental in propping up the Assad regime in Syria. Yet none of this was part of the Joint Plan of Action, and none of this is being discussed as the Administration attempts to reach a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear plan.

The Administration is dealing with these talks as if Iran's nuclear program exists in some kind of vacuum; As if the nuclear program is not somehow related to Iran's support for terror. And the most dangerous part of these negotiations is that the Administration is willing to ignore these facts and other aspects of the regime so that it can say it reached a deal with Iran.

That is why I think this hearing is critical – so that we can draw attention to the true nature of the regime in Tehran.