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**TESTIMONY OF
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR THE MIDDLE EAST DR. COLIN KAHL
BEFORE THE HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Tierney, distinguished committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the role of the Department of Defense in the Administration's policy towards Iran.

As you know, the President has made Iran one of his top national security priorities. The Department of Defense plays a supporting role in our whole-of-government strategy of engagement and pressure toward Iran, which is led by the State and Treasury Departments. However, a supporting role should not be confused with a minor one.

In support of interagency efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and counter its destabilizing efforts, the Department of Defense focuses on four major lines of effort. These efforts are: (1) ensuring Israel's security; (2) building partnership capacity in the region; (3) developing a regional security architecture in the Gulf; and (4) prudent defense planning. Let me begin with Israel.

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Israel

Iran's nuclear and missile programs and its sponsorship of terrorism represent a significant threat to Israel. In the face of this threat, we are working closely with the Israelis to develop multi-layered ballistic missile defenses, and we continue our efforts to ensure Israel's Qualitative Military Edge. The U.S.-Israel defense relationship is strong and enduring. Indeed, based on joint military exercises such as JUNIPER COBRA, and continued cooperation, both Secretaries Panetta and Gates have called it "stronger than ever." We regularly consult with our Israeli allies and maintain a close, extensive and very frank defense dialogue.

We also continue our cooperation with the Israeli Defense Forces to ensure that their qualitative military edge extends to all present and future threats. As you know, Israel is the only nation in the region that will receive fifth generation aircraft in the Joint Strike Fighter. Another example is your support of President Obama's request to provide an additional \$205 million to Israel for the Iron Dome short range counter mortar and rocket defense system. Iron Dome has already proved effective in the field, successfully striking rockets headed for Israeli civilian targets.

These efforts to buttress Israel's security help underline our message to Iran: pursuing nuclear weapons offers Iran no true benefits, and efforts to destabilize the region through proxies and support for terrorism will not succeed.

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Building Partnership Capacity

We continue to work with partners in the region to build capacity to defend against Iranian destabilizing influence, particularly in Iraq and Lebanon. By the end of next month, we will complete the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq, in accordance with the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. Some have expressed concerns that we leaving behind a vacuum for Iran to fill. However, we are not disengaging from Iraq, and there is no vacuum for Iran to fill.

Due the extraordinary sacrifices of our armed forces, civilians, and the Iraqis, Iraq has emerged as an increasingly stable, sovereign, and self-reliant nation. Iraq has no desire to be dominated by Iran or anyone else. Iraqi nationalism is strong, and the Iraqis have consistently shown their willingness to resist the Iranians and their surrogates when Tehran has over-reached. This will continue as Iraq's economy grows, particularly through its oil industry.

The Iraqis have also made clear that they desire a strong and enduring relationship with the United States, including robust security cooperation, and we will purse that partnership under the Strategic Framework Agreement. The recent Iraqi decision to purchase American F-16s is just one example of Iraq's interest in a long-term defense relationship. Iraq is now our 9th largest customer in terms of foreign military sales, and 4th largest in the region. Continued security ties through our Office of Security Cooperation and Security Assistance activities such as

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Foreign Military Sales (FMS) will deepen this partnership in the years ahead and assist the Iraqis in resisting Iran's coercive diplomacy and support for militant proxies.

In Lebanon, we are similarly working to strengthen Lebanon's national institutions and its ability to exercise its sovereignty and authority over all of its territory. Central to this work is the development of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) through training, assistance, and military aid. Since 2006, the United States has been committed to helping the LAF effectively counter the operations of terrorists within Lebanon, secure Lebanon's borders, and work alongside UNIFIL to implement all Lebanon-related United Nations Security Council Resolutions (1559, 1680, and 1701). Effectively implementing these resolutions requires ending Iranian and Syrian support for Hezbollah, and undermining Hezbollah's militant activities in southern Lebanon and beyond Lebanon's borders. The LAF is the only institution trusted by Lebanon's diverse population and it is considered apolitical, professional, and non-sectarian—and our continued support to the LAF, over the long-term, offers the best counterweight to Iran's destabilizing support for Hezbollah.

Regional Security Architecture

DoD also works closely with our Gulf partners to develop a common regional security architecture, one that includes both bilateral and multilateral

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security initiatives. These include a regional network of air and ballistic missile defenses, shared early warning systems, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy efforts, programs to build partner capacity, and projects to harden and protect our partners' critical infrastructure.

We currently have substantial missile defense assets in a number of Gulf partner nations to protect our forces and partners from the threat of Iranian missiles. USCENTCOM maintains a robust exercise schedule in the region, as well as a robust force presence to enhance stability and deter regional aggression. We also maintain a full schedule of bilateral and multilateral defense engagements with our Gulf State counterparts, going up to the highest levels. The Department's senior leadership frequently travels to the region and hosts counterpart visits in Washington, D.C.

As we improve bilateral and multilateral cooperation, we are also working to build the defensive capabilities of our partners and improve interoperability with U.S. and regional forces. Much of this is accomplished through our foreign military sales, or FMS. The majority of U.S. worldwide FMS activity is in the Middle East, particularly with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Israel, and Iraq. These sales serve to bolster our partners' capabilities in this critical region.

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We have an enduring commitment to our partners to counter, protect, and defend against regional threats, and our extensive security cooperation efforts and engagements reaffirm that commitment. It is also a strong signal to Iran that their nuclear ambitions and destabilizing behavior will ultimately make them less—not more—secure.

DoD Planning

When it comes to Iran, we know that there are no overnight solutions, but many of our diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation efforts are beginning to bear fruit, as evidenced by Iranian President Ahmadinejad's recent statement regarding the impact of sanctions. At the same time, we also know that Iran has not ceased its proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or support for terrorism. For that reason, the Department continues to prepare for all contingencies.

On this point let me be clear: it is the Department of Defense's responsibility to plan for all contingencies, and provide the President with a wide range of military options should they become necessary. That's a responsibility we take very seriously, and when it comes to the threat posed by Iran, the President has not taken any options off the table.

But I also want to emphasize our continued belief that at this time, diplomacy and pressure *remain* the most effective tools for changing Iranian

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behavior. That's something Secretary Panetta—and Secretary Gates before him—have repeatedly said.

In conclusion, through close security cooperation with regional partners and prudent planning, DoD activities seek to counter Iran's destabilizing activities, support efforts by the State and Treasury Departments to encourage Iran to change course on its nuclear program, and provide the President with the full range of options to achieve our national objectives.

Thank you once again. I look forward to answering your questions.

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