

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Opening Statement

#### Rep. Stephen F. Lynch, Ranking Member

#### Subcommittee on National Security

#### Hearing on “Assessing the Iran Deal”

#### April 5, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank you for holding this hearing to examine the continued implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – otherwise known as the Iran nuclear agreement. I'd also like to thank today's witnesses for helping this Subcommittee with its work.

As reported by former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper in his 2016 Worldwide Threat Assessment, Iran remains the “*foremost state sponsor of terrorism...and presents an enduring threat to U.S. interests because of its support to regional terrorist and militant groups and the Assad regime, as well as its development of advanced military capabilities.*” Similarly, the most recent State Department Country Terrorism Report, issued by the Obama Administration in 2016, again underscored that Iran has been designated as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1984 and is maintaining its terrorist-related activity through support for Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi Shia terrorist groups in Iraq, Palestinian militant organizations in Gaza, and Iraqi, Afghan, and Pakistani Shia fighters aiming to bolster the Assad regime in Syria.

There is no doubt that Iran is a destabilizing force in the Middle East and continues to provide arms, financing, and training to terrorist groups in the region. It also remains unequivocally clear that we cannot trust the Iranian leadership given these subversive military and foreign policy objectives. That is precisely why the nuclear agreement reached between the U.S., the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, Germany and Iran seeks to contain them. For these same reasons, successful implementation of the Iran nuclear agreement is not dependent on our trust that Iran will simply abide by the terms of the deal and limit its nuclear program and nuclear weapons capabilities. A key advantage we gained is the ability to place inspectors and investigators on the ground in Iran.

In referencing adversarial nations and the nuclear arms race in his 1960 inaugural address, President Kennedy remarked that the sincerity of negotiation “*is always subject to proof.*” To this end, a determination of whether Iran is living up to its commitments under the agreement is entirely based on proof in the form of a robust nuclear inspections regime conducted by the independent International Atomic Energy Agency.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano released his latest report on Iran's compliance with the nuclear agreement and corresponding U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231. As reported by the IAEA, Iran has already permanently disabled the core of the heavy

water reactor at its water plant in Arak by filling it with concrete “*such that the Agency was able to verify that it is not usable for a future nuclear application.*” In addition, all existing uranium pellets and fuel assemblies related to the original design of the Arak reactor remain under continuous IAEA supervision. This is verified proof that Iraq has abided by its commitment under the Iran nuclear agreement to render the Arak reactor inoperable so that it can no longer produce weapons-grade plutonium. According to the IAEA, Iran is thus far abiding by its commitment to refrain from producing or retaining uranium enriched at a level greater than 3.67% for 15 years –far less than the approximately 90% enrichment level of weapons-grade uranium and the 20% level of the uranium that Iran had previously stockpiled. The IAEA also reports that there are currently no more than 5,060 centrifuges at the Natanz fuel enrichment plant, in accordance with Iran’s obligation to dismantle two-thirds of its centrifuges to enrich uranium for 10 years.

The IAEA enjoys unprecedented and open access to Iran’s nuclear facilities, conducts formal reviews on at least a quarterly basis, and has determined that Iran has met its commitments in every one of its reports. This is a vast improvement over previous international ballpark estimates to assess Iran’s nuclear capabilities based on hypothetical “breakout” timelines.

It is in light of the critical and continuing work of the IAEA to verify Iranian compliance with the nuclear agreement that we must make every effort to ensure that the agency is able to carry out its inspection and verification workload. Director General Amano recently stated that absent a 2.1% increase to its operating budget in 2018, or about \$400 million, from its contributing member states, “*the IAEA will not be able to implement the verification and monitoring activities in Iran.*” In stark contrast, the budget blueprint recently submitted to Congress by President Trump proposes a nearly 29%, or \$10 billion cut, to the State Department budget. This could drastically decrease our estimated \$200 million annual contribution as the IAEA’s largest contributor given that our typical 25% share of IAEA funding comes from the State Department. While I understand that members on both sides of the aisle may have concerns with the rationale behind the agreement itself, I strongly believe that we must continue to support the IAEA.’s work now that the Iran nuclear deal is in place.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to discussing with today’s witnesses what additional steps we can take in furtherance of the sole purpose of the agreement: “*that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop, or acquire any nuclear weapons.*”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman – I yield back the balance of my time.

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