

## Subcommittee Chairman DeSantis Opening Statement "Assessing the Iran Deal" *Subcommittee on National Security*

*Chairman Ron DeSantis (R-FL):*



*Remarks as Delivered:*

On July 14, 2015, the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China reached an agreement with Iran called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, widely known as the Iran Nuclear Deal. The Obama Administration pushed an agreement giving Iran massive and immediate sanctions relief. In return, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism agreed to temporarily pause its pursuit of a nuclear bomb.

Shortly after announcing the deal, then President Obama called it "the strongest non-proliferation agreement ever negotiated" and promised it "cuts off all of Iran's pathways to a bomb." But over a year and a half later, those words ring hollow. Instead of cutting off a path to a bomb, the JCPOA gives Iran a clear road to the bomb.

The nuclear deal's sunset clauses phase out most of its significant restrictions on Iran's nuclear agreement over the course of the next 10 or 15 years. Once this happens, Iran will have access to a large-scale nuclear program powered by advanced technology and vastly increased resources due to the lifting of sanctions. President Obama acknowledged that lifting sanctions would give Iran access to advanced centrifuges and by year 15 of a deal, the time it takes for Iran to "break out" and create a nuclear weapon will "have shrunk almost down to zero."

This is a bad deal. That's why President Trump called it "the worst deal ever negotiated." It's also why Senate Minority Leader Schumer and the Democratic Ranking Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee all opposed it.

And that's only part of the story. After the JCPOA was adopted, the Obama administration made a bad deal even worse through its feeble implementation. The Obama administration failed to penalize Iranian violations, gave Iran exemptions from the JCPOA's nuclear restrictions, weakened sanctions far beyond the terms of the agreement, and allowed Iran's ballistic missile launches and regional aggression to go unchecked. Not only did the Obama administration give Iran a pass, Secretary of State John Kerry actually served to lobby on behalf of Iran, flying to London and pitching European bankers that Iran was "open for business" as his staff pressed governors across the U.S. to drop their states' Iran sanctions.

Thankfully, the Trump administration signaled the beginning of a different approach this February. When Iran continued pursuing an agenda of regional aggression against us and our allies, the new administration responded by putting Iran "on notice" and imposing new sanctions.

This hearing will highlight the numerous problems with the Iran Nuclear Deal that demand correction by the new administration, as well as Iran's destabilizing activities throughout the Middle East.

The Obama administration failed to hold Iran to the JCPOA's nuclear restrictions on critical issues like uranium, heavy water and centrifuge restrictions. Independent experts have identified numerous ways in which Iran has been able to violate the deal's provisions, exploit loopholes, and been granted secret exemptions with no penalty.

There are also serious questions about the effectiveness of the IAEA's verification process and the degree of access its inspectors are receiving. There are other serious problems with the deal besides the implementation of its nuclear provisions. After numerous U.S. sanctions on Iran were lifted on Implementation Day, Department of Treasury officials continued to weaken the sanction.

Treasury changed its official guidance on a Friday evening before a holiday to allow foreign companies to do business with entities controlled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), process some dollar transactions involving Iran, and loosen due diligence standards. Treasury also removed a number of entities tied to Iran's ballistic missile program and the IRGC from its sanctions list. For example, Treasury lifted sanctions on Bank Sepah, which it previously called "the financial linchpin of Iran's missile procurement network." Despite all these concessions, the deal has failed to quiet Iran's belligerence.

Just last week, the head of U.S. Central Command testified before Congress that "[w]e have not seen any improvement in Iran's behavior since the [deal] was finalized in July 2015." This is evident from Iran's numerous ballistic missile tests conducted in defiance of U.N. restrictions and its escalating aggression towards the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf.

The State Department has identified Iran still to this day as the "world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism." And now, the funds Iran has gained through the Deal's sanctions relief are flowing in part to terrorist and insurgent groups, something former Secretary of State John Kerry even admitted would likely happen. The IRGC continues to use terror and insurgency to expand Iran's influence throughout the Middle East, including support for the Assad government in Syria, radical Shiite militias in Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Simply put, the deal along with the way it has been implemented is not a viable course of action going forward. The U.S. must make clear that Iran's nuclear violations, illicit financial networks, ballistic missile tests, and otherwise malignant activities will not be tolerated. This hearing will specifically identify where these problems originate and discuss what we need to do next to fix them.