

An Open Letter to the Leaders of the U.S. House and Senate

November 14, 2014

Dear Speaker Boehner, Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, and Representative Pelosi:

We are writing to urge that the United States Congress take immediate action to repudiate the current nuclear talks with Iran and any agreement they may produce. We urge Congress to pass legislation to this effect that also prevents the Administration from waiving sanctions or moving forward with any executive agreements to conclude a nuclear agreement with Iran without full Congressional review. We are calling on Congress to take this action because we believe the United States and its Western allies have already given away too much to Iran in these negotiations and that any agreement that emerges as a result will be a threat to our interests, allies and security.

Examples of the problems with the emerging deal abound: We have effectively conceded to Iran the “right” to enrich uranium. The United States has offered one-sided concessions allowing Iran to continue uranium enrichment, install new, more advanced centrifuges, and retain its large stockpile of low-enriched uranium. The United States is not requiring Iran to disassemble centrifuges, its underground Fordow enrichment facility or its plutonium-producing Arak heavy water reactor now under construction. U.S. diplomats recently offered new concessions which will allow Iran to operate up to 6,000 uranium centrifuges.

We believe these concessions put American and international security at risk because they will do virtually nothing to stop, or even to substantially delay, Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons. Estimates by the American Enterprise Institute, the Institute for Science and International Security, and the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center on how fast Iran could make enough weapons-grade uranium for one nuclear bomb using reactor-grade uranium currently range from *four to six weeks*. According to Harvard University’s Belfer Center, Iran could make up to seven nuclear bombs from its current stockpile of low-enriched uranium (after further, possibly undetectable enrichment).

In exchange for the above concessions, the Obama administration has asked for very minor accommodations by Tehran. The end result will not reduce the number of nuclear bombs it can currently construct. In fact, it would only delay the time for Iran to produce enough weapons-grade fuel for its first bomb by as little as two weeks.

In addition to our grave concerns about U.S. concessions to Iran during this year’s nuclear talks, we also are alarmed that Tehran has defied a central premise of the negotiations: full cooperation with the IAEA and answering all outstanding questions about whether its nuclear program is truly peaceful.

According to a September 5, 2014 IAEA report, Iran continues to refuse to resolve “outstanding issues over possible military dimensions of its nuclear program.” We also

note that an October 31, 2014 *New York Times* report which revealed that, “Iran had stopped answering the agency’s questions about suspected past efforts to design the components of a bomb.”

We believe that, since Iran has failed to cooperate fully with the IAEA either during the nuclear negotiations or, indeed, ever since its accession to the Nonproliferation Treaty there is negligible likelihood that its cooperation with the IAEA will improve after a final agreement is signed.

Iran’s strategy in the nuclear talks is crystal clear: offer minimal and inconsequential concessions and limited transparency on its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of Western sanctions. Iran’s negotiating strategy has included a refusal to dismantle nuclear facilities and demands for an increased uranium enrichment capacity. As long as this is Iran’s purpose, we believe an agreement that will result in the actual and permanent termination of the Iranian nuclear weapons program is impossible.

Given Iran’s long record of covert nuclear activities with weapons applications and its continuing refusal to cooperate with the IAEA and answer outstanding questions about its nuclear program, we believe the responsibility rests with Tehran to resolve all outstanding issues before any final agreement eviscerates the only remaining leverage we have: the still-extant U.S. and international sanctions. Further, we believe that the United States must demonstrate resolve in demanding the Iranian regime verifiably dismantle any facilities that could permit progress towards a deliverable nuclear weapons capability.

To make matters worse, recent press reports indicate that President Obama plans to deny the U.S. Congress any say in the forthcoming nuclear agreement with Iran, and that he intends unilaterally to suspend U.S. sanctions against Iran once a final accord is reached.

Surely, there will be wide, bipartisan agreement on both sides of Capitol Hill that it would be a grave mistake to go forward with any nuclear deal with Iran without the express support of the U.S. Congress. The legislative branch knows that, once the current sanctions regime against Iran by the United States and counterpart sanctions imposed by the Europeans disappear, it will be difficult – if not as a practical matter, impossible – to reestablish them, even if Iran does not live up to its obligations.

It is, therefore, time for Congress to act. By making clear that the legislative branch does not support the agreement now being finalized, there is a chance of preventing a bad deal from being concluded with far-reaching and negative consequences. The talks with Iran have drifted so far from reality, and our minimum requirements, that they are certain to produce a bad deal that cannot be salvaged.

America’s allies in the region, especially Israel and Saudi Arabia, are rightly alarmed at the prospect that Iran is being enabled to go nuclear by the U.S. and the rest of the P-5 plus 1. Among other possible responses could be a decision by the Saudis to develop their own nuclear weapons program, or simply buy one or more nuclear weapons from

another state, setting off a spiral of further proliferation likely to make the region even more unstable and dangerous.

We therefore respectfully call on Congress to adopt legislation to repudiate the nuclear agreement now taking shape. We urge you and your colleagues to insist that a coherent, realistic and firm U.S. policy be adopted instead, one aimed at actually *preventing* the Iranian regime from realizing its nuclear weapons ambitions. This should require, at a minimum, that there be no further easing of sanctions or further talks with Iran until Tehran complies with all UN Security Council resolutions related to its nuclear program, fully cooperates with the IAEA, and provides truthful answers to all outstanding questions about its nuclear program.

Sincerely,

Hon. Peter Hoekstra
Former Chairman, House Permanent Select
Committee on Intelligence

Lieutenant General William G. Boykin, U.S.
Army (Ret.)
Former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for
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Admiral James A. Lyons,
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