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Testimony

Presented before a Hearing of the
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Russia, Iran, and Nuclear Weapons: Implications of the Proposed US-Russia Agreement

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Good morning Chairman Berman, Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen, and Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

I am opposed to the Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation with Russia because Russia continues to proliferate nuclear and missile technologies to Iran, is finalizing construction and fueling of the Bushehr nuclear reactor, and is providing Iran with advanced conventional weapons. Furthermore, this agreement is part of President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership program, or GNEP, an unnecessary, horribly expensive, and dangerous plan to reinvigorate civilian nuclear reprocessing.

This Nuclear Cooperation Agreement rewards Russia for a few marginal improvements in its generally poor record vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear program. It is true that Russia has supported sanctions resolutions at the United Nations Security Council and secured a spent-fuel take-back arrangement from Iran for the Bushehr reactor. These are positive steps. But are they significant enough to cause the United States Congress to ignore Russia's ongoing proliferation activities with Iran? I believe that the answer is a resounding, "No."

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration's proposed nuclear agreement will enter into force after 90 days of continuous session from its date submission, which was May 13th, unless the Congress takes action to block the deal. That's why I have introduced H.J.Res. 85, a Resolution of Disapproval pursuant to the Atomic Energy Act, to block this dubious – and dangerous – Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation.

Let me walk through some of Russia's proliferation activities with respect to Iran that, in my mind, should make Russia ineligible for nuclear cooperation with the United States:

- First, Russia continues to assist Iran's nuclear program. Serious questions remain about the proliferation risks associated with the Bushehr nuclear power plant, and whether the Russian institutions which are carrying out this work possess adequate controls to prevent the flow of sensitive materials, technology, equipment, and training to Iran.
- Second, Russia continues to assist Iran's missile program. Just last year, the Director of National Intelligence provided this committee an unclassified assessment of Russia's missile proliferation to Iran. He stated that Russia

continues to provide missile assistance to Iran, and that this assistance “has helped Iran move toward self-sufficiency in the production of ballistic missiles.”

- Third, Russian entities continue to face U.S. sanction for WMD- and missile-related transfers. Since 2001, ten Russian entities have been sanctioned by the United States on eleven separate occasions.
- Fourth, Russia has sold Iran advanced conventional weapons and air-defense systems. By January of 2007, Russia had delivered to Iran Tor M1 advanced anti-aircraft missile systems, among other advanced weapons.

I am deeply concerned by the casual treatment given to these crucial issues by the unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement, which was submitted along with the text of the agreement. This document states, “The United States has received assurances from Russia at the highest levels that its government would not tolerate cooperation with Iran in violation of its UN Security Council obligations.”

Assurances? How can we rely on assurances? What happened to ‘Trust But Verify?’

As we all know, the Bush Administration does not really believe that Russia’s proliferation activity has halted. We know this because they have requested a waiver from this Committee of Section 6(b) of the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act, which requires the President to make a determination that Russia is fully committed to preventing the transfer of WMD and missile technologies to Iran, Syria, and North Korea.

If the Administration cannot make a determination that Russia is not a proliferator, how can it ask this Congress to allow nuclear cooperation with Russia? I commend Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen for the excellent work she has done to expose this blatant contradiction.

I would also note that the Government Accountability Office is currently investigating the development of the Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement, and its classified annex, at the request of Chairman Dingell of the Energy and Commerce Committee and Chairman Stupak of the Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee. The report will detail whether the Administration omitted information “which could invalidate, modify, or impair the conclusions” of the document.

I urge this Committee to take into consideration the apparently flawed Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement, and consult with the GAO on the findings of their ongoing investigation.

Some have argued that the defeat of this agreement would prevent valuable nuclear nonproliferation work between the United States and Russia. As an ardent and

committed proponent of effective nonproliferation policies, let me assure this Committee that nonproliferation programs such as Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction and highly-enriched uranium blend-down will not be affected whatsoever whether this agreement goes forward or not.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify here today. As this committee continues to shine a spotlight on Russia's proliferation practices, it will be clear that the US-Russia Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation should be rejected.

Thank you.