



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

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CHAIRMAN HUNTER OPENING STATEMENT

Full Committee Hearing on Options Available to the United States to Counter a Nuclear Iran

Washington, D.C. – This morning the committee is meeting to consider the implications of a nuclear Iran. A nuclear Iran would radically alter the security situation in the Middle East at the same time it called into question the continued relevance of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and our efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The big question, of course, is what can we do about it. We have three experts on the Middle East, Iran, and proliferation here today to help us review our options.

They are:

Mr. Michael Eisenstadt, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Dr. George Perkovich, The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Mr. Ilan Berman, American Foreign Policy Council

This is a particularly timely hearing given Iran's recent decision to break the seals on some of its reprocessing facilities and the Administration's success in convincing other members of the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran should be reported to the United Nations Security Council for its nuclear activities.

That said, I worry about the seriousness of international efforts to stop, or turn back, an Iranian bomb program. Iran's negotiating strategy has clearly sought to divide the United States from its allies and buy time for Iran's nuclear capabilities to evolve. That strategy has had some success. After all, we've known that Iran had violated its safeguards agreements for years. Yet, the Europeans have been reluctant to hold Iran accountable. As a result, Iran bought time to continue developing its nuclear capabilities. Even now, the International Atomic Energy Agency is only reporting Iran to the Security Council, as if every member of the Security Council is not already aware of Iran's behavior. There is no guarantee that the Security Council will take any meaningful action. The United States has gone along with the European strategy in the interests of multilateralism, which may be necessary for any diplomatic efforts to succeed. But, that has given Iranian scientists and engineers more time to work. Time is not on our side.

Our witnesses are going to review U.S. options for the worst case scenario, a nuclear-armed Iran. Their testimony will help us sort out the consequences of a nuclear Iran and how we might deal with that future. At the same time, they will highlight some of the policy options that may be available to us now. Finally, they will help us review a debate about the nature of the Iranian regime. Does Iran respond to the traditional sticks and carrots of international diplomacy, or is it run by religious extremists with entirely different motivations? Iran is one of the most aggressive state sponsors of international terrorism. It actively supports Hamas and Hezbollah, which had killed more Americans than Al Qaeda before September 11th. Its newly elected President claims to have received visions from God and reportedly believes that he can trigger the return of the twelfth Imam through a confrontation with the West. That is not far from Al Qaeda's vision for the world. Clearly, we need to get ahead of Iran's nuclear program before it is too late.

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