

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
The President
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

On Saturday, September 17th, a Treasury Department spokesman confirmed that your administration has made two wire transfer payments to Iran in the last 14 months -- one in July 2015 and one in April 2016. The 2015 payment, according to press reporting, was for approximately \$848,000 and was divided between the Iranian Ministry of Environment and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. The 2016 payment was for approximately \$9 million as part of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in exchange for Iran's removal of heavy water supplies associated with its nuclear weapons program, according to the same reporting.¹ These wire transfers, Mr. President, seemingly contradict what you have previously told the American people.

On August 4th, during a press conference discussing your payment of a \$400 million ransom to Iran in an exchange for the release of American hostages, you justified making this payment in foreign cash by saying, "[T]he reason that we had to give them cash is precisely because we are so strict in maintaining sanctions and we do not have a banking relationship with Iran that we couldn't send them a check and we could not wire the money."² But, unless a new sanctions regime has been put in place after April 2016, this is clearly not the case as evidenced by the 2015 and 2016 wire transfers discussed above.

It would seem, then, that not only did you embark on a policy that ultimately endangers American lives by incentivizing foreign governments to detain our citizens as a means of extortion, but that this policy was enacted in a manner that maximizes Iran's ability to hide its use of these funds. Furthermore, you appear to be denying Nebraskans a clear understanding of how and why these funds were given to the world's leading state-sponsor of terrorism. As such, I respectfully request written answers to the following questions:

¹ "U.S. wire payments to Iran undercut Obama - POLITICO." 2016. 19 Sep. 2016
<<http://www.politico.com/story/2016/09/us-iran-payments-wire-transfer-228324>>

² "Press Conference by the President After Meeting with National ..." 2016. 19 Sep. 2016
<<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/04/press-conference-president-after-meeting-national-security-officials>>

1. How many wire transfer payments has your administration made to Iran?
2. How many cash payments has your administration made to Iran?
3. Are there any other types of payments your administration has made to Iran? If so, please list them as well as their respective purpose, date of payment, and value.
4. What, if any, payments to Iran are scheduled? What is the value of each payment and how do you intend to make these payments?
5. What sanctions were you asserting in your August 4, 2016 press conference prevent the United States from making wire transfer payments to Iran? Did these sanctions come into effect after April 2016?
6. Were the July 2015 and April 2016 wire transfers to Iran made directly or via third-party financial intermediaries?
7. Why was a cash payment of \$400 million preferable to a wire transfer?
8. Did Iran request a cash payment? If so, why did you not reject this request in order to maintain accountability for the use of these funds?
9. Do you have any information suggesting Iran is using any of these funds to support its Revolutionary Guard Corps or to support terrorist groups. Can you rule this out?
10. How many Americans are still detained in Iran? How many have been detained since your \$400 million payment?

Sincerely,



Ben Sasse
U.S. Senator