

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 7, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

As Members of Congress look forward to carefully reviewing the terms of a nuclear agreement subject to the Iran Review Act, I write to express my concern about the terms under which existing United Nations Security Council sanctions against Iran might be lifted pursuant to such an agreement. It is absolutely vital that any Security Council resolutions lifting sanctions contain a robust mechanism for the rapid reinstatement of sanctions if Iran fails to comply with any relevant obligations completely and verifiably. That means that any such resolution must contain procedures that clearly place the burden of proof on Iran.

On April 17, 2015, you stated: "Our main concern here is making sure that if Iran doesn't abide by its agreement that we don't have to jump through a whole bunch of hoops in order to reinstate sanctions." That standard cannot be met if the Council enacts resolutions that merely declare Iran's obligation to comply proactively, but provide no practical, automatic consequences if any dispute over Iran's compliance remains unresolved. If a dispute over Iran's compliance arises, and the consequence is merely votes and referrals to the Security Council and more votes, then the burden of proof, for all practical purposes, will be on the United States to demonstrate Iran's noncompliance. Iran will then have a strong incentive to manufacture disputes over its compliance as a way to escape its obligations under the agreement. That is a recipe for failure.

Any agreement that erects procedural hurdles between a dispute over Iran's compliance and the automatic reinstatement of sanctions will leave you and future presidents handicapped in your ability to keep the pressure on Iran. Without meaningful pressure, Iran will almost certainly continue its consistent pattern of lying and cheating on its nuclear weapons program.

We should not give up on longstanding demands of the international community that Iran halt its enrichment of uranium and dismantle its dual-use nuclear facilities while Iran remains the world's most dangerous state-sponsor of terrorism. I am concerned that you have made one concession after another to secure Iran's agreement. As Senator Bob Corker wrote to you on

June 15, 2015, your own administration officials have all but admitted that the sanctions relief will be used by Iran at some level to support terrorism. The message you are sending to other countries is that they can cheat and defy the international community and get away with it.

No deal is better than a bad deal. Unless Iran agrees to anytime-anywhere inspections and verification measures, full disclosure of previous weaponization efforts, gradual and conditional sanctions relief, and automatic snap-back of sanctions, Congress should reject the deal and ensure that both sanctions and military action remain on the table to stop Iran's nuclear ambitions. The ultimate goal must be for Iran to dismantle its nuclear facilities, facilities built in secret and in violation of international law, facilities that it defends like military targets and doesn't need for anything except nuclear weapons. We cannot let the world's most dangerous weapons fall into the hands of the world's most dangerous state-sponsor of terrorism.

The existing U.S. and U.N. sanctions may not have much chance of convincing this regime in Iran to give up its nuclear weapons ambitions. But those sanctions are a strong incentive for a future Iranian government that is peace-loving and law-abiding to turn away from the world's most dangerous capabilities. And those sanctions send a message that the pursuit of nuclear weapons is a blind alley into isolation from which there is no exit, as in the case of North Korea. Despite the enormous long-term leverage the sanctions give U.S. policy, your administration is lifting them under a deal that appears to legitimize the essential elements of Iran's nuclear weapons program. You are telegraphing to the world that if a rogue regime really wants nuclear capabilities, the U.S. has no diplomatic or military way of stopping them. That is a deplorably irresponsible, reckless, and false message, and it can only increase the risk of instability, armed conflict, and widespread nuclear proliferation in the long run.

The contemplated agreement reportedly includes a dispute resolution mechanism. It is vitally important that the reinstatement of sanctions be triggered through an automatic procedure if a dispute over Iran's compliance is not fully resolved after a reasonable period. If the agreement does not provide for such a procedure, future presidents will be deprived of any effective diplomatic means for stopping Iran's nuclear breakout, and the chances for armed conflict will be dramatically increased. Please do not deprive our country of the few remaining diplomatic options that remain for resolving the Iran nuclear standoff peacefully. The burden of proof must be on Iran to demonstrate its compliance with the terms of the dangerous nuclear deal your team is negotiating.

I look forward to reviewing the terms of any nuclear agreement as provided by the Iran Review Act, including the terms of any related Security Council resolution. There is no more important national security issue than ensuring Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Sasse
United States Senator