

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on Iran
September 19, 2006

The Committee meets today to examine U.S. policy towards Iran, with particular focus on our response to Iran's continued pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.

The United States has a clear interest in preventing such an Iranian capability. Iran has been a de-stabilizing force in the Middle East. As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote in the Washington Post last week: "Everything returns to the challenge of Iran. It trains, finances and equips Hezbollah, the state within a state in Lebanon. It finances and supports Moqtada al-Sadr's militia, the state within a state in Iraq. It works on a nuclear weapons program which would drive nuclear proliferation out of control and provide a safety net for the systemic destruction of at least the regional order."

Diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran to halt its enrichment and re-processing activities have continued in fits and starts. In July and August, Iran turned down a package of incentives offered by the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany. Iran also rejected UN Security Council Resolution 1696, which required the suspension of its enrichment activities. In recent days, we have seen reports of additional European attempts at dialogue with Iran against the backdrop of impending UN sanctions.

This Committee has devoted much attention to examining Iran's nuclear intentions and U.S. policy options. Last May 17th and 18th, we held a two-hearing series on this topic. Our witnesses – experts from academia and policy organizations – judged that the Iranian leadership is highly motivated to pursue a nuclear weapons capability by national pride, the desire to have a potent military deterrent, and the goal of greatly expanding their influence in the region. Our experts said that Iran will not easily be dissuaded from its current path, but that the leadership would not be prepared to sacrifice everything. They also noted that there are some divergent views within the Iranian regime on the wisdom of pursuing a nuclear weapons capability in defiance of international will.

The task for American diplomats must be to bolster that international will and construct an international consensus in favor of a plan that presents the Iranian regime with a stark choice between the benefits of accepting a verifiable cessation of their nuclear program and the detriments of proceeding along their current course.

The United States currently has in place extensive unilateral economic sanctions against Iran. Some have suggested that the Congress should pass legislation targeting additional unilateral sanctions against foreign companies that invest in Iran. I understand the impulse to take this step. But given the evident priority that the Iranians assign to their nuclear program, I see little chance that such unilateral sanctions would have any effect on Iranian calculations. Such sanctions would, however, be a challenge to the very nations that we are trying to coalesce behind a more potent multilateral approach to Iran. We should not take steps that undermine our

prospects for garnering international support for multilateral sanctions, which offer better prospects for achieving our objectives than unilateral measures.

If we are able to proceed with multilateral sanctions in the UN, we should recall the lessons of the UN sanctions regime against Iraq. To the extent possible the sanctions should be targeted on the Iranian regime or on maximizing popular discontent with the regime. Sanctions also must be designed to achieve the broadest international support over potentially many years. If a sanctions regime lacks the full commitment of the international community, it is more likely to be undermined by leakage and corruption.

As the United States pursues sanctions at the United Nations, it is important that we continue to explore potential diplomatic openings with Iran -- either through our own efforts or those of our European negotiating partners. Even if such efforts ultimately are not fruitful, they may reduce risks of miscalculation, improve our ability to interpret what is going on in Iran, and strengthen our efforts to enlist the support of key nations to oppose Iran's nuclear weapons program.

We are delighted to be joined by two distinguished panels to help us assess these issues and evaluate policy options. On the first panel, we welcome back our good friend Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Nicholas Burns. We look forward to his assessment of current diplomatic efforts.

On the second panel, we welcome three experts in the field. Dr. Ashton Carter, Co-director of the Preventive Defense Project at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, is a former senior official in the Defense Department who, with former Defense Secretary William Perry, has recently led a blue-ribbon workshop on the Iranian nuclear issue. Ambassador Martin Indyk, Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, grappled with the challenges posed by Iran as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs in the 1990s. And Dr. Ray Takeyh, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, is an expert on Iran's complex internal politics.

We thank our witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

###