



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM AND
UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS
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PRESS RELEASE

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OPENING STATEMENT OF JIM SAXTON

Hearing on Understanding the Iran Threat

Washington, D.C. – The Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities meets this morning to discuss and understand the threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran to U.S. national security.

It is my view that Iran is on the rise. No other country in the region can rival it and Iran's influence is strong. As the new Iranian President's speech at the United Nations demonstrated, Iran intends to pursue its nuclear program – whether or not it is sanctioned by the international community – and it is willing to disseminate its nuclear know-how to others as well.

Iran has taken full advantage of the break up of the Soviet Union and the void left in Central Asia and the Middle East, while consolidating its power under the Ayatollahs. Iran promotes radicalism to the east by exploiting the power vacuum left in Afghanistan. In the West they fund insurgents in Iraq, and in the Levant they stoke the fire of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

In my opinion, the Iranian influence is deeply felt throughout the region, and to some extent, around the world. The most troubling example, of course, is that Tehran uses surrogate terrorist organizations like Hizballah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to spread terror, while at the same time it avoids direct links to these cowardly activities.

Instrumental to the war on terrorism is stemming threats presented not only by non-state actors, but also the threats posed by the states that support terrorism. In the war on terrorism there is no greater potential threat than that of terrorists armed with Weapons of Mass Destruction. It is therefore appropriate, and vital, that this subcommittee probe into whether Iran, if at all, is advancing the lethal nexus of WMD and terrorism.

It is for these reasons that I believe the U.S. must take a renewed look at the Iranian threat. Confronting Iran on nuclear proliferation is important, but it is not enough. As the hearing today will demonstrate, Iran presents an array of challenges to our national security. We must be innovative in our response to Iran – not one that necessarily involves a military component – but one that takes to heart the severity of the Iranian threat.

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