

Senator Robb HASC Iran Testimony

June 20, 2012

Introduction

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith and Members of the House Committee on Armed Services, thank you for inviting me to testify this morning on such an important topic. I am honored to be here with my colleague on the Bipartisan Policy Center Task Force on Iran, Steve Rademaker, and the other distinguished panelists.

Overview

Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons capability is the most urgent national security threat facing the United States. For the last four years I have served as the co-chair of the Bipartisan Policy Center Task Force on Iran, working to help articulate and advocate a realistic and robust approach to this pressing problem. Our latest report – published February 1, 2012 – lays out a comprehensive strategy that we continue to believe offers the best hope for a peaceful resolution of Iran's nuclear challenge, without sacrificing vital national interests or security.

The report reinforces prior BPC studies calling for a triple-track strategy to prevent a nuclear weapons-capable Iran: the simultaneous pursuit of diplomacy, sanctions, and visible, credible preparations for a military option. This approach is in keeping with the policy articulated by President Obama as a candidate and in his presidency, including his recent statement that preventing a nuclear Iran is “profoundly in the security interests of the United States” and his commitment to “use all elements of American power” to achieve this goal. As the warnings of an Israeli strike rise along with Iran's enriched uranium stockpile, the president has urged Iran to understand that “the window to solving [this] diplomatically is shrinking.”

Indeed, BPC analysis of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports indicates Iran has advanced dramatically in its quest: overcoming technical hurdles to almost triple its uranium enrichment rate since 2009, enriching uranium to ever higher levels, testing more effective centrifuge models, beginning operations at a previously undisclosed underground facility, and continuing its weaponization program.

Still, a negotiated agreement involving persistent invasive inspections remains the best possible outcome of this standoff and it behooves us to pursue all diplomatic options. For this reason, President Obama's sincere diplomatic outreach to Tehran has been an important and necessary step. Yet the evidence from past and current talks demonstrates that negotiations and sanctions, however harsh, will not solve the problem alone. Iran's stalling tactics during its most recent rounds of talks with the P5+1 this spring underscore this point. The time has come to dramatically increase the pressure on the Iranian regime. To ensure the best possible conditions for reaching a diplomatic settlement, the United States must exert the utmost pressure on Iran's leadership. This will require demonstrating its resolve to do whatever is necessary, to

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include taking military action and supporting Israeli military action, to thwart Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions.

It is precisely the credible threat of military action that can enable peaceful diplomatic solutions. When faced with a deteriorating military balance after eight years of war with Iraq in the 1980s, Ayatollah Khomeini agreed to an armistice even though he likened it to drinking from a poisoned chalice. Fear of military action apparently led Iran to briefly halt its nuclear program after the United States toppled Iraq's Saddam Hussein in 2003. It also led Moammar Qaddafi of Libya to halt his country's nuclear program. Had Qaddafi instead continued program and acquired nuclear weapons, it is unlikely NATO would have intervened in Libya's civil war in 2011 – a lesson not lost on Iran's leaders.

At this late date, it is only the credible threat of force, combined with sanctions, that affords any realistic hope of an acceptable diplomatic resolution. There are three primary components of a credible military threat: an effective information and messaging strategy, economic preparations and credible military readiness activities. Undertaking these steps would boost the credibility of the military option, thereby strengthening the chance for sanctions and diplomacy to succeed in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the standoff over Iran's nuclear program.

Information and Messaging Strategy

In addition to its hard power assets, the sincerity and gravity of America's commitment to thwarting Iran's nuclear ambitions can be bolstered through four actions:

Strengthen declaratory policy. Recent statements by the president have conveyed the Administration's resolve to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability. It is essential that the Administration maintain a clear and consistent message in the coming months and avoid sending contradictory signals, which have previously undermined the clarity of the U.S. position, as well as diminished prospects for a peaceful resolution.

Start a public debate about U.S. policy toward Iran. Policymakers need to engage the American public in a frank discussion about both the risks of a nuclear-capable Iran and what it will take, realistically, to thwart it. The President and his Administration will have to expand its public engagement on the issue, but Congress can play a role as well. Hearings on the dangers posed by a nuclear Iran, the feasibility of a military strike and its ramifications can help inform the public about this important issue and signal American's resolve to Tehran.

Demonstrate further the strength of U.S. alliances. Senior Administration officials should conduct more regular, high profile visits to confer with and support U.S. allies deeply concerned by Iran's nuclear program. High-ranking defense officials, including

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the Secretary of Defense, should also oversee military exercises designed to counter Iranian threats to the region. In essence, this is a form of strategic communication designed to reassure our security partners and signal the seriousness of our intentions to Tehran. Senior U.S. officials should take the opportunity to demonstrate U.S. commitments and engage partners concerned by a nuclear-capable Iran by addressing this issue at regional forums such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Regional Security Summits held annually in Bahrain and Singapore.

Publicize certain relevant activities to demonstrate our resolve to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. To the extent possible, military and civilian officials should highlight through actions, statements, remarks and releases of videos and photographs those measures the United States is taking to prepare for a military conflict. These include: advancements in, and deployments of, the U.S. Air Force's Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP); efforts to increase floating oil storage in Asia; defense appropriations reprogramming to bolster U.S. military capabilities; and repositioning of armaments, munitions and personnel in preparation for a military option, should it prove necessary.

Economic Preparations

Military conflict with Iran would risk disrupting oil supply not only from Iran but from the Persian Gulf, leading to higher oil prices and economic dislocation. It will require the United States to take action now that would mitigate the economic costs of any possible military conflict.

Iran is the world's fifth-largest exporter of crude oil and an important supplier to China, India, Japan, South Korea and southeastern Europe. The threat from U.S. sanctions on Iran's Central Bank and from a European Union (E.U.) oil embargo beginning next month have already curtailed Iran's oil exports from roughly two to one-and-a-half million barrels per day in 2012. These would likely temporarily stop altogether if either Israel or the United States attacked Iran's nuclear installations. This cessation could last several weeks, depending upon the duration and impact of the military conflict.

Moreover, Iran could retaliate – and deepen global opposition to a strike – by seeking to damage oil facilities of neighboring countries and/or attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 17 million barrels per day transit. This represents 35 percent of seaborne oil exports and about 20 percent of global oil trade. The market is capable of making up for the loss of Iranian oil exports. Global spare production capacity is currently about two to two-and-a-half million barrels per day, virtually all of it in Saudi Arabia. In fact, the threat of sanctions has already convinced Iran's main customers to begin replacing Iranian supplies with imports from other Gulf producers.

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However, if the Strait of Hormuz was closed temporarily, most of the 17 million barrels that flow through there on a daily basis, and any spare capacity that would be brought online, could not reach most of the market (though some could be rerouted). The consequences for oil prices and the U.S. and global economies would be significant. For every annual price increase of oil of \$10 per barrel, the U.S. gross domestic product is estimated to decline about 0.5 percent. Many Western countries have strategic reserves to cushion the blow. The United States has about 700 million barrels in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), which equates to about 77 days of imports. The SPR has a stated drawdown capacity of about 4.25 million barrels of oil per day, but there are concerns that the maximum delivery rate might be measurably lower. Therefore, we recommend that:

- The U.S. Department of Energy initiate a study, to be completed within 60 days, to assess the infrastructure constraints that might inhibit the SPR's ability to fulfill the initial 4.25 million barrels per day of stated delivery capacity. The United States and other Western countries have strategic reserves to cushion the blow from any Persian Gulf supply cutoff.

Taking this step would mitigate the economic impact of a disruption of oil supply from Iran and other Persian Gulf oil exporters, calm the market, lower the oil price premium caused by the Iranian crisis, reduce Iran's ability to blackmail the world and signal U.S. resolve to utilize the military option.

Credible Military Readiness Activities

The United States needs to undertake efforts to underscore that, if all else fails, it is prepared and willing to launch an effective strike against Iran's nuclear program. Boosting the visibility and credibility of the military option would send a strong signal to Iran and press the regime to negotiate in good faith. It will also help persuade buyers of Iran's oil, such as China, to support U.S. sanctions to peacefully resolve this crisis or face the possibility of a significant disruption of oil supply from the Persian Gulf.

U.S. military planners are presumed to have prepared an array of options for attacking Iran's nuclear facilities and addressing potential retaliation. In recent months, the military has buttressed its presence in the region, including the deployment of two carrier strike groups and a Mine Countermeasures (MCM) Squadron to the Fifth Fleet. This deployment strengthens U.S. capabilities, if needed, to: launch a sustained sea and air campaign against a range of Iranian nuclear and military targets; protect seaborne shipping; enforce a quarantine of refined petroleum imports to Iran; and repel Iranian retaliation against U.S. interests and allies in the region. It is important to sustain and

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augment these efforts. The United States should undertake additional measures to boost the credibility of the military option:

Augment U.S. Fifth Fleet Capacity in the Region. The U.S. Navy regularly maintains one carrier strike group and often a smaller expeditionary strike group in the Fifth Fleet's area of responsibility, which includes the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman offshore Iran. This presence should be expanded by procuring and deploying force protection munitions and other systems to reinforce existing U.S. naval capabilities. Iranian naval capabilities focus increasingly on unconventional forces – anti-ship mines and missiles, unmanned aircraft and swarming small fast-attack and patrol craft – and employ asymmetric tactics to threaten tanker traffic, overwhelm enemy vessels and deny access to waters off Iran. Additional surface-to-air missiles, anti-submarine warfare capabilities, ship gun modifications and ammunition, and electronic and cyber warfare support would reinforce the Fifth Fleet's ability to defend against such threats.

Preposition Military Supplies. Ensuring sufficient supplies of aircraft, munitions, fuel and other key materiel for air- and sea-based missions at key forward support locations in the Middle East, Indian Ocean and possibly Central Asia and southeastern Europe would reduce the logistical challenges and buildup phase of any potential military operation. In particular, and with approval from Great Britain, the United States will need to preposition additional strategic bombers at Diego Garcia – including those capable of deploying the MOP – as well as additional aerial refueling tankers and bunker-buster munitions. We also support prepositioning U.S. bunker-buster munitions and aerial refueling tankers in Israel.

Explore "Strategic Partnerships" with Countries on Iran's Northern Perimeter. Currently, U.S. forces and support staff can be positioned to Iran's west, south and east. This posture should be bolstered by enhanced U.S. access to military facilities along the Caspian Basin, north of Iran. Turkey is a NATO ally but has significant disagreements with the United States, and Russia's military influence in Armenia is too deeply embedded for that country to coordinate significantly with U.S. planning. Azerbaijan is much more cooperative with the United States on regional energy and security matters, and Israel and the United States recently increased arms sales and defense cooperation with that country. Baku is a major logistical hub for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and could provide a forward support location for a credible U.S. military option against Iran. Turkmenistan serves as another key node in NATO supply routes for Afghanistan, hosts U.S. Air Force personnel and has facilities to support U.S. logistical operations.

Conduct Broad Military Exercises with Regional Allies. Military exercises enhance the readiness and capabilities of U.S. and allied forces to conduct a range of joint offensive

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and defensive operations against Iranian nuclear and military targets. Such exercises, whether undertaken in-theater or elsewhere, should include deployment of U.S. strategic bombers and aerial refueling tankers to forward support locations, and address Iran's growing sea- and land-based anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities.

Strengthen Air Force Capabilities Required for an Effective Strike. If all else fails, the U.S. military is capable of launching an effective strike against Iran's nuclear program. Augmenting the capabilities required to do so will send Iran a strong signal of U.S. resolve. Specific measures include:

- Expedite the building and deployment of the MOP bunker buster. The bomb unit is reportedly capable of penetrating 200 feet of reinforced concrete, which is sufficient to neutralize Iran's known underground nuclear sites. The first 20 of the bombs were delivered to the Air Force in late 2011, and can be deployed on B-2 and B-52 strategic bombers. We applaud Congress's approval earlier this year of additional funding to continue developing and improving this weapon.
- Install additional command and control, cyber, electronic and information warfare and intelligence support systems.

Augment Israeli Capabilities to Strike Iranian Nuclear Facilities and Defend Itself from Retaliatory Strikes. For several decades, the United States has supported Israel's security interests through a variety of military and non-military aid. As the threat from Iran and Hezbollah has increased, the United States has taken careful steps to strengthen Israel's military capabilities. Through such efforts, the United States enhances the credibility of the military threat against Iran's nuclear facilities without encouraging or condoning Israeli military action.

As with any military action, an Israeli strike carries risks. There is a possibility that an Israeli strike could fail to sufficiently deter or deny Iran's attempt to reconstitute its nuclear program. Whether successful or not, a strike would be expected to trigger retaliation by Iran and its terrorist proxies (primarily Hezbollah) against Israel, Iranian-inspired terror attacks abroad and a spike in oil prices. However, none of these risks pose as great a threat to U.S. strategic interests as a nuclear weapons-capable Iran.

Strengthening Israel's ability to mount an effective attack on Iran's nuclear facilities would serve the same purpose as boosting U.S. military capability to strike; namely, to pressure Iran to negotiate and persuade buyers of Iranian oil to abide by sanctions. Augmenting Israeli strike capability could also calm Israeli concerns about U.S. commitment to its defense, thus possibly postponing its decision on whether to strike.

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Finally, if Israel did feel compelled to strike, it would serve U.S. interests for that strike to be as successful as possible.

There are two main ways the United States can usefully strengthen Israel's strike capabilities against Iranian nuclear facilities: by transferring aerial refueling tankers, and by transferring advanced bunker busters. Israel already possesses some aerial refueling capacity; however, providing it with three KC-135 refueling planes would increase the range and efficiency of its fighter and bomber aircraft to reach Iranian targets. Similarly, Israel possesses some bunker-buster munitions, including an estimated 100 GBU-28 bunker busters delivered since 2006, which could damage Iran's known underground nuclear sites. Selling Israel 200 GBU-31 bunker busters would increase its capacity to destroy such targets. The GBU-31 bomb unit uses the same BLU-113 penetrator as the GBU-28, and can be deployed on the same aircraft, while utilizing a GPS tailkit for improved precision. This would allow the Israeli Air Force (IAF) to maximize damage to buried targets, allocate extra aircraft to strike packages and retain the capability to launch follow-on sorties if needed. We therefore applaud the House of Representatives for recently passing H.R. 4133, which calls for providing Israel with air refueling tankers and specialized munitions.

In addition to offensive capabilities, the United States has worked closely with Israel to develop and deploy a layered anti-missile defense system to intercept short-, medium- and intermediate-range rockets and missiles fired at Israel. The United States should do what it can to further upgrade Israeli anti-missile defense systems and conduct joint air-defense exercises. Along similar lines, we support the multi-billion dollar arms sales to Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that include anti-missile defense systems.

Bipartisan support exists in Congress for strengthening Israel's ability to defend itself from the Iranian threat. The House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 4133 with the purpose of enhancing Israel's defensive capabilities, including "the military capabilities necessary to deter and defend itself by itself against any threats." The House also introduced bipartisan legislation H.R. 4229, which calls for the "procurement, maintenance, and sustainment of the Iron Dome anti-missile defense system." (H.R. 4133, *The United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act of 2012*; H.R. 4229, *Iron Dome Support Act*.)

Conclusion

President Obama and congressional leaders have been clear that the United States will not tolerate a nuclear-capable Iran. Simultaneous pursuit of diplomacy, effective sanctions and credible and visible preparations for a military option would further

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demonstrate President Obama's resolve to use "all elements of American power" to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions and provide the best hope for achieving a peaceful resolution of this accelerating crisis.