

**Chairman Michael McCaul
Opening Remarks
As Prepared for Delivery**

Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management
and
Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

“Iranian Terror Operations on American Soil”

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The Iranian Government is a threat to the international community building weapons of mass destruction. It is a threat to the Middle East dominating the region through intimidation and support to terrorist organizations. And now we discover the Iranian Government is a threat to the American homeland attempting to assassinate an Ambassador from another country on our soil using drug cartels operating on our doorstep.

Enough is enough. In the past we and the International Community have attempted to use economic sanctions. It is obvious these sanctions have not worked. Our message to Iran should be simple—continue threatening the national security of the United States and have no doubt there will be a punitive response.

Our hearing today examines the threats from the Iranian Government, the timid U.S. response and alternative courses of action.

In February, the International Atomic Agency Director agreed that Iranian leaders seem very determined to build a nuclear weapon. Additionally Iran has declared it has successfully enriched uranium.

Iran's growing arsenal of ballistic missiles enhances its power projection and there are reports Iran is adapting one of its ballistic missiles to deliver a nuclear warhead.

The U.S. Department of State considers Iran the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism. Since its inception in 1979, the Islamic state has used terrorism as an integral part of its foreign and military policies. It provides funding, weapons, training, and sanctuary to numerous terrorist groups—most notably those operating in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries.

Iranian-backed political violence has killed more than 1,000 people in over 200 terrorist attacks, including the 1983 suicide bombings of American and French military barracks in Beirut, killing 299 people.

Most recently, the U.S. Department of Justice filed charges of conspiracy to commit terrorism against Manssor Arbabsiar [AR-BOB'-SEE-AR], a naturalized US citizen who also holds an Iranian passport and Gholam Shakuri [SHAH-KOO-REE], who was identified as a member of the Quds Force, a special covert unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Shakuri [SHAH-KOO-REE] is still at large and thought to be in Iran.

The charges state Arbabsiar [AR-BOB'-SEE-AR], who was living in Corpus Christi, Texas, attempted to hire the Mexican drug cartel "Los Zetas" to assassinate the Saudi Arabian Ambassador in Washington, DC. We should be concerned about a nexus between Iran and the drug cartels.

This plot indicates a dangerous escalation of the Iranian government's role in the sponsorship of terrorism. Remember that World War I started because of an assassination of a foreign diplomat.

The Iranian government has established strong ties to Latin America. Presidents Ahmadinejad and Chavez are allies. Iran is focused on recruiting Venezuelan youth of Arab origin, for use as intelligence and militant operatives. Some are brought to Iran for training. Sources claim that Hezbollah is involved in this operation.

In addition, Iran Air operates a Tehran-to-Caracas flight commonly referred to as "Aeroterror" by intelligence officials for allegedly transporting terror suspects, uranium shipments, IRGC members and Hezbollah operatives to South America. The Venezuelan government shields passenger lists from Interpol on those flights.

Obviously Iran is a rogue state, which continues to work toward acquiring nuclear weapons, building long-range missiles and supporting terrorism. Actions taken by the Administration are not working.

We do not enforce sanctions against Iran's Central Bank. Iran uses this bank to circumvent sanctions. Additionally this bank assists the Iranian Quds Force in funneling money to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Strict sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran must be enforced sooner rather than later.

If it turns out that this Iranian assassination plot on US soil was sanctioned at the highest levels of the Iranian Government then I believe military force should not be ruled out. I do not think it should be taken off the table.

I look forward to the witness testimony, and I especially look forward to what actions the Obama Administration will take to demonstrate that the Iranian Government's actions are unacceptable.

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