

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We appreciate your commitment to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. We believe the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the P5+1 and Iran did not sufficiently ensure Iran could never obtain a nuclear weapon. In return for temporary limits on aspects of Iran's nuclear program, this agreement allowed Iran access to billions of dollars in sanctions relief which it has continued to use to advance its ballistic missile program and expand its support for terrorism. We urge you to work with our allies and consult with Congress in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion to outline a better, comprehensive deal with Iran that would block its path to a nuclear weapon and blunt its global malign activities. This would help preserve the security and interests of the United States and our allies, including Israel.

In recent years, Iran directly attacked U.S. troops in Iraq, injuring more than 100 servicemembers. In addition, Iran damaged oil tankers in the Gulf, fired cruise missiles against our allies, and maintained its support of terrorist groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel. Iran has not ceased its destructive behavior since the implementation of the JCPOA. We believe a better deal will improve security in the region. The United States reimposed sanctions on Iran which increased leverage for pushing Iran to the table. Additionally, we recognize the positive momentum created by regional developments, including the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab states, thereby forging regional partnerships better able to counter Iran.

There are numerous provisions of the JCPOA that should be improved. Most notably, various "sunset clauses" could result in Iran rushing to obtain a nuclear weapon once the deal expires. Absent any changes, the agreement would have less than five years before Iran is able to ramp up its nuclear program to industrial scale. Iran has committed other concerning violations of the JCPOA. Iran has abandoned commitments regarding research and development of centrifuges. Not only is Iran enriching uranium at its Fordow facility where no nuclear material is permitted under the deal, it is enriching uranium at 20 percent and has threatened to enrich up to 60 percent, dramatically reducing the breakout time for a nuclear weapon. A new deal must also provide the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with access to all nuclear sites. In its June 5, 2020 report the International Atomic Energy Agency noted that "Iran has denied the Agency access to two locations for almost a year, refusing to engage in discussions to clarify possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear related activities." Last month Tehran announced it would reduce access and limit video surveillance footage of certain sites. Additionally, the JCPOA did not address Iran's non-nuclear issues including its robust arsenal of

ballistic missiles and other malign and destabilizing activities. Iran continues to transfer weapons to terrorist groups and proxies, engage in illicit and deceptive financial practices, and commit gross human rights abuses and violations, including taking of U.S. and other foreign citizen hostages.

The administration recently eased travel restrictions for Iranian diplomats at the United Nations; Iran nonetheless increased its provocative actions. Going forward, the administration should make use of existing leverage to sharpen the choices available to Tehran. The world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism must be held accountable for its nuclear enrichment and undermining regional peace and stability. We appreciate the steps you have already taken to do so by ordering a targeted military strike against a facility used by Iran-backed militia groups in eastern Syria, following escalating attacks on U.S. and coalition personnel in Iraq.

During your confirmation hearing, you expressed support for a better deal to address Iran's malign activity and a commitment to work with Congress. We strongly support that goal. We also believe it is critical that you consult with Israel and other partners in the region who are heavily impacted by Iran's malign activities.

We share the goal of preventing a nuclear armed Iran, inhibiting its ballistic missiles capabilities, and ending Iran's threats to the United States and our regional allies, including Israel. We are eager to work with you on this important foreign policy issue and look forward to consultations soon. Thank you for your service and dedication to the State Department and U.S. national interests.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



Steve Chabot
Member of Congress



Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



David Kustoff
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Elise M. Stefanik
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Anthony Gonzalez
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Juan Vargas
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Ted W. Lieu
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J. Luis Correa
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Haley M. Stevens
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Kurt Schrader
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Tom Reed
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Jim Costa
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