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AN EXAMINATION OF U.S.–IRAN POLICY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

OCTOBER 16, 2019

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AN EXAMINATION OF U.S.–IRAN POLICY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Rubio, Johnson, Gardner, Romney, Graham, Barrasso, Paul, Young, Cruz, Menendez, Cardin, Shaheen, Udall, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, and Merkley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

The CHAIRMAN. The Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate will come to order.

The chair would note we have a full house today and an enthusiastic audience I am sure. We would ask you to be respectful. I would remind everyone that holding up signs or making verbal outbursts during the proceedings is disruptive and appropriate action will be taken. If need be, we will suspend briefly while we restore order.

This morning we have a hearing on a matter that is really of pressing national security importance, and that is the relationship of the United States and, for that matter, the world with Iran.

This hearing is intended to do three things. Number one, we will consider the facts behind the maximum pressure campaign against Iran. We will examine the elements of Iran's necessary behavioral changes that would satisfy U.S. and the world's national security interests and, thirdly, assess Iran's willingness to behave as a responsible member of the international community.

Iran's pursuit of regional domination following the 1979 revolution transformed the fabric of the Middle East. The Iranian regime dangerously catalyzed sectarian identities and weaponized sect and religion against its neighbors. The regime triggered a Sunni-Shia war that threatens to unravel the greater Middle East.

The nuclear issue is but one aspect of the regime's malign conduct. Indeed, one of the biggest criticisms I had of the JCPOA was that it addressed only the nuclear issue and not the many other troubling aspects of Iran's behavior.

Iran continues to threaten its neighbors with ballistic missiles, conducts criminal maritime activity in international waters, continues to unlawfully hold American citizens, and fuels dangerous proxy conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Iranian-spon-

sored, precision-guided munitions are a threat aimed at the heart of Israel. Iran actively enables Assad's continued butchery in Syria. Additionally, the regime is working to subvert several other regional governments below the level of armed conflict.

Iran's support of proxies is perhaps the most nefarious. Ask any of our men and women in uniform who faced Iranian-provided roadside bombs in Iraq. Iran already has American blood on its hands. The lack of a more firm response by prior administrations has only encouraged further Iranian violence.

Inside of its borders, the regime's abuses against its own people continue to be a concern. Iranian citizens live under constant threat of arbitrary arrest and torture for expressing their most basic human rights, including freedom of expression and religion.

Indeed, despite the regime's claims of religious legitimacy, it is morally bankrupt, a kleptocracy that steals from its people in order to subvert its neighbors.

That brings us to a question on the most appropriate policies to curb the totality of Iranian behavior.

It is my assessment that the maximum pressure campaign against Iran is working and can serve as the bridge to more meaningful negotiations. I note that some of my colleagues have argued publicly that the maximum pressure campaign is not working. I will be the first to concede that the campaign has not achieved its goals, but on the other hand, it is clearly working.

Since May of last year, sanctions have denied the regime over $25 billion in oil revenue. The Administration estimates it will cost the regime as much as $50 billion annually.

The Iranian economy faces unprecedented strain. After nearly 30 rounds of highly targeted sanctions, the rial has plunged. Inflation is at 50 percent in Iran and climbing. Iran's economy is shrinking at a rate that should alarm Tehran. Nearly a six percent reduction in GDP for 2019 is estimated.

In my judgment, these are clear indications and clear evidence that, indeed, the sanctions are working.

For the first time, Iran's terror proxies have seen a reduction in funding. Hezbollah, once well-funded by Iran, has been reduced, as we all know, into panhandling for donations. Iran's proxies throughout the region are feeling the pinch. They are either going without pay or forced to undergo austerity measures to survive.

Make no mistake. Every dollar, every rial we deny the regime is money not spent on terrorism.

Iran's requests for total sanctions relief in order to come to the table should be and is a non-starter. The regime must demonstrate it is willing to negotiate in good faith or face continued pressure.

The pressure must have an international face. For too long, our European friends have sought to preserve a moribund nuclear deal that offered Iran a financial escape hatch to continue destabilizing the region. We have had numerous conversations with our European friends regarding that.

I welcomed the joint statement from the U.K., France, and Germany following Iran's attacks on Saudi Arabia. Apart from rightly identifying Iran as the culprit, our partners stressed the importance of addressing regional security issues, as well as the nuclear question. This was well received by us.

They must go further than that. Our European partners must follow the United Kingdom's lead and support the pursuit of behavioral changes on Iran's part.

My thoughts on the JCPOA are well known. The deal was a poor one, one that only partly addressed the nuclear issue and importantly—very importantly—ignored the rest of Iran's terrorist conduct and enriched the regime's illicit terrorist proxies.

Any new deal with Iran should address all facets of Iranian conduct, curbing the ballistic missile program, ensuring freedom of navigation consistent with international law, ending Iranian adventurism, and the regime's efforts to undermine governments and promote civil war through its proxies in addition to the nuclear issue.

The nuclear solution should not merely delay Iranian development of a nuclear weapon or sunset in a manner that allows the regime's scientists to sprint to the finish line. It is in the U.S.'s vital national security interests and, indeed, the interests of the entire world that Iran never possess a nuclear weapon.

Finally, a topic has emerged in public discourse that should be addressed. There are many that blame the U.S. diplomatic and economic efforts as the root cause of Iran's acts of violence. To you, I say you could not be more wrong. There is only one party to blame for Iran's acts of violence and that is the Iranian regime. There is only one bad actor here, and that is the Iranian regime.

The Iranian regime is feeling the weight of the growing community against them. Absent an attack on Americans or American assets abroad, we should not be moved by Iranian outbursts or attacks on shipping. We should continue to apply pressure until the regime capitulates and changes behavior. They will.

The Iranian regime is faced with a sharp choice. It is long past time that Iran enter the community of nations as a responsible actor and enjoy the many benefits, advantages, and cultural progress that all peace-loving nations on the planet take delight in. Otherwise, it will remain a pariah state.

This is an important issue, and I am glad we have the attendance we have today to examine this issue.

With that, I will recognize Senator Menendez.

[The prepared statement of Senator James E. Risch follows:]

Prepared Statement of Senator James E. Risch

This morning we have a hearing on a matter that is really of pressing national security importance—the relationship of the United States with Iran.

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The nuclear issue is but one aspect of the regime's malign conduct. Indeed, one of the biggest criticisms I had of the JCPOA was that it addressed only the nuclear issue and not the many other troubling aspects of Iran's behavior.

Iran continues to threaten its neighbors with ballistic missiles, conducts criminal maritime activity in international waters, continues to unlawfully hold American citizens, and fuels dangerous proxy conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Iranian-sponsored precision guided munitions are a threat aimed at the heart of

Israel. Iran actively enables Assad's continued butchery in Syria. Additionally, the regime is working to subvert several other regional governments below the level of armed conflict.

Iran's support to proxies is perhaps the most nefarious—ask any of our men and women in uniform who faced Iranian-provided roadside bombs in Iraq. Iran already has American blood on its hands. The lack of a more firm response by prior administrations has only encouraged further Iranian violence.

Inside of its borders, the regime's abuses against its own people continue to be a concern. Iranian citizens live under constant threat of arbitrary arrest and torture for expressing their most basic human rights including freedom of expression and religion.

Despite the regime's claims of religious legitimacy, it is morally bankrupt—a kleptocracy that steals from its people in order to subvert its neighbors.

That brings us to a question on the most appropriate policies to curb the totality of Iranian behavior.

It is my assessment that the maximum pressure campaign against Iran is working and can serve as the bridge to more meaningful negotiations. I note that some of my colleagues have argued publicly that the maximum pressure campaign is not working. I will be the first to concede that the campaign has not yet achieved its goals, but on the other hand it is clearly working.

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But, they must go further than that. Our European partners must follow the United Kingdom's lead and support the pursuit of behavioral changes on Iran's part.

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And finally, a topic has emerged in public discourse that should be addressed. There are many that blame the U.S. diplomatic and economic efforts as the root cause for Iran's acts of violence. To you, I say you could not be more wrong. There is one party to blame for Iran's acts of violence—the Iranian regime.

The Iranian regime is feeling the weight of the growing community against them. Absent an attack on Americans or American assets abroad, we should not be deterred by Iranian outbursts or attacks on shipping. We should remain steadfast and continue to apply pressure until the regime capitulates and changes behavior.

The Iranian regime is faced with a sharp choice. It is long since time that Iran enter the community of nations as a responsible actor and enjoy the many benefits, advantages, and cultural progress that all peace-loving nations on the planet take delight in—otherwise, it will remain a pariah state.

With that, I recognize Ranking Member Menendez for his opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing.

Before I get to the hearing, I just want to urge the chair. Global events come at us fast and furiously. This committee historically has played a role in fashioning U.S. foreign policy, and as we face the challenges in Ukraine and Syria, I hope that the chairman—I know that committee Democrats have written to the chair asking him for a hearing on Ukraine. I think that would be echoed on Syria. These are vitally important issues in terms of the foreign policy of the United States, the role that Russia is playing, and the role that Iran is playing. So I certainly hope that the chair will honor those requests and hold a hearing on both of those issues as expeditiously as possible.

Now, this committee has not had a hearing on Iran since March of 2017, more than 2 and a half years ago, which is unfortunate because it has been one of the Administration's biggest stated priorities and one in which I believe there is at least a basis of bipartisan consensus from which we could work.

There is no doubt that an Iranian-enabled nuclear state would pose a serious threat to the United States and its allies. There is equal agreement that Iranian malign activity throughout the Middle East, including through proxies and terrorist organizations, is ongoing, dangerous, and destabilizing. There is, I believe, also widespread agreement that the United States should utilize strategic diplomacy, including sanctions, with our international partners and allies to most effectively counter Iran.

As everyone, I think, on this committee knows, I did not support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. When the Trump administration withdrew from the deal without a strategy and without partners, I worried that this unilateral approach would put our nation on a dangerous and lonely path that would ultimately leave Iran emboldened.

Well, Mr. Hook, I am afraid to say I think I was right. Yes, the Iranian regime seems starved of some financial resources. As far as I can tell, that is all. It would appear that beyond sanctions, our maximum pressure campaign only extends to sending American troops to protect Saudi Arabia.

In fact, the rest of the Administration's policies across the Middle East seem only to have emboldened Iran, hardened its political supporters from Hezbollah to militias in Iraq, and most devastatingly and recently, helped entrench itself in Bashar al-Assad's Syria.

On the nuclear front, as it warned it would, Iran is now slowly winding back the nuclear restrictions that the JCPOA imposed, putting it even closer to weaponization.

You and your colleagues are quick to point out that Iran has pursued this malign activity in the region for more than 40 years, and

frankly, I could not agree more. I do not see your policies meaningfully changing that behavior.

You have said that the two goals of the maximum pressure campaign are to deprive the Iranian regime of money to stop its malign activity and to bring Iran back to the negotiating table. However, application of this policy is confusing. One minute the President is willing to make a deal. The next he is threatening to wipe out the Iranian economy.

You have utilized just about every sanctions authority available to you, but sanctions are only a viable tool if they are consistent.

For example, Reza Zarrab of Halkbank in Turkey was arrested in 2016 in connection with one of the largest Iran sanctions evasion schemes in history. However, while his criminal case was ongoing, we recently learned that the President and his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, were trying to get him freed from prison. I understand you were at least aware of these efforts.

What does that say about the viability of American sanctions or this maximum pressure campaign?

The Iranians are holding out because they believe for now they can. They will not come to the table for a Kim Jong-un-like photo op.

So my fundamental question for you, Mr. Hook, is where are you on the harder diplomatic part of this campaign. How have you utilized the pressure to get Iran to a negotiating table?

I also would like to live in a world where we could sanction Iran into stopping its support for terrorism, treating its own people with dignity and respect, into releasing all unjustly detained Americans, including Princeton University student Xiyue Wang.

I live in the real world where I know that in order to make a deal, you have to give something to get something. Now seems like the ideal time to harness the pressure you have created. I am curious to know if you have laid out the parameters of a deal that the Administration would accept, including limitations on research and development, limitations on enrichment and stockpile amounts, and whether or not you have any sense of what the Iranians will seek in relief from the United States. I would like to know whether you have directly or indirectly or through back channels or other countries sought to engage Iran in that regard.

So, Mr. Hook, let us use our diplomatic tools as leverage for what we should be ultimately trying to achieve: a negotiated agreement with Iran with buy-in from our international partners to meaningfully constrain its nuclear program and address other malign activity, a deal that includes permanent and long-term restrictions on Iran's nuclear capacity, tackles its ballistic missile proliferation, and one that addresses its regional support for terrorism, including through the transfer of weapons.

I look forward to hearing about your progress to address this ongoing and pressing national security priority.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Menendez.

First of all, I want to agree with you 100 percent that this hearing on Iran is important and I think probably one of the most pressing issues facing the United States because I think it is the issue that has the most potential for having miscalculation by the other side and winding up with a situation that we really do not

want to be in. I think that potential is there. I think it is there more so with this regime than any other regime on the planet.

Secondly, I agree with you 100 percent that this committee has historically played an important role in foreign policy. It continues to do so. I note that members of this committee are very active in public making statements stating their opinions, giving advice to the Administration, both to the State Department and the White House. Members of this committee regularly I know communicate with the State Department and with the White House. We will, of course, continue to do that.

I want to address briefly—you had mentioned that I had received a letter from you and members of the minority on the committee wanting certain hearings scheduled. I have taken that under advisement. I am in the process of vetting that. I am doing some foundational work on that. I have talked with most members of the committee, not all, but almost all. I want to talk with other interested parties before I respond to that, and I will respond to that in writing, just as you did.

Lastly, I want to correct you respectfully regarding your criticism of the Administration's withdrawal from the JCPOA. You indicated that you supported the withdrawal. Or I guess you did not support the JCPOA. I do not recall whether you said you supported the withdrawal. I did. I urged the President to withdraw.

I believe the President withdrew with a very clear strategy, and that strategy was to go back to the pressure campaign, the maximum pressure campaign, that was in place before the JCPOA negotiations started. It was not called the maximum pressure campaign, but it was the same thing. I agreed with that at that time. What I disagreed with was to stop the maximum pressure campaign and sit down and start negotiating when they were not at a point where they had to negotiate.

At the present time, we have a maximum pressure campaign. I reiterated the things that I think are pressuring the country. I suspect Mr. Hook will talk about that quite a bit more. My urging is that we stay with the strategy that we have, the clear strategy we have had since we withdrew from the JCPOA. That is continue to exert maximum pressure on the regime until they capitulate. They will. They will have to.

So with all that, thank you.

We have the Honorable Brian Hook, Special Representative for Iran and Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State. As Special Representative for Iran, Mr. Hook leads the Iran Action Group, which is responsible for directing, reviewing, and coordinating all Iran-related activity within the U.S. State Department. We could not have a better witness or a more informed witness or a more competent witness to address these issues before the committee.

On a personal note, I have had the good fortune to talk to Mr. Hook on many, many occasions about these issues and counsel with him on these issues. I find him to be receptive. I find him to be well informed and acting in the best faith and best interest of the United States as we move forward.

So with that, Mr. Hook, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN HOOK, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR IRAN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. HOOK. Thank you, Chairman Risch, and thank you for your very kind words.

I would also like to thank Ranking Member Menendez for his opening statement and distinguished members of the committee.

I have appeared before this committee a number of times, but it has mostly been in private. So I am very happy to have an opportunity to have a discussion on Iran in a public setting. I have a longer prepared statement that I have submitted, but why do I not go over some parts of that submitted statement.

We have implemented an unprecedented pressure campaign, and it has two objectives. One is to deny the regime the revenue that it needs to fund a revolutionary and expansionist foreign policy. The other one is to increase the incentives for Iran to come to the negotiating table. If you look at the 40-year history that the United States has had with this republic and other nations have had, you see a consistent pattern that you need to have either economic pressure, diplomatic isolation, or the threat of military force. It is one or more of these factors are what inform Iran's decision-making calculus. We have kept our foreign policy squarely within the left-right limits of economic pressure and diplomatic isolation.

The President has also repeatedly expressed the United States' willingness to negotiate with Iran, and we are willing to meet with the Iranians without preconditions.

We are seeking a comprehensive deal, and it needs to address four areas. It needs to address in a very comprehensive way the threats that Iran presents to international peace and security, and that is their nuclear program, their missile program, its support to terrorist groups and proxies, and its 40-year history of hostage taking. This includes the arbitrary detention of U.S. citizens, including Bob Levinson, Siamak Namazi, and Xiyue Wang, and others.

Before we exited the deal and re-imposed sanctions and accelerated our pressure, Iran was increasing the scope of its malign activity. We now have newly declassified information relating to Iran's missile program that I can share today.

While the United States was still in the JCPOA, Iran expanded its ballistic missile activities to partners across the region, including Hezbollah, Palestinian terrorist groups, and Shia militias in Iraq.

Beginning last year, Iran transferred whole missiles to a separate designated terrorist group in the region.

Iran is continuing to develop missile systems and related technologies solely for export to regional proxies.

While we were in the JCPOA, Iran increased its support to Hezbollah, helping them produce a greater number of rockets and missiles. This arsenal is then used to target our ally, Israel.

Beyond continuing advancements to its missile program, Iran was also deepening its engagement in regional conflicts.

Also, under the Iran nuclear deal, Iran was given a clear pathway to import and export dangerous weapons. Two days from now on October 18, we will be exactly 1 year away from the expiration of the United Nations arms embargo on Iran. Because of the Iran

nuclear deal, countries like Russia and China will soon be able to sell conventional weapons to Iran.

The U.N. Security Council needs to renew the arms embargo on Iran before it expires. We have made this a priority. The Secretary has visited the U.N. Security Council now two or three times to highlight the expiration date of the arms embargo.

Today, by nearly every measure, the regime and its proxies are weaker than when our pressure began. Shia militant groups in Syria have stated to the "New York Times"—this was in March—that Iran no longer has enough money to pay them as much as they have in the past. There was one Shia fighter who said the golden days are gone and they are never coming back. Iran just does not have the money that it used to.

Hezbollah and Hamas have enacted unprecedented austerity plans due to a lack of funding from Iran.

In March, Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, went on TV and said Hezbollah needed public support to sustain its operations. In various parts of Lebanon, you can see piggybanks in grocery stores soliciting spare change from Lebanese citizens to support Hezbollah's operation.

We are also making it harder for Iran to expand its military capabilities. Beginning in 2014, Iran's military budget increased every year through to 2017 when it hit nearly $14 billion. However, from 2017 to 2018, when our pressure went into effect, we saw a reduction in military spending of nearly 10 percent in the first year, and in Iran's 2019 budget, which was announced in March, there was a 28 percent cut to their defense budget, and this includes a 17 percent cut for IRGC funding. Because of our sanctions, Iran will be unable to even fully fund this thin budget for 2019.

The IRGC cyber command is now low on cash, and the IRGC has told Iraq Shia militia groups that they should start looking for new sources of revenue.

Today, this morning, the IMF revised its economic outlook for Iran and forecasted a GDP contraction of 9.5 percent. We anticipate that in this fiscal year, Iran could be in as much as a 12 percent negative GDP contraction.

So the regime does face a choice. It can act like a country, or it can act like a cause. Iran must change its behavior and start to act like a normal nation or it will watch its economy continue to decline.

Our policy is, at its core, a diplomatic and an economic one. This Administration does not seek armed conflict with Iran. We are relying on American economic pressure and American diplomacy to raise the costs on Iran and force meaningful behavior change.

Unfortunately, Iran has responded to our diplomacy with violence and kinetic force. In recent months, Iran has launched a series of panicked attacks, what Secretary Pompeo has called panicked aggression, to intimidate the world into halting our pressure. Iran was responsible for the attacks at the Port of Fujairah, the assault on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, and the attack on Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq.

Iran's message to the international community is quite clear. This is important that I think people understand the regime's paradigm. Iran's message to the world is if you do not allow us to con-

duct our normal level of terror, then we will behave even more badly until you do. Iran has long used its nuclear program in this way and for this reason. The world ought to recognize this extortion when it sees it.

When the world comes together to push back against Iran—and we saw this recently in the context of FIFA, which put enormous pressure on Iran because it was denying women from attending soccer matches. FIFA stood up to the regime, made very clear that there needed to be a change, and for the first time, Iranian women were admitted recently into a game. They were segregated from everybody else, and they were kept in a cordoned area. It is an example of imposing, sort of isolating Iran, and pressuring Iran can achieve the kind of behavior change that we are talking about.

When the world comes together to push back Iran, we do see a change in its behavior. This Administration will do its part, and we are succeeding in having others join us. On the Monday of the U.N. General Assembly—this is shortly after the attacks at Abqaiq—France, Germany, and the United Kingdom called for Iran to accept negotiations on its nuclear program, ballistic missiles, and regional activity. This has been the position of the United States for 2 and a half years, and we were very pleased to see the E3 call on new negotiations so that we can have a new and comprehensive deal. I think it is very much the case that the Iran nuclear deal has come at the expense of missile nonproliferation in the Middle East. I think I have said to this committee probably a year ago—I know I said it a year ago when I was at the United Nations—if we do not restore deterrence against Iran's missile proliferation, we are accumulating risk of a regional war. We saw this then 1 year later in the Iranian attack on Saudi.

We remember that the longest suffering victims of the Iranian regime are the Iranian people. We wish nothing more for the Iranian people than a future with a truly representative government and a much better future with the American people and the Iranian people.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and other members of the committee, I thank you for devoting a hearing on the subject of Iran, and I am happy to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hook follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mr. Brian Hook

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today, and thank you for devoting a hearing to discuss America's foreign policy to Iran.

This Administration has implemented an unprecedented pressure campaign with two primary objectives: First, to deprive the Iranian regime of the money it needs to support its destabilizing activities. Second, to bring Iran to the negotiating table to conclude a comprehensive deal, as outlined by Secretary Pompeo in May 2018.

President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have expressed very clearly the United States' willingness to negotiate with Iran, and we are willing to meet with the Iranians without preconditions. No one should be uncertain about our desire for peace or our readiness to normalize relations should we reach a comprehensive deal. We have put the possibility of a much brighter future on the table for the Iranian people, and we mean it.

The comprehensive deal we seek with the Iranian regime should address four key areas: its nuclear program, its ballistic missile development and proliferation, its support to terrorist groups and proxies, and its arbitrary detention of U.S. citizens including Bob Levinson, Siamak Namazi, Xiyue Wang, and others.

A year and a half ago, Secretary Pompeo laid out 12 points that expanded further on the kind of deal we are seeking with Iran. The requirements Secretary Pompeo laid out reflect the scope of Iran's malign behavior. It also reflects the longstanding global consensus as enshrined in multiple Security Council resolutions since Iran's nuclear violations were first addressed by the Council in 2006.

Before we exited the deal, re-imposed sanctions, and accelerated our pressure, Iran was increasing the scope of its malign activity. The Islamic Republic was strengthened by the resources and legitimacy provided by the nuclear deal. Under the deal, Iran was continuing to expand its missile testing and proliferation. We now have newly declassified information related to Iran's missile program that I can share today:

- While the United States was still in the JCPOA, Iran expanded its ballistic missile activities to partners across the region, including Hizballah, Palestinian terrorist groups, and Shia militias in Iraq.
- Beginning last year, Iran transferred whole missiles to a separate designated terrorist group in the region.
- Iran is continuing to develop missile systems and related technologies solely for export to its regional proxies.
- And while we were in the JCPOA, Iran increased its support to Hizballah, helping them produce a greater number of rockets and missiles. This arsenal is then used to target our ally, Israel.

Beyond continued advancements to its missile program, Iran was also deepening its engagement in regional conflicts.

- In Yemen, Iran helped fuel a humanitarian catastrophe by providing funding, weapons, and training to the Houthis. Its support has only prolonged the suffering of the Yemeni people.
- In Syria, Iran supported Assad's brutal war machine as the Syrian regime killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. Under the cover of the Syrian civil war, Iran is now trying to plant deep military roots in Syria and establish a forward operating base to attack Israel.
- In Lebanon, Iran uses Hizballah to provoke conflict with Lebanon's neighbors, threaten the safety of the Lebanese people, and imperil prospects for stability.

Furthermore, under the deal, Iran was given a clear pathway to import and export dangerous arms. Two days from now, on October 18th, we will be exactly one year away from the expiration of the U.N. arms embargo on Iran. Because of the Iran nuclear deal, countries like Russia and China will be able to sell conventional weapons to Iran. The Iranian regime will also be free to sell weapons to anyone. This will trigger a new arms race in the Middle East.

The moment Iran is allowed to buy advanced drones, missiles, tanks, and jets, it will do so. This will be a win for its proxies across the region, who will use such arms to then attack other nations on Iran's behalf. The United Nations Security Council needs to renew the arms embargo on Iran before it expires. We have made this a priority.

Under the Iran deal, the travel ban on 23 Iranian terrorists, including Qassem Soleimani, expires the same day as the arms embargo.

Constraints on Iran will continue to unravel under the deal.

- In 4 years, the ban on Iran's missile testing will expire.
- And then, in 6 years, all the provisions of Resolution 2231 will end. Restrictions on Iran's nuclear program, enrichment and reprocessing will also expire, positioning Iran with all the weapons it needs to pursue its revolutionary, hegemonic ambitions.

Our Iran strategy is aimed at reversing these trends. Today, by nearly every measure, the regime and its proxies are weaker than when our pressure began and we are well on our way to restoring the strong international standards that had long guided the world's policy on Iran.

Shia militant groups in Syria have stated to the New York Times that Iran no longer has enough money to pay them as much as they have in the past. Hizballah and Hamas have enacted unprecedented austerity plans due to a lack of funding from Iran. In March, Hizballah's leader Hassan Nasrallah went on TV and said Hizballah needed public support to sustain its operations.

We are also making it harder for Iran to expand its own military capabilities. Beginning in 2014, Iran's military budget increased every year through to 2017, when it hit nearly $14 billion. However, from 2017 to 2018, when our pressure went into

effect, we saw a reduction in military spending of nearly 10 percent. Iran's 2019 budget, which was released in March, called for even steeper cuts, including a 28 percent cut to their defense budget and a 17 percent cut for IRGC funding.

The IRGC's cyber command is now low on cash, and the IRGC has told Iraq's Shia militia groups that they should start looking for new sources of revenue. Now, because of our sanctions, Iran will be unable to even fully fund this skinny budget for 2019.

Iran's economy contracted by about 5 percent last year and this year will shrink by more than 10 percent. We estimate it could contract by as much as 14 percent, sending Iran into a deep depression. Iran is now tapping unconventional sources—like privatizing state assets and drawing on its sovereign wealth fund—to make up for the shortfall. Iran is being forced to choose between printing more money or delaying spending on infrastructure development, salaries, and benefits.

Iran has a choice: it can act like a country, or it can act like a cause. Iran must change its behavior and act like a normal nation or it will watch its economy crumble.

Our policy is at its core an economic and diplomatic one. We are relying on economic pressure and the might of American diplomacy to raise the costs on Iran and force meaningful behavior change.

Iran, however, has responded to this policy with violence.

In recent months, Iran has launched a series of attacks in a panicked bid to intimidate the world into halting our pressure. Iran was responsible for the attacks at the Port of Fujairah, the assault on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, and the attack on Saudi oil facilities at Abqaiq.

Iran should meet diplomacy with diplomacy, not with terror, bloodshed, and extortion. Our diplomacy does not entitle Iran to undertake violence against any nation or to threaten maritime security.

This Administration does not seek armed conflict with Iran. We have been equally clear to the regime that we will defend our citizens, forces, and interests, including against attacks by Iran or its proxies.

We stand with our partners and allies to safeguard global commerce and regional stability, and have taken appropriate steps to enhance the regional defense architecture. Our aim is to deter conflict and support our partners.

The Islamic Republic is also engaging in its longstanding practice of nuclear extortion. Iran's message to the international community is clear: if you do not allow us to conduct our normal level of terror, then we will behave even more badly until you do. It has long used its nuclear program in this way and for this reason. The world ought to recognize this extortion when it sees it.

Iran's recent accelerations of its uranium enrichment reminds us of the deficiencies of the Iran nuclear deal. Iran's nuclear threats are made possible by a plan that left Iran's nuclear capabilities largely intact and that seems to have encouraged Iran to dream of the day when key limits on its nuclear program would evaporate, allowing it to prepare for rapid breakout.

I should also emphasize, Mr. Chairman, that the problems presented by Iran's provocative threats to begin building up its stocks of nuclear material—and the actions it is already taking to expand its uranium enrichment centrifuge research and development, and to produce more heavy water—are problems that the world would have faced anyway, in a few years' time, under the terms of the JCPOA itself.

Had we stuck to the JCPOA until those dangerous Iranian provocations were actually permitted by the JCPOA, we would be less prepared to meet the threats Iran presents. In that intervening period, Iran would have continued on the trajectory it was on until the United States' re- imposition of sanctions pressures: amassing revenue from abroad because the deal encouraged business with Iran, while funneling maximum effort and money into missile development, missile proliferation, support for terrorism, and regional destabilization. The Iran we would have faced then would be much more formidable than the Iran we face today.

We must learn from past mistakes and demand comprehensive and permanent restrictions on Iran's activities in any new deal.

We can look to a recent tragedy to show nations can pressure Iran to change. When Sahar Khodayari, an Iranian woman, died from self- immolation after she was sentenced to prison simply for attending a soccer match in Tehran. Together with international outrage and condemnation, FIFA challenged the regime's policy of prohibiting women from attending matches. As a result of international pressure, Iran agreed to permit women to a match last week, even though the authorities kept the women segregated in a separate section.

When the world comes together to push back against Iran, we see change in its behavior. This Administration will do its part, and we are succeeding in having others join us. Late last month, France Germany, and the United Kingdom called for

Iran to accept negotiations on its nuclear program, ballistic missiles, and regional activity. The E3 now agree with us that a new deal is needed. Secretary Pompeo and I have made clear to our allies and partners that we will continue to stand with them against Iran's violence.

Looking forward, our pressure will continue to deny Iran access to the revenue streams it needs to destabilize the Middle East. As we raise the costs of Iran's expansionism and foreclose the possibility of prolonging the status quo, Iran will continue to find its violence will only earn it isolation and censure.

We seek a comprehensive deal that sets our two peoples on a new trajectory toward a far more peaceful and stable relationship. We remember that the longest suffering victims of the Iranian regime are the Iranian people. The last 40 years of Iran's history are a sad tale of corruption and the oppression of a once-vibrant people. The United States stands with the Iranian people in their deep desire that the next 40 years of Iran's history will not be stained by repression and fear of the clerics' cruelty. We wish nothing more for the Iranian people a future with by a truly representative government and friendship with the American people.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and other Members of the Committee, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you. I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Brian, thank you very much for those comments. I really feel like we are in good hands with your firm hand on the tiller on this issue. I want to thank you for appearing before this committee. As you will recall, Senator Menendez indicated we had not had a hearing on Iran since I think 2017. On June 19, you appeared in a joint committee before us and the Armed Services Committee, along with two other informed witnesses, on this important issue. We thank you for making yourself available to them.

It is very troubling the fact that on October 18, the U.N. resolution is going to expire on the sale of conventional arms to the country. Obviously, we would like to pass another resolution, but with the sellers, Russia and China, having veto power over that kind of an action by the U.N., realistically what do you think can happen there and what is the prognosis on this whole thing?

Mr. HOOK. The Secretary and I have had many discussions with Russia and China about promoting a more peaceful and stable Middle East. I have had separate discussions with China and Russia talking about the attack on September 14 and the significance of it.

We have to at least be honest with ourselves that the Iran nuclear deal's approach to Iran's missile program facilitated its missile testing and it also allowed Iran to, I think, proliferate missiles to its proxies without much cost. The European Union has not taken one sanction against Iran's missile program since adoption of the Iran nuclear deal. Yet, during the same period, Iran has increased its ballistic missile testing and its provision of weapons to its proxies.

I have seen some accounts where there was a lot of interest in the buyers and the sellers on October 18, a year from now, so that Iran can not only buy conventional weapons but also sell them.

So we see a role for the U.N. Security Council after the attacks of September 14 on Saudi Arabia by Iran. This is an act that was in clear violation of the United Nations Charter. The U.N. Security Council is vested with responsibility for resolving threats to international peace and security. This violation of Saudi sovereignty—and it was an attack really in so many ways on the global energy market because Iran is trying to create shocks in the global energy markets. They have failed at that to date.

We hope that China and Russia will play a constructive role to get serious about Iran's missile proliferation. Russia and China voted for the arms embargo on Iran. It was resolution 1737, 1747, those series of resolutions. So they have supported it before. There is no reason they cannot support it again. We think that there is a clear case to be made for it in light of Iranian aggression not just over since May, but as I said earlier during the life of the Iran nuclear deal.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I appreciate that view.

One of the troubling aspects of this for me is that the ask here by the world to Iran is an ask that Iran has thumbed its nose at in a very haughty manner and just absolutely refuses to even agree what is appropriate international accepted conduct. I view it very different than the situation with North Korea. With North Korea, Kim Jong-un, who actually capitulated and said, look, I am willing to talk about what everybody wants, and that is a nuclear-free peninsula. The Iranians are not anywhere even near that from an attitude standpoint. People will argue that North Korea has not gotten where we want it. It certainly has not. I will be the first to admit it is a work in progress, but at least it is a work in progress.

To me these things can resolve if you have two things: number one, you have two parties that have a common objective, and then once the common objective is agreed to, that the two parties act in good faith. We have neither of those here with Iran and did not when we went into the JCPOA.

What is your view on that just strictly from an attitude standpoint?

Mr. HOOK. We have not seen a change of heart in the Iranian regime. They seem to have doubled down on their strategy, which is a 40-year strategy of deniable attacks, using proxies in the gray zone to conduct attacks against American partners, against American interests.

What I think I would highlight here are the number of diplomatic off ramps that this Administration has offered to the regime. It is not just the United States. Prime Minister Abe was the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit the Islamic Republic of Iran. He went there. He asked President Trump if he thought that would be useful, and the President encouraged him to go. He went. The Supreme Leader put out a series of tweets rejecting Prime Minister Abe's diplomacy, and while Prime Minister Abe was in country, the regime blew up a Japanese oil tanker.

You have President Macron who has repeatedly tried to intervene.

Iran has not met our diplomacy with diplomacy despite being offered many opportunities. The President has said many times that he would be willing to meet with the regime. So has Secretary Pompeo.

When the United States was in the Iran nuclear deal and I attended what turned out to be the last meeting of the joint commission where the U.S. was a party to, I requested a meeting with Iran's deputy foreign minister so I could talk about the hostages. So this is an Administration that is very open to resolving our differences with Iran at the negotiating table and diplomatically.

I think now that you have seen the E3 also recognize the need for a new deal—and I also would point out at the beginning of the U.N. General Assembly—I think it was David Sanger who wrote a "New York Times" story talking about how Rouhani and Zarif are experiencing a very chilly reception at the United Nations. What they did, in terms of attacking the world's largest oil facility, is indefensible. So I think more people are recognizing that and that is a good thing for our diplomacy.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I think that your observations about their reactions, particularly what they did to the Japanese is very troubling. The attitude issue to me is something that is troubling. Everybody wants a diplomatic result here. Everybody wants diplomatic movement here. They are not showing any signs whatsoever of going in that direction.

Thank you for your thoughts.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just two comments to some of the comments you made. First of all, this is the first public hearing in 2 and a half years. I believe the public has a right to know about what our Iran policy is, and we have not had a public hearing in 2 and a half years.

Secondly, I would just say as someone who was the staunchest opponent of the JCPOA that in fact leaving the JCPOA without a strategy at the end of the day, without allies at the end of the day has not left us in a better position. I do not care for the JCPOA, but by the same token, leaving without a strategy has not led us to a better position.

Mr. Hook, is it not true that Iran has hijacked oil tankers?

Mr. HOOK. They did take one oil tanker from Iranian waters.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is it not true that they have struck oil tankers?

Mr. HOOK. Yes, they have.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is it not true that they had a stealth attack on Saudi Arabia's oil refineries?

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is it not true that Iran has exceeded the limits imposed on its stockpile of uranium?

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is it not true that it has enriched uranium to higher levels of concentration than permissible in the JCPOA?

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is it not true that it has begun using more advanced centrifuges for enrichment?

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. So when I listen to that—and I could go down through a list of other things—we are right now in a worse position vis-à-vis Iran than we were before.

Let me ask you something. Withdrawing troops in northern Syria and green-lighting Turkey's brutal incursion gives new life to ISIS and hands over the keys to our national security to Putin, Iran, and Assad, all the sanctions in the world are not going to fix that.

Does the Administration have a plan for countering Iran in Syria? If so, can you explain what it is and how it will account for

recent gains by Iran-backed pro-regime forces that are filling the vacuum that we created in northern Syria?

Mr. HOOK. I would like to answer your first question, and I will take the next one.

Senator MENENDEZ. I did not pose a first question. I posed a question as it relates to this. So would you answer that one?

Mr. HOOK. Can I comment on your first question?

Senator MENENDEZ. If I get enough time, but first answer my question.

Mr. HOOK. The President's decision with respect to Syria is not going to change our Iran strategy or the efficacy of it. So we are—Iran has given Assad $4.6 billion in lines of credit and billions more. They have sent 2,500 of their own Quds Force fighters, and they have helped mobilize 10,000 Shia fighters to support Assad.

Our diplomatic work that Ambassador Jeffrey is heading is to ensure, as part of a political solution, that all of the forces in Iran under Iranian control have to leave Syria. We are withholding our reconstruction assistance for Syria as one of the levers that we have.

Senator MENENDEZ. You really think, after having withdrawn and let the Iranians—what we have here is something that we, by our presence, helped avoid. We have the possibility of a land bridge that Iran has sought over Syria to attack our ally, the state of Israel. What commitments do we have from any of these parties that in fact they will prevent Iran from moving fighters and supplies from Iraq through northern Syria?

I mean, as far as I am concerned, Iran is not an agent of Russia. They have their own interests. They have spent their own blood. Russia is not going to tell them, okay, Iran, now thank you for your help. It is time to get out. They are going to have their own interests. All we have done here is perpetuate their interests and created a greater risk for our ally, the state of Israel.

Mr. HOOK. Well, I would say this. I think that our pressure on Iran threatens Iran's position in Syria in three ways.

It starves the IRGC and Hezbollah of operational funds.

It disrupts Iran's financial support to Assad. I talked about the billions of dollars that Iran has provided. Our pressure is making it harder for Iran to give Assad financial support.

We are also impeding Iran's ability to sell oil to Syria, and we have sanctioned one oil shipping operation and we have sanctioned Russia and a Syrian. One of the ways that the Quds Force has been financing its operations is through illicit oil shipments. So we are going to keep after the oil. We are going to still keep after that. We are going to continue our pressure campaign.

Senator MENENDEZ. Let me ask again. Do we have any commitments from Turkish or Iraqi authorities to prevent Iran from moving fighters and supplies from Iraq through northern Syria?

Mr. HOOK. That is something—I have been with the Secretary to Iraq. We discuss that on a very regular basis to do everything we can——

Senator MENENDEZ. We have no commitments?

Mr. HOOK. The specifics of this—I am happy to follow up with you in terms of which minister or leader we spoke with about this, but we have raised this issue repeatedly as a security concern.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, it seems to me that here is a perfect example of what maximum pressure without a strategy that ultimately brings Iran to the negotiating table leaves us in. More attacks, more consequences, greater chance of breakout, lowering the breakout time to the possibility of a pathway to nuclear weapons, a land bridge, in addition to the President's decisions to withdraw precipitously out of Syria, a land bridge for Iran to attack our ally, the state of Israel. If that is success, if that is your measurement of success, then I have a real concern for where we are headed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOOK. Just two quick things on that.

One, when the President got out of the Iran deal, Secretary Pompeo released our Iran strategy within a week or two. We did exit the deal with a strategy. The Secretary put in place a very clear articulation of the 12 areas where we need to see a change in Iranian behavior. So that speech that he gave in May of 2018 is the same policy that we are pursuing today.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, that is a wish list. I agree with the wish list.

Mr. HOOK. It is not a wish list.

Senator MENENDEZ. You think you are going to get everything that Pompeo listed, you are going to give virtually no relief to Iran, and they are just going to succumb.

Mr. HOOK. No.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, I would like to believe that is the real world. That is not the real world, Mr. Hook.

Mr. HOOK. Here is the real world. We do not negotiate with ourselves. The 12 areas, requirements, are a mirror image of Iran's threats to peace and security, and most of those 12 you can find in a U.N. Security Council resolution——

Senator MENENDEZ. Do you believe that the more you ask for, the more you have to give?

The CHAIRMAN. Senator, allow him to finish.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, he has taken up my time. He has gone beyond my time. I saw the chairman went beyond his time as well.

Mr. HOOK. I have heard it often said that during the Iran nuclear deal, Iran was behaving. Since we got out of the deal, things have gotten worse. I would like to, Mr. Chairman, submit for the record—this is 71 items of Iran regime malign activities during negotiations with Iran and during the JCPOA. It is 71 items long.

I think that we do not do ourselves a great service about understanding the historical record if we ignore what Iran did during the negotiations and while the JCPOA was being implemented. So I would like to submit this for the record so that people can review everything Iran was up to while we were in the deal.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, and that will be submitted for the record.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Menendez, I will give you the last word on this.

Senator MENENDEZ. Just let me ask you just a simple question. Is it not true virtually anywhere in the world, the more you want, the more you have to give? Or do you believe you can get everything that Secretary Pompeo asked for and just return to what was the status quo with the JCPOA in terms of Iran's relief?

Mr. HOOK. The United States tried taking a bifurcated approach by only focusing on one aspect of Iran's threats to peace and security, and it was the Iran nuclear deal. That has enabled Iran to expand its missile testing——

Senator MENENDEZ. That is not responsive to my question.

Mr. HOOK. I am responding to it.

Senator MENENDEZ. It is a simple proposition. The more you ask for, do you not expect the more that you will have to give——

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. —and in contemplation of that?

Mr. HOOK. If you look at the strategy that we laid out in May, Secretary Pompeo said at the conclusion of an agreement, which we will submit to the Senate as a treaty——

Senator MENENDEZ. Which we applaud.

Mr. HOOK. I have worked very closely with this committee to show that I think that we very much need to have full Senate support for what we are doing. If we are able to get into talks with Iran, you will be fully apprised.

It is also the case that in that strategy the Secretary said if we can get a deal, we are prepared to end all of our sanctions and to restore diplomatic ties with Iran and to welcome Iran into the international community. That is very significant. That has never happened before. Even under the Iran nuclear deal, many of our sanctions stayed in place and so have some of the U.N. sanctions. They are going to start unraveling. We have put out very significant incentives for the regime. The decision they face is whether they are going to come to the table and recognize that it is deepening isolation, come with the United States to the table and other countries to negotiate a full and comprehensive deal.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would point out during the JCPOA debate, it was my amendment that would have deemed that a treaty. We should have voted that 100 to 1. We would be in a far better place today had we deemed that a treaty and treated it as such.

Mr. Hook, first of all, thank you for your service.

As somebody who has observed Iran for a long period of time, you have laid out in your testimony their actions. They want to be a nuclear power. They are developing ballistic missiles. They continue to support their terrorist proxies around the world.

What is their ultimate goal? Do you have a sense in terms of what they are actually trying to achieve?

Mr. HOOK. It is a good question. I gave a speech a couple of weeks ago looking at the sort of history of the regime.

I think in many ways it is the last revolutionary regime on earth. If you look at its founding, it talks about exporting revolution. It has a clerical model where you have clerical and revolutionary oversight over what looks like a sort of fairly Westphalian system

with a President, with a Foreign Minister, with a military, but in fact also has this Revolutionary Guard Corps—and I highlight Revolutionary Guard Corps—and a Quds Force component. It has an opaque financial system so that it can move money around the world for terror finance and money laundering. It is all in the service of promoting clerical oversight, weaponizing Shia grievances, undermining the sovereignty of regimes around the Middle East.

Senator JOHNSON. Do they want to topple regimes and put in place some kind of Iranian surrogates or total Iranian control over areas of the region? Do they want a greater Iran?

Mr. HOOK. Yes, they would like a greater Iran. So when you look at their engagement with Iraq, if you look at where they engage in Lebanon, where they take a country like Lebanon—and that military should have a monopoly on the use of force, but then Hezbollah undermines that. They are trying to do the same thing in Yemen with the Houthis. They have an ambition there to become a power broker in Yemen on Saudi's southern border so that it will be in a position to attack UAE, Saudi, Bahrain, and also the U.S. Navy through the Bab el-Mandeb.

Senator JOHNSON. To eventually install a regime in these countries, either favorable or under direct control of Iran. That is their ultimate goal.

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator JOHNSON. We need to understand that.

The situation in Syria is incredibly complex. I would like your evaluation. What is the current relationship with Iran and Russia as it relates to Syria?

Mr. HOOK. I think Russia has tried to have it both ways, both with Syria and with Israel. So I think Russia knows that it is going to have a very hard time getting into a post-conflict stabilization for as long as Iran is using Syria as a forward-deployed missile base to attack Israel. So I think there are incentives for Russia to direct Iranian forces out. At the same time, I think that Russia has also said to the Israelis you should do whatever you need to do to defend yourself against attacks coming from Iran inside Syria. So they have done I think an artful job—President Putin has—of playing both sides.

I think it is going to be very hard for Syria. They are not going to see a return to normal until they direct the forces under Iranian control to leave. So I think there are incentives both for Assad and for Putin to get to a post-conflict stabilization, but for as long as they have Iranian forces there with another agenda, it is going to be hard to get to that.

Senator JOHNSON. There is not a cooperative relationship between Russia and Iran in Syria. They are both supporting the Syrian regime, but they are really not overtly cooperating?

Mr. HOOK. I think in this case they both have a common objective of saving Assad.

Senator JOHNSON. What is Iran's attitude toward ISIS?

Mr. HOOK. That is something which during the—I would probably defer to NEA on this for the more specifics around it and the history of that that occurred I think in the last Administration. In our mission to defeat ISIS, the President made a priority coming into office and working with Secretary Mattis to liberate the terri-

torial caliphate from all the lands under that control, but I do not have anything to add beyond that.

Senator JOHNSON. So, I mean, Iran is just kind of agnostic. They are happy to have ISIS destabilize the area? There is no evidence of support in any way, shape, or form?

Mr. HOOK. This is something which I would probably defer to my colleagues at State on this who have been point on the counter-ISIS campaign.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOOK. I am happy to take that as a QFR.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hook, thank you for your service.

In your statement, you point out a concern of a miscalculation in the region that could spread into a much more serious conflict. Clearly the Iranians could make a miscalculation. Clearly the Saudis could make a miscalculation. Now, Israel might make a miscalculation based upon the increased concerns about Iranian strength.

So I want to just back up one moment to set the history here. Along with Senator Menendez, I opposed the JCPOA and I strongly disagreed with the Administration's decision to pull out of the JCPOA. You pointed out that you wanted to go to a maximum pressure campaign against Iran. I support that.

You also point out that prior to pulling out that Iran was violating international standards. We all knew that. It was not on the nuclear side. It was on the non-nuclear side. It was not covered under the agreement. They were in compliance with the agreement.

As President Trump had indicated his displeasure with the JCPOA, you and I had conversations that we now had maximum pressure with our European allies to get their support for sanctions against Iran on the ballistic missiles and other issues in which they were doing activity that was against international norms. In fact, we could have had a maximum pressure campaign against Iran on the activities that you are referring to, but instead the President pulled out of the JCPOA.

That is the facts, and you and I know that even the EU was prepared to go along with us on sanctions on non-nuclear provided the United States stayed in the JCPOA.

So I just want to underscore the point of Senator Menendez. Since pulling out of the JCPOA, look at the facts of what has happened. It has emboldened Iran. Look at their attack against the Saudi oilfield and their capacity to do major damage. They have partnered and strengthened their position with Russia and the Assad regime in Syria giving them additional capacity. They are now closer to restarting a nuclear weapons program than they were when we were in the JCPOA, and we have no ability to challenge that within the JCPOA.

Now you talk about the U.N. vote on the embargo of conventional weapons, and the United States' influence is so much weaker today because we have isolated ourselves. We do not have the support of China and Russia, and we have lost the credible support of our European allies in regards to Iran. So when you talk about a max-

imum pressure campaign, it seems to me we gave up that maximum pressure when we pulled out of the JCPOA and isolated America.

Now, I want to get to the most recent decision on President Trump pulling out of northern Syria with a conversation with President Erdogan and then the Turkish forces going in and our Kurdish fighters that were with us in northern Syria now engaged in their own military campaign.

It is clear from the facts on the ground that it has given additional influence in Syria by Russia, and there is now concern that Iran can be emboldened, including in the bridge to Israel's border.

So I just want to get your view. The fact that we now have allowed the Turkish forces unembedded without U.S. presence to go in and fight the Kurds—does that help us or hurt us in regards to Iran? It is a simple question. I hope we can get an answer to that.

Mr. HOOK. We are very comfortable with our Iran strategy in Syria.

Senator CARDIN. The specific question I am asking is about the current situation with the Kurdish fighters now engaged with the Turks. Does that help us or hurt us in regards to the Iranian strategy?

Mr. HOOK. It does not hurt our Iran strategy.

Senator CARDIN. So it is helpful to us in regards to Iran to have the Kurdish fighters who were our stabilizing force in northern Iran keeping Russia and Iran out. That is a positive view?

Mr. HOOK. Well, our forces in northeast Syria have never had an Iran mission set.

Senator CARDIN. Now that we are not there and we now have the ability of Russia to take a greater capacity in Syria, allowing Iran then to come into that and to be more emboldened in Syria, you are saying that does not affect us?

Mr. HOOK. No, because our strategy from the beginning in Syria has always been around using our diplomatic leverage, withholding reconstruction assistance so that we can get forces under Iranian control out, and then our maximum pressure campaign. Remember, while they were in the deal, they were able to give Assad many billions of dollars.

Senator CARDIN. I understand the money. So you do not think there is now a greater chance of a miscalculation with Israel looking at the Iranians having greater access to Syria that could use drones in a similar type of an attack that we saw against the Saudis? You do not think that is a greater risk today because of what is happening in Syria?

Mr. HOOK. We do not see it as a greater risk today. No, because Israel will continue to do what it needs to do to defend itself.

Senator CARDIN. We know that. But suppose Israel now is on higher alert.

Mr. HOOK. I have not seen that. I have not seen that.

So if you look at our core drivers from the beginning and nothing has changed with the President's recent decision on withdrawing troops from Syria, our strategy is around denying revenue and using diplomatic leverage in Syria to get Iranian forces out. It is undeniable that during the Iran nuclear deal, Iran was able to use the sanctions relief and give Assad many billions of dollars and

12,500 fighters. That was the big mistake. Now we are trying to do everything we can to put this back in the box. It starts with denying them revenue, and we have done that. Iran's military budget is down 28 percent——

Senator CARDIN. I will just state my last point on that. We could deny them support from Europe on sanctions, but instead we chose to pull out of the JCPOA rather than working with our European allies. You know that was on the table before the President pulled out of the JCPOA, and we lost that opportunity to get European support for stronger sanctions.

Mr. HOOK. So let me make one point on that which I think there has been a lot the last couple of years. The President directed negotiations with the U.K., France and Germany over 6 months to see if we could fix the deficiencies of the Iran nuclear deal. I led those negotiations, and we met in Paris and in London and Berlin and Washington multiple times over 6 months. We made a great deal of progress around the weak inspections regime and the absence of intercontinental ballistic missiles from the deal. The biggest priority was ending the sunset clauses, and for as much as supporters of the deal may like the deal, it expires. It did not permanently address Iran's nuclear program.

So I spent 6 months working with the Europeans, and the biggest thing for us that we—I think we achieved largely agreement on inspections and on ICBMs. We were not able to get agreement on ending the sunsets.

Senator CARDIN. You turned down greater pressure on Iran from the financial point of view because of the length of the JCPOA.

Mr. HOOK. Say that one more time. I did not understand.

Senator CARDIN. You turned down the opportunity to get Europe with us on sanctions against Iran because you wanted a longer term on the nuclear provisions. I understand that, but you turned down maximum pressure in order to get an extension of a nuclear agreement that there was already compliance on. It is inconsistent with what you are saying now. You pulled out to put additional pressure on Iran. It is inconsistent.

Mr. HOOK. Well, I would say two things. One, we tried to remedy the deficiencies of the deal, and I do not know who here supports ending the nuclear restrictions on Iran.

Senator CARDIN. I supported your efforts to extend that, but the nuclear agreement did not have any limitation on time. It was a permanent restriction on Iran.

Mr. HOOK. It is not.

Senator CARDIN. Yes, it was. They were not allowed ever to have nuclear weapons.

Mr. HOOK. No. The Iran nuclear deal expires. It is going to start expiring a year from now.

The CHAIRMAN. Guys, hold it. You will get your shot at him, Senators. I appreciate that. We are well over time. This is a good experience to go through to litigate this, but let us try to do it as civilly as we can.

With that, Senator Romney.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hook, my reading is that Iran's power position has changed quite significantly as a result of Turks going into Syria wiping out

our friends, the Kurds. The Kurds that are remaining are rushing to Assad and pledging support to Assad. This changes the dynamic for Iran I presume in Iran's view in a very positive way. I presume Iran was smiling from ear to ear as Turkey rushed into Syria. Am I right that this really changes the dynamic for Iran in Syria and perhaps regionally?

Mr. HOOK. We do not believe that it changes the dynamic with Iran because in terms of our strategy——

Senator ROMNEY. Things are not better for Iran in the Middle East as we have gone, as Turkey has hit the Kurds and the Kurds have now allied with Assad? Surely Assad is stronger. This is not good for Iran?

Mr. HOOK. If you take a look at what our U.S. Special Representative Jim Jeffrey has said for some time now, our military is in Syria for ISIS. Our diplomacy is focused on Iran. So that is why Jim Jeffrey and I worked together very closely because what I do on the pressure side and what he does on withholding reconstruction assistance is mutually reinforcing.

Senator ROMNEY. I hear you. Diplomacy has impact if there is a military that is strong and in the region. When our ally now aligns with our adversary, Assad, that is in my opinion not helpful for diplomacy and not helpful for our interests in the region. That is so dramatic a perspective on your part that Iran is not celebrating what is happening in Syria is extraordinary to me.

Let me turn to a different area, which is that I do agree that there is an enormous benefit in putting pressure on Iran. Whether it is maximum pressure or not, I do not know. I believe that a nation that decides to go nuclear should suffer a dramatic cost for doing so. Whether they are at their knees or not I do not know. It is very hard for us to tell from the outside what is actually going on inside Iran, but clearly it would have a dramatic effect if other nations were to join us in applying maximum pressure.

What are the prospects for our European friends, for other nations around the world joining us either with the snapback provisions being applied or not on a snapback basis? What are the prospects of us actually seeing truly maximum pressure because it is applied not just by us but by our friends as well?

Mr. HOOK. There is no precedent in Iran's history for the kind of pressure that we have put on them, and the regime has said this publicly, that they are experiencing the kind of economic contraction that is and will be worse than what happened during the Iran-Iraq war in the eighties. We have done a very good job of drying up Iran's sources of export revenue, but we have also devoted as much energy to enforcing our sanctions especially in the case of the oil sanctions. I think the fact that the U.K., France, and Germany have now acknowledged something that we saw some time ago that the Iran deal is insufficient to address Iran's threats to peace and security and that when you are inside the deal, you cannot touch your energy or your financial sanctions. That was the deal. So being out of the deal gives us a great deal more leverage to accomplish the objectives of denying Iran a nuclear weapon and on missile proliferation which I think other countries——

Senator ROMNEY. Mr. Hook, I am not one of those that thinks we should be back in JCPOA, and I do believe that there should be

an enormous price paid by a country that decides to go nuclear. I do not know whether we will actually ever see Iran make a different decision.

My question is, is there some prospect of our being able to get other nations to join us in applying maximum pressure on Iran, or must we continue to do it alone?

Mr. HOOK. I think it depends on how. So Europe has done a lot. They have not re-imposed the financial sanctions that were in place, but when you look at what Europe has done since the time that we left the Iran deal, it is a fairly extensive list. Germany and I believe France and the U.K. have all denied landing rights to Mahan Air, which is an Iranian commercial airline which is a dual use commercial airline and also ferries terrorists and weapons around the Middle East to their proxies.

The EU did impose sanctions on Iran's ministry of intelligence for terrorism in Europe. You have also had the E3 send a number of letters to the U.N. Security Council condemning Iran's space launch vehicle testing, Iran's ballistic missile testing. You had Boris Johnson a few weeks ago said the Iran deal is a bad deal with many, many defects. That has been our position.

Senator ROMNEY. Mr. Hook, my time is up. I just want to point out that letters and speeches are delightful but crippling sanctions on the part of our allies would make a real difference, I believe, in exacting a very substantial price on Iran and hopefully causing dissent within their own country. I think it should be a high priority of our country to get other nations to join us in those crippling sanctions.

My time is up, so I am going to pass the time over to the chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I agree with your last point.

Mr. HOOK. Can I say one other thing on that? I am happy to submit for the record—this is three pages of European actions starting on July 28 going up to September 24, 2019. I talk on a weekly basis with my European counterparts, not just the E3, but we just had Poland in town. We did a global ministerial on the Middle East to promote peace and stability in Warsaw, Poland. We had 65 nations from almost every continent attend. So we have made working with our partners a priority. That is Under Secretary Hale, Secretary Pompeo, Deputy Secretary Sullivan. So I am happy to submit for the record three pages of everything that Europe has done to counter Iran's threats.

The CHAIRMAN. Those will be included in the record for full disclosure to everyone.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that, Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, without taking the Senator's time, can you tell me how we are going to proceed since votes have just started? Is the chairman intending to keep the hearing going as members come in and out of votes?

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think this is an important hearing.

Senator MENENDEZ. I agree.

The CHAIRMAN. I think probably what we ought to do is get down to the very end and take a short break, and everybody go vote. Then we will come back here.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I see a lot of anxiousness on my friends' parts over here that would like to bite the apple, and I want to give you every opportunity to do so.

So with that, Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hook, I want to follow up on the line of questioning that my colleagues have pursued with respect to Syria because the shift by Kurdish forces who were our partners in the fight against ISIL away from the United States and into alignment with Iran and Russia I believe is going to have serious implications for Syria and for the region. It is hard for me to understand that you think there is no—at least you appear to think there is no connection between what is going to happen in Syria and our efforts to address what is happening in Iran.

Now, the President said on Twitter that, "Anyone who wants to assist Syria in protecting the Kurds is good with me, whether it is Russia, China, or Napoleon Bonaparte. I hope they all do great. We are 7,000 miles away."

So does this "anyone" who the President is referring to also extend to Iran? Are you concerned about a Kurdish-Iranian alliance in the Syrian conflict and what its impact on U.S. interests in the region will be?

Mr. HOOK. As I said earlier, Syria is not going to see a return to normal until they direct forces under Iranian control to leave. We do have enormous leverage in that space.

Senator SHAHEEN. Can you just further elaborate what our leverage is? Because it appears to me, given the pullout of troops—and I appreciate what you are saying about reconstruction dollars. The fact is they are years away from reconstruction at this point. So we had a very small amount of troops partnering with Kurdish forces to maintain a significant area in northeast Syria that was stable, where the United States had influence, where we were wanted. What you are telling me now is that we have pulled out those troops and we have greater leverage than we had before?

Mr. HOOK. I did not say that. What I am saying is that our pressure campaign—because, as I said, Shia fighters do not have the money that they used to, Iran does not have the money that it used to, to support Assad and to support its proxies. So Iran is going to face a dilemma. They can either support guns in Syria or prioritize the needs of their own people at home. That is the choice that we are trying to force upon the regime.

Senator SHAHEEN. Have we not just empowered them further by pulling out of northeast Syria and giving Iran more influence in the region and more ability to negotiate with Russia?

I heard the Obama administration talk about how we were going to starve Syria of the funds they needed to continue to engage in a civil war, and that never happened. What our experience has been with crippling sanctions—I think they are important, but they

are not the only way, the only tool in the toolbox for us to address these conflicts.

So I guess I would go on to ask you—in September, you noted that it is clear we need to reestablish deterrence. We are one missile strike from regional war. I think that is a quote.

Could you speak to how this Administration plans to reestablish deterrence against Iran? What specific options, other than sanctions, are on the table to penalize Iran for its destabilizing behavior?

Mr. HOOK. Well, the first thing you have to do is to stop doing what is not working. There is no question that Iran increased its missile proliferation and its missile testing. I talked about——

Senator SHAHEEN. I do not want to talk about JCPOA. What I want to talk about is what the Administration has on the table now to address Iran's destabilizing behavior.

Mr. HOOK. I am making that, but that is part of it is we have to stop doing what we are doing or we are going to get more of the same. So we broke the paradigm of not having significant leverage and pressure to drive up the costs of Iranian aggression. So we are only what? Five or 6 months into having all of our sanctions imposed because for the first 6 months, after getting out of the deal, we granted a few oil waivers. Now since May, we are about 5 or 6 months into this, and we have achieved record results. We also have to understand that we never promised that we would——

Senator SHAHEEN. How do you define record results?

Mr. HOOK. Because the regime is materially weaker today than when it was when we took office 2 and half years ago.

Senator SHAHEEN. I appreciate that on paper that that is the case.

Mr. HOOK. It is not just on paper.

Senator SHAHEEN. When we look at the behavior that they are exhibiting both in the region and in terms of our interests in the region, they have increased that destabilizing behavior.

Mr. HOOK. It is not an increase. I mean, I do want you to take a look at all 71 instances of this. Iran for 40 years has been running a steady state of aggression and using terrorism as a tool of statecraft. As I said, they want the world to accept a normal level of terrorism, as they defined it, and then when the world stands up to them, they increase it to a level to put pressure on people so that they will return to their normal level. We are breaking the paradigm.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Hook, I have heard you make this argument this morning, and I appreciate that that is an argument that the Administration has. I am just not buying that argument at this point. What I am asking is, what are the plans, what are the additional plans beyond sanctions that will address their behavior? My time is up, so I am not going to ask you to respond to that.

I do have one final question that I would like to ask you, and that is, do you believe that ISIS has been defeated in Syria?

Mr. HOOK. The territorial——

Senator SHAHEEN. That is a yes or no.

Mr. HOOK. The territorial caliphate has been defeated. We have liberated all the land that was held by ISIS.

Now, it is a separate question on the forces of extremism. That is a separate question because no one has said——

Senator SHAHEEN. Okay. Do you believe that the forces of extremism have been defeated in Syria?

Mr. HOOK. There is no one who will claim that the forces of extremism have not been defeated in the Middle East in any Administration. There is a crisis of Islamist extremism that has been going on for many decades, and we have——

Senator SHAHEEN. That we just exacerbated by pulling American troops out of northeast Syria, and we have given rise to the potential for ISIS to come back in Syria, in Iraq, all across the region. That empowers Iran.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOOK. It is clearly the case that Iran, if you talk to countries in the region—and here is an area where you are going to hear complete agreement from the Israelis and the other Arab countries on the front lines of Iranian aggression—is that Iran expanded its power over the last many years, and we came into office with a regime that was enjoying a very healthy economy, a healthy military budget, strong proxies. There was a deficit of trust that we inherited with our Sunni partners and with Israel. I would say that our bilateral relations with all of these countries has been markedly improved, and we have helped to shrink the Iran tumor.

We are only at this for the first—this has only been a matter of about a year and a half since leaving the deal. I mean, you do not have to take my word for it. In March, the "New York Times" ran a front page story documenting that Iran's proxies are weaker today. Then the "Washington Post" ran a follow-on story in June documenting how Iran's proxies are weaker because of our sanctions. These are stories that were not written about prior to our pressure campaign.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Paul.

Senator PAUL. If we step back and ask the question, do sanctions work, I think it is a bigger, broader question. We think, oh, it is all we can do is we do sanctions and we do more and more. We are doing maximum pressure. I think there has been an economic effect. Nobody questions that. Are they working to bring Iran to the negotiating table? I would say they are not really working.

So I think it is a fact of a loss of trust. I think that Iran feels that we are not trustworthy because of pulling out of the agreement that was worked on for so many years. I think it is also a matter of having naive expectations that they are going to agree to 12 points, most of which they did not agree to in the previous agreement. I think it is going to be very difficult to get started because of the lack of trust and starting with some things that were not agreed to previously and were specifically agreed to different limits, like no enrichment and no ballistic missile agreement.

I think Iran sees their ballistic missiles as a deterrent as well, and I do not think they are willing to give up a deterrent as they see Saudi Arabia spending $83 billion a year. We are like, oh, my goodness. Iran spends $14 billion. Well, that is one-fiftieth of what we spend, and it is about one-fourth or even less than one-fourth of Saudi Arabia. If you add in Saudi Arabia's allies, you can see why Iran might say, oh, please, please—why they might not say

please, please take my ballistic missiles. They are not jumping up and down to do this, and they are really, even against the world's super power that can defeat them in a moment, willing to keep pricking and prodding because we are unrealistic in what we ask and I think by pulling out, showed that we are not to be trusted from their perspective. So your problem there is you have an unwilling partner.

In Syria, it is a little bit different. In Syria, we have been unwilling to negotiate in the sense that our goal has been remove Assad, replace Assad. So no one wants to negotiate with Assad.

I think the one thing that has not been picked up on yet—and I think it is going to be ironic because everybody seems to be concerned about the Kurds—is actually I think the Kurds' permanent solution is much more likely to come from Assad. He is there. He largely is going to stay barring something untoward happening to him from his own people, but the war is largely over. Assad stays.

So really, if we are going to be realistic about this and we want to protect the Kurds, maybe the diplomatic arena has gotten simplified. Now essentially you have Turkey on one side and Syria on the other. So really, I think our goal—everybody is going to talk about the sanctions, which I frankly do not think will work, but I think really somebody from the State Department that is involved with diplomacy ought to be saying why do we not try to use our leverage to get Turkey now and Assad to talk. We would have to acknowledge that someone is going to talk to Assad. I think if we did, the goal would actually be to allow the Kurds to live in the northeastern quadrant of Syria, similar to the way the Kurds live in Iraq. It was not always easy there. It has been very messy, and there have been a lot of problems. Currently, the Iraqi Kurds trade with the Turks and have a fairly decent and robust trade. Over the last 10 years, it has actually increased.

So I think we should not look at this as all sturm and drang and that, oh, my goodness, the Kurds are being wiped out and all of this. I think we should look at it as an opportunity actually, as a breakthrough diplomatically because we have simplified who needs to talk to whom at this point.

So I would just hope—and I guess my question is, is there anybody in the State Department actually looking to take an opportunity of the new dynamic in the last 24 hours that if Assad could reassure Erdogan that he is going to prevent incursions and that he is going to respect the border with Turkey and that he is going to use a real government with a stability of a real government, is there a possibility Erdogan would simply withdraw under that guarantee? That is the kind of conversation that we have kind of prevented from happening because we would not let the Kurds talk to Assad. So in some ways, I think there may be a breakthrough here. Your comments.

Mr. HOOK. Well, my understanding that there is a member briefing that is in the works to try to be organized that would focus on Syria. So that is probably a question that is best left to my colleague, my counterpart, Jim Jeffrey, who is lead on Syria.

Can I answer your question about——

Senator PAUL. Do you see a way the Kurds could permanently live in Syria without some kind of an arrangement with the Syrian Government?

Mr. HOOK. I am going to stay in my lane and let Jim Jeffrey answer that question. I do want to answer your Iran question that you asked at the top.

Iran does have a history of coming to the table in the context of sanctions, and we saw that in the run-up to the Iran nuclear deal. We have also seen that in various times when the United States——

Senator PAUL. I think you have to be willing to offer something. Simply saying we are not going to offer any relief—if you were willing to offer relief of some of the export to Asia of their oil so you do not have a complete embargo on them, yes, I think they would talk in a heartbeat. That would be offering something. It would have been easier before they attacked Saudi Arabia. I agree. It is easier to offer them something now. But 6 months ago, had you offered them relief of some of the sanctions in order to get the talks started, I think you might have had a chance. Now nobody wants to offer any relief because of the heightened tensions between the countries. I think it is more difficult now to get started.

Mr. HOOK. Sanctions relief was not granted in the run-up to what became the Iran nuclear deal. I think once you establish that precedent——

Senator PAUL. You had a unified Europe at that time too. You had a little bit more pressure. You also had the engagement of the Obama administration actually talking to them, and there was more a trust then. There is less trust now because we basically pulled out of something that they were adhering to.

Mr. HOOK. Well, on that, we have made it clear that we are open to meeting. Iran has rejected the offer. By the way, they rejected the offer while we were in the deal. Iran rejected our offers of meeting while we were in the Iran nuclear deal. It did not happen after we left the deal. So they have consistently rejected diplomacy. I think they have a theory of the case that their resistance is greater than our pressure. We are very comfortable with the foreign policy that we have in place because we know that the regime has less revenue to spend on its military budget. We are forcing them to make very hard choices.

As I said earlier, I have looked at the 40-year history of it. If talking nicely with the Iranians worked, we would have solved this a long time ago, but it does not. This is a regime that only respects and understands strength.

Senator PAUL. They do not consider an embargo of their main export talking nicely to them. I am not saying it is justified, but you have to understand their perspective. They do not understand this to be nice talk when we have an embargo on their main export.

Mr. HOOK. That oil goes to fund terrorism. So if you let Iran sell oil, they use it for terrorist operations. So we do not want Iran to sell its oil. That is why we put in place the sanctions that we have on Iran's oil exports, and that is tens of billions of dollars in revenue that they would otherwise spend on Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, Palestine Islamic Jihad, Shia militias in Iraq and Syria. That is a good thing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Hook. We are going to have to take a break at this point. We have got some votes going on. We are going to go vote on number one, number two, and then we will be back in session. I appreciate your patience. Thank you. You are welcome to use our anteroom.

Mr. HOOK. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will be in recess.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hook, thank you for your service.

The President has deployed a growing number of additional U.S. armed forces to Saudi Arabia in recent weeks as part of a potential conflict with Iran. Do you believe that the Congress is required by the Constitution to authorize U.S. participation in any war with Iran?

Mr. HOOK. I know that my colleague, Marik String, who is the Department's Acting Legal Adviser, testified before this committee on July 24 to answer questions related to legal authorities surrounding Iran. I have nothing new to add beyond what he said, and so I would defer to his answers.

As I said earlier in my statement, we are not looking for conflict with Iran, and we have said repeatedly that we will not exercise military force unless we are attacked.

The troop-enhanced posture with Saudi is purely defensive, and it is to help Saudi do a better job of defending itself. Obviously, when——

Senator UDALL. I am not so sure that Iran sees it that way when we are taking sides like we have.

How many times have you met with President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, about any subject involving foreign policy? What topics did you discuss?

Mr. HOOK. Back when I was the Director of the Office of Legal Policy—I am friends with—I know Judge Michael Mukasey. He asked for a meeting when I was in Legal Policy. He brought Rudy Giuliani to the meeting with him. The meetings were regarding a consular issue. There was no action taken regarding the meeting topic.

Senator UDALL. That is the only meeting you had with him?

Mr. HOOK. General Mukasey came and met with me twice, and Mr. Giuliani was there at both meetings.

Senator UDALL. What was the second meeting about?

Mr. HOOK. The same one.

Senator UDALL. So are you confirming the meeting about the Zarrab case?

Mr. HOOK. It is a consular issue, and we do not discuss consular issues. What I can say——

Senator UDALL. Let me ask it this way then. So you were confirming the "Washington Post" reporting that you met with Mr. Giuliani in 2017 when he was representing Reza Zarrab, a Turkish national who has been convicted of helping powerful Turkish figures make huge amounts of money evading Iranian sanctions.

Did you believe that it was appropriate for Mr. Giuliani to press for presidential intervention in an ongoing criminal trial to free an Iranian sanction evader to avoid testimony that would implicate powerful figures in Turkey? What actions did you take after that meeting in response?

Mr. HOOK. So it was a meeting at the request of Judge Mukasey, and there was no action taken after either meeting.

Senator UDALL. So can you confirm that you only met with Mr. Giuliani twice?

Mr. HOOK. Correct. Again, it was a meeting at the request of Judge Mukasey, and I know Judge Mukasey. He was Attorney General of DOJ in the Bush administration. I served at the Justice Department. I have known him for a number of years. He requested the meeting. So that is the nature of the meeting. I want to make that clear.

Senator UDALL. Well, you said two meetings.

Mr. HOOK. Yes. I am saying Judge Mukasey came by twice.

Senator UDALL. With Giuliani about the same subject as reported by the *Washington Post*.

Mr. HOOK. Well, I do not have the Post article. I do not know what the Post is reporting.

Senator UDALL. Well, I have stated the basis of it, and you confirmed it.

Mr. HOOK. Well, no. What I said was it was involving a consular issue. We do not discuss consular issues.

Senator UDALL. You confirmed the meeting.

Mr. HOOK. I have confirmed that I met at the request of Judge Mukasey twice to discuss—he requested the meeting to discuss a consular issue.

Senator UDALL. The consular issue concerned Reza Zarrab, a Turkish national.

Mr. HOOK. I do not have any comment beyond what I said about the nature of the meeting that Judge Mukasey requested.

Senator UDALL. So do you not confirm at all what the *Washington Post* reported about your meeting with this gentleman?

Mr. HOOK. I have not read the Post article, so I cannot confirm something that I have not read.

Senator UDALL. The Inspector General and internal State Department emails show that you have been working to retaliate against State Department employees whom you do not believe are sufficiently loyal to President Trump. There are reports that you wrote yourself an email with a list of individuals whom you consider insufficiently loyal or whom you listed as troublemakers or turncoats. Furthermore, you have reportedly received communications from private citizens such as Newt Gingrich and others in the Republican Party to justify firing or reassigning career officials.

We have a civil service system to protect this sort of politicization of our government, especially our diplomats.

Who was urging you to take action against career State Department officials, and what actions did you take in response?

Mr. HOOK. So first of all, I cannot comment on an IG investigation. I look forward to that report coming out.

I think what you are quoting from is from something that was leaked. So I do not have any comment on something that was

leaked. So we will wait for the report to come out. It is not proper for me to comment on it.

I will say that as Director of Policy Planning and in my current role as Director of the Iran Action Group, I have worked very closely and very well with all members of the career Civil Service, the Foreign Service, political appointees, all manner of schedule appointments in the Federal Government, and I am very proud of the work that we have done together.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Hook.

Let me start out by saying I am a supporter of the Administration's policy towards Iran. I also believe you are very knowledgeable about the topic, and I think you are doing a very good job. I think you have a very tough job. So obviously, I am not expecting you to be able to do that job and opine on everything I am about to say. I do need to challenge the notion that our decision that led to the Turkish incursion and attack on northern Syria do not hurt our Iranian strategy.

I want to start by saying that clearly Iran is carrying out a counter-pressure campaign that allows them to directly or under cover of surrogates conduct attacks in the region with enough deniability to avoid international condemnation. It is a capacity, by the way, that they have built partially with the funds generated by the disastrous Iran deal. I believe—and I think the evidence is clear—that the threshold they think they can get away with on some of these attacks is greatly influenced by their perception that the Administration is looking to get out of the Middle East, not reengage in some conflict.

So I do not believe, although I understand the difficulty of the job you have, it is credible to argue that the decision with regard to Turkey does not fortify that Iranian perception.

I also think it is difficult to ignore the implications that that decision has on our partners in the region and their views on our security assurances, whether it is Israel or Jordan or the UAE or Saudi Arabia. Frankly even beyond the Middle East, it is not credible to argue that other countries do not view that decision and see themselves there one day potentially in a moment of conflict and crisis.

So I do not expect you can opine on it. Those are my views. I feel strongly about it, and I suspect many others do as well. If anything I said that you disagree with, I welcome a comment. If not, I do have a question.

Mr. HOOK. I am happy to take your question.

Senator RUBIO. The Security Council resolution that implemented the nuclear deal and revised the embargo on sales of conventional weapons to Iran is set to expire no later than October 2020 on things like large caliber artillery systems and combat aircraft and the like. It banned foreign assistance to Iran's ballistic missile program and manufacturing that sunset in 2023.

In September of 2019, an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* by Steve Rademaker, a lawyer who served as President Bush's Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation—and he made the argument that the U.S. should trig-

ger the 2231 and the mechanisms there for snapping back U.N. sanctions against Iran and preserving the arms embargo and the missile ban. Under those provisions, by the way, the snapback would then go into effect unless the U.N. Security Council adopts a resolution to the contrary, which would be, of course, subject to a U.S. veto.

One thing that is important to note in his op-ed is he wrote, "some might argue that because the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA, it is no longer a participant and therefore cannot trigger this procedure. In fact, resolution 2231 defines a JCPOA participant to include the U.S. without any qualifications."

My question is, do you agree with his assessment that the U.S. could trigger the snapback mechanism regardless of whether or not the U.S. is observing the non-legally binding deal?

Mr. HOOK. It is ultimately a question for L. I think we need to have the lawyers from the NSC and the State legal department and other agencies with equities take a look at this question.

The broad procedure for a snapback is a member of the deal would go to the U.N. Security Council. The president of the council would table a resolution that was introduced by the member. Then the member that introduced it would then veto his own resolution, and then that would then end the Iran nuclear deal.

I think the question you raised is who has standing to initiate that sequence of events that leads to the end of the Iran nuclear deal and the full snapback of all the U.N. sanctions. That is—since you have asked—and I have talked to other staff on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I know this is a live question that you would like to have answered. I will take it back and work with the interagency to come up with an answer.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The requested information referred to above follows:]

Question. Do you agree with his assessment that the U.S. could trigger the snapback mechanism regardless of whether or not the U.S. is observing the non-legally binding deal?

Answer. Whether there is a legal basis for the initiation of snapback in a given case would have to be evaluated against the requirements in U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231 in light of the particular facts and circumstances. The requirements for initiating snapback under UNSCR 2231 are that (i) a "JCPOA participant State" (ii) notify the U.N. Security Council (iii) of an issue it believes constitutes "significant non-performance" of commitments under the JCPOA.

Senator RUBIO. One last point is in July of this year, I raised the problem of Chinese individuals and entities that were helping the Iranian regime export oil in violation of the secondary sanctions. I was very pleased to see later that month that the Secretary of State announced the imposition of sanctions against the Chinese firm and its CEO for knowingly purchasing or acquiring oil from Iran contrary to U.S. sanctions.

Without getting ahead of ourselves and alerting people to the fact they are in the crosshairs, are there other such actors still out there that are available for us to go after? Is there more to do in this space in regards to entities, whether it is Chinese or otherwise?

Mr. HOOK. Well, thank you for raising what we have done to enforce our sanctions, especially our oil sanctions because that is the chief source of Iran's export revenue.

We have sanctioned Chinese companies, Zhuhai Zhenrong back in July, and then in mid-September we sanctioned six Chinese entities that were importing Iranian crude oil. All the oil waivers—there are none. Those ended after the 6-month period after we left the deal.

So we have said that we will sanction any sanctionable activity. We also sanctioned five executives, Chinese executives, in these firms. We have demarched China a number of times on this subject. I have met with the Chinese to talk about this.

China is Iran's—historically its largest importer, and so it is important that its largest importer not import crude oil. The argument that I have made to the Chinese is that you, like many nations, would like to see greater peace and stability in the Middle East, and for as long as Iran is able to sell its oil, they are going to use that oil to fund their proxy operations around the Middle East. That undermines security and it undermines sovereignty and stability. So that is the message that we have been taking to them.

We hope that China decides that it will no longer import. Iranian crude oil is not an exotic grade. We have a well-supplied oil market. There has been no interruption of China's energy needs during this period, and so there is no need for them to be importing Iranian crude oil.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hook, the reason that Senator Udall is asking you questions about Rudy Giuliani's requests on behalf of Reza Zarrab I think is twofold. One, we are very concerned that there is a shadow foreign policy operation that exists being conducted by the President's personal lawyer, a representative of his political interests. We know that because we have transcripts of phone calls in which the President tells foreign leaders not to call your boss, Secretary Pompeo, if they want to deal with the United States, but to call Rudy Giuliani.

We are also concerned about this particular case because it seems as if it is evidence that the President's personal lawyer, his shadow Secretary of State, is working to undermine American sanctions against Iran, the very sanctions that you testified to us that are crippling their economy.

So let me ask Senator Udall's question a different way. Have you spoken to Rudy Giuliani about U.S. sanctions policy towards his client, Reza Zarrab?

Mr. HOOK. This meeting was a couple of years ago. I was in listening mode. As I said, Judge Mukasey asked for the meeting, and I listened to what they had to say and there was no action taken.

Senator MURPHY. You did have a meeting with Rudy Giuliani specific to his representation of a client who was seeking to get out of U.S. sanctions.

Mr. HOOK. I had a meeting with Judge Mukasey, who was the lead, and Judge Mukasey raised a consular issue with me, and there was no action taken.

Senator MURPHY. There is a report from three people familiar with the meeting between President Trump and Secretary Tillerson, who you were working for at the time as perhaps his closest advisor, in which President Trump asked for Secretary Tillerson's help to work to drop the case against Zarrab. Are you familiar with this meeting or the request that was made?

Mr. HOOK. I was not familiar with the meeting.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Chairman, I think it is important to set the broader record straight here with respect to some of the things that Mr. Hook has said about our policy vis-à-vis Iran and its connection to the recent developments in Syria.

I appreciate that you do have a tough job to do, and I do not imagine that you would have given counsel to the President to abandon our Kurdish partners in Syria. It is simply not credible to say that we did not have a counter-Iran element to our Syria strategy. In fact, multiple individuals testified to that before this committee and would still testify to that before the committee.

It is not credible to say that abandoning the Kurds does not change the efficacy of our Iran strategy. Iran absolutely benefits unequivocally from a new alignment inside Syria in which the Kurds are forced to align themselves with Bashar al-Assad.

It is also not credible—it just does not pass the straight face test—to try to convince us that Europe is helping us with a maximum pressure campaign on Iran.

To the extent that I have a question on these topics, I will give you one to try to clarify the record. I know you have this list of actions that Europe has taken. Let us be honest. Europe is attempting to work around our sanctions. Europe is trying to create financial vehicles so that their businesses can continue to trade with Iran. They are talking about a new line of credit to prop up the Iranian economy. They still have diplomatic relations. It just does not pass the laugh test to suggest that the Europeans are working with us.

So I just want to put this question back to you again. I mean, are you really trying to convince us that the Europeans are assisting in our maximum pressure campaign when we know that they are actively engaged in trying to help their businesses work around U.S. sanctions?

Mr. HOOK. So you said that Europe is working around our sanctions, and I think maybe just to be a little more precise European companies is what we are talking about. European companies have made a clear choice to choose the United States market over the Iranian market. The EU does more trade with Kazakhstan than it does with Iran. It is not even in the top 30 of trading partners. So we have seen nothing but full compliance by European companies on our sanctions regime.

European governments are frustrated that Iran has lost some of the benefits under the Iran nuclear deal with our departure, but that is a secondary consequence.

As it pertains to European companies, there is no daylight. There is more daylight between European companies and European governments than there is between the U.S.——

Senator MURPHY. I think you were sending us a list of actions that European countries had taken. I think it just strains credi-

bility to suggest that you have had success in convincing other nations, especially those in Europe, to rejoin the pressure campaign. The pressure campaign is unilateral. It is not as effective as it could be if you were successful.

Mr. HOOK. So our unilateral sanctions have been much more effective than the multilateral sanctions that were in place prior to the deal. Indisputable on that.

The second thing. It is true—and maybe this is just a matter of sort of making distinctions. There is our pressure campaign, and then there is Europe working to confront and address Iranian threats to peace and security. Sometimes those overlap, and sometimes they separate. When I look at this list of European actions, it is dozens of actions, I mean, everything from, as I said, the statements. Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany exposed an Iranian plot to bomb an oppositionist rally in Paris and they arrested several Iranian operatives. The Netherlands expelled two Iranian diplomats in connection with an assassination. The French Foreign Minister condemned Iran's attack on U.S. diplomatic missions in Iraq. Serbia revoked visa-free travel for Iranian citizens. Belgium extradited—I would welcome you reading this.

Europe has done a lot in the time that we have left the deal to try to raise the cost of Iranian aggression. They have not joined our maximum pressure campaign, but they have adopted our position that we need a new deal. Boris Johnson said that the Iran nuclear deal was a bad deal with many, many——

Senator MURPHY. I would just say, listen, the proof is in the pudding. Iran is not at the negotiating table. You have a year left on your term. Their malevolent activity in the region is worse than ever before. If you had evidence that all of these actions were bringing them to the table, we might be in a different conversation, but there is absolutely no evidence that this has actually gotten us to a point where you can effectuate a negotiated settlement. You only have 12 months left on the term. We are just not going to get the agreement that you have sought with the time that you have left and without European partners.

I know I am way over my time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murphy, I am not complaining about the time because I think this is an important discussion to have. I am sitting here listening, and I am hoping we are not talking past each other. I mean, as far as starting with the Europeans, we all meet with the Europeans. We know what their view is on this.

Senator MURPHY. Of course.

The CHAIRMAN. They are despondent over the fact that we walked away from the JCPOA.

On a transactional basis, I think as Mr. Hook has pointed out, they have certainly done some things to help us move the ball forward. They have also done some things to try to get around us by establishing other credit and what have you.

Again, I think the debate should be—and apparently we have at least some disagreement on that—that the sanctions that have been put in place indeed are causing great difficulty within Iran. Has that gotten them to the table yet? No. Have they given any indications they are coming to the table? No. So where do you suggest we go to? We then just say, oh, okay, we will go back to the

JCPOA or we beg them to come to the table. I do not understand that.

Believe me, I am not trying to rankle anybody here. I think we all need to pull the wagon together as far as Iran is concerned. So I hope we are not talking past each other on this.

Senator MURPHY. Again, my point is that to the extent there is evidence you are crippling the economy, that is supposed to be leverage in order to get them to the table to negotiate a deal that was better than the JCPOA. I think many of us would argue that you are never going to get them to agree to something that was better than the JCPOA. You cannot even get them to the table in part because they see Europe as a lifeline. They see their ability to work around our sanctions through lines of credit and innovative financial vehicles from Europe. I just do not think we should let the Administration get away with telling us that Europe is our partner in trying to get Iran to the negotiating table. They are not. They are trying to work around the sanctions that the Trump administration has enacted. That is one of the primary reasons why this strategy has not worked for 3 years and is not going to work as a vehicle to try to get the Iranians back to the table before the end of Trump's term.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that is a fair opinion of yours. I would disagree with it. The point about sitting it out until Trump's terms is over may be good, but boy, they got a tough year ahead of them. They have got 14 months ahead of them of some pretty dark times if you accept what is happening internally within Iran, particularly with the depreciation of their currency and that sort of thing. Look, that is a fair opinion that you have. I think we just have a fair disagreement on that opinion.

With that, unfortunately, we have got to go vote a couple of times. So we will do that and we will come back as we are anxious to hear from Senator Markey and Senator Cruz who are our last questioners. So if we can have a short break while we go vote, we will all come back. Fair enough? The committee will be at ease subject to the call of the chair.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Chair, thank you for interrupting me as I was interrupting the witness earlier. I should not have interrupted, and I appreciated you making me wait my turn.

Mr. Hook, the reason I interrupted is I do not like being lied to. You said something that you repeated twice that has been said to this committee before that I just think is completely wrong, and that is that the JCPOA, the Iran deal—one of the reasons it was bad is because it expires. I think you know that is false. There are provisions in the agreement that expire. That is correct. So the agreement has a set of provisions dealing with centrifuges and inspections, and some of the provisions, you are correct, expire at year 8 or year 15 or year 20 or year 25 or year 30. To say to me, to our committee, to the American public that the deal is bad because it expires is just wrong.

The first paragraph of the deal, preface—I said first sentence, first paragraph. I was wrong. It is not the first sentence. The first paragraph of the deal: Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop, or acquire any nuclear weapons. That is permanent. Ever, under no circumstances, any. That is a permanent provision that they have signed to that never expires unless somebody like the United States decides to blow up the deal.

The second page of the deal, preamble and general provisions. I guess they felt that was important enough that they wanted to repeat it twice. Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop, or acquire any nuclear weapons.

That is not the only permanent part of the deal. While there are some provisions that expire—and anybody can feel free to like or not like the sunset on those provisions—there is also a provision that I believe at year 30 extra investigation, examination of their nuclear arsenal provisions expire, but at year 30 Iran agrees to permanently abide by the additional protocol set up by the IAEA for inspections in the aftermath of North Korea being caught cheating.

I would not dwell on it except other Administration witnesses have come here and looked us in the eye and said the same thing. I get it that you guys want to say the deal was bad. By lying about it and suggesting that the deal was bad because it expires, you tremendously weaken your credibility.

I believe that the Administration backing out of the JCPOA was incredibly foolish. Who cares what I think? I am a Democrat. I do not think the Administration cares one whit what I think.

How about Secretary Mattis? How about Secretary Tillerson? How about head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joe Dunford? I am on the Armed Services Committee. They appeared when the President was trying to decide what to do about the deal and said staying in the deal was in the United States' interests. All right. Well, forget about them. Maybe they do not know anything.

Our European allies begged us to stay in the deal. Okay. Who cares about allies? Maybe we do not. The International Atomic Energy Agency said Iran was complying with the deal. President Trump felt otherwise, just like President Bush trashed the IAEA when it said Iraq had a program of weapons of mass destruction.

So this is a deal that had some provisions that did, in fact, expire, provisions that expired, but it was a permanent deal where Iran suggested they would never seek, purchase, acquire, develop nuclear weapons. That promise was enforceable by sanctions. That promise could potentially have given legal justification for military action against Iran if they had violated the provision. The additional protocol that was permanent gives the United States not only intel, but intel plus inspection data that if we ever needed to take military action, we could target it in a more sophisticated way.

When I see the Administration coming and telling the American public we do not like the deal because it expires, it just infuriates me.

We should have done what Senator Cardin said. The Administration should have stayed in the JCPOA and then done exactly what you are trying to do, sanction Iran for all the other bad activities

that you have testified to here today. Many of us on both sides of the aisle had supported sanctions against Iran for missiles, human rights violations, their aggression in the region. We should have kept the permanent promise and the additional protocol being permanent in our pocket and worked with our European allies to get sanctions against Iran for those activities, which you could have done by your own testimony today except you were asking for additional negotiations of the JCPOA itself.

The withdrawal has made the region less safe, and the withdrawal has made it much more difficult for you to do what you want to do, which is to get another deal, because if the deal is being complied with and we backed out of it, why would a country do another deal with us? They would think we would back out of it.

Backing out of the deal has made it much harder to get a deal with North Korea. I applaud the President's efforts in trying. When North Korea sees the U.S. backing out of a deal that the IAEA said Iran was complying with, it makes it much more difficult. Much more difficult for them to get on board.

So I just wanted to put on the record that is why I was agitated. You can be against the deal. You can be against the expiration of provisions of the deal. To tell the American public the deal was bad because it expires is just a lie.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Would you like to respond, please?

Mr. HOOK. I would like to respond to that.

The CHAIRMAN. I am sure that Senator Kaine will give you the rest of his time, such as it is.

Mr. HOOK. It is the case that the deal will expire. I do not think it is a material distinction to say that after all of the substance of the deal expires, that the deal does not expire because Iran makes a commitment to never get a nuclear weapon. I think that is a misreading, and it is a misleading account of the Iran nuclear deal.

In 2031——

Senator KAINE. Do you think I misquoted what I just read? Are you accusing me of misquoting it?

Mr. HOOK. I am happy to go through everything that you raised.

Senator KAINE. No, but are you saying that I—you think it is a misreading. Did I incorrectly state those provisions in the preface and preamble to the deal?

Mr. HOOK. As I understood what you said, it was that because Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever develop or acquire any nuclear weapons that that means that this deal never expires. The provisions of the deal expire.

Senator KAINE. That is a provision of the deal.

Mr. HOOK. It is not a provision.

Senator KAINE. It is in the preamble. It is in the preface.

Mr. HOOK. It is preambular. It is a preambular. It is not an operative paragraph. It is preambular paragraph. It is hortatory.

So in 2031, all restrictions lift on the Iran nuclear deal.

Senator KAINE. Except that provision and the agreement to follow the additional protocol in perpetuity.

Mr. HOOK. If Iran has no intent to acquire a nuclear weapon, what were they doing with that atomic archive in the heart of Tehran that Israel had to liberate?

Senator KAINE. Look, if you want to talk about what Iran is doing wrong, that is fine. I am just saying——

Mr. HOOK. I did not misrepresent it. I stated very clearly that the Iran deal will expire.

Senator KAINE. The wording stands as it is, and I am perfectly comfortable to let the people look at the first paragraph of the deal and the preamble and compare it against this witness' statement.

The CHAIRMAN. That is fair, Senator Kaine. The language of the agreement cannot be argued with. It is black and white. The opinion as to whether or not that is an expiring provision I think is subject to debate. Some of us feel one way. Some of us feel another. That is a fair statement.

I understand how it agitates anybody if you come in and try to tell somebody the facts are different than what they are. I think there are a lot more important issues here over whether or not that provision was expiring. I think we can go forward with what we have to do about the situation that we have in front of us without agreeing on whether an agreement that is no longer in effect had a provision that said this or that. Again, I get the same frustration you do when people try to tell me something that I believe differently. In any event, it would be productive if we did go forward with other parts. There is nobody going to argue with you that the language of the agreement is not exactly what it is.

So thank you, Mr. Hook.

Let us go to—I had it mixed up—Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start by saying that I know my friend from Virginia is speaking in good faith when he expresses his support for this deal, but I think the Obama Iran nuclear deal was flawed in virtually every respect. In my judgment, the threat of a nuclear Iran is the single greatest national security threat facing the United States. The Obama Iran nuclear deal was the most catastrophic international agreement since Neville Chamberlain led the United Kingdom. It was flawed on multiple fronts.

On one front, it gave $150 billion to the Ayatollah Khamenei, to the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. It did so while the Ayatollah was chanting "death to America" and "death to Israel." Literally as we negotiated the deal, the Ayatollah would lead mobs in chanting "death to America." History teaches us when someone tells you they want to kill you, we should believe them.

The deal on its face would have led inexorably to a nuclear Iran. It was designed to be utterly unenforceable. On the face of the deal, numerous sites were deemed exempt from inspections. Military sites were deemed exempt from inspections which, of course, means that is naturally where the Iranian regime would engage in additional nuclear research.

It also required 21 days advance notice to the regime before any inspection, a provision certain to encourage cheating.

Indeed, in some circumstances, the agreement provided that Iran would inspect itself, a provision so laughably weak the only con-

sequence of the Iran deal that would have occurred is that Iran would acquire nuclear weapons.

We now know thanks to Israel's heroic work seizing Iranian records that Iran has cheated from day one and continues to cheat, and the only question is is Iran better off with $150 billion or without $150 billion. I believe pulling out of the disastrous Obama Iran nuclear deal is the single most important national security decision the Trump administration has made.

The maximum pressure campaign is exactly the right approach. Now, listen, Iran remains profoundly dangerous, but I would much rather a weakened Iran with billions of dollars less resources to use to pay terrorists to kill Americans and to fund nuclear research than an Iran flush with cash racing to catch up with North Korea and use nuclear weapons and ICBMs to threaten the lives of millions of Americans.

Now, Mr. Hook, you talked about major provisions of the Iran deal expiring, major provisions such as the arms embargo and the ballistic missile test ban expiring. I agree that that is highly troubling. There is an obvious remedy to that, which is under the terms of resolution 2231, you have the snapback sanctions. We now have a situation where Iran's conduct has gotten even worse. Even our European allies acknowledge that Iran committed a serious act of war in bombing Saudi Arabia and taking out about half of their oil production capability. That act of war merits a real response.

Two questions. Does State believe the United States is able to trigger the snapback mechanism? Number two, should we trigger the snapback mechanism?

Mr. HOOK. Senator, thank you for your question. I read your letter from July 2 I believe to Secretary Pompeo that raises this question, and it is something which Senator Rubio and I discussed earlier about whether we can and whether we should use the 2231 to trigger the snapback of the sanctions.

I have raised this with our legal advisor's office. I know it has been in discussion with the NSC legal advisor. It is a procedural question and interpretation of 2231 that turns around what the definition of some of the various terms are, like "participant" and other things. I think yours is a very plausible reading.

What we have done since leaving the deal is allow other countries to decide whether to stay in the deal. Obviously, I think even as the French Foreign Minister said recently after the attacks on Abqaiq on September 14, it is a seminal event. It is a game changer. I cannot remember exactly how he described it. It is something we should take another look at and I appreciate you raising it to our attention.

Senator CRUZ. Well, I would certainly encourage you. On my reading, I believe we have full authority to invoke the snapback sanctions, and particularly given this recent attack against Saudi Arabia, I think we should invoke the snapback sanctions. I think that is a natural response.

Second question. You and I have had multiple conversations about the civilian nuclear waivers. As you know, another round of waivers is coming up in the next couple of weeks. We have waivers right now allowing them to continue construction at the underground Fordow nuclear bunker, a bunker built into the side of a

mountain to build nuclear weapons. We also have a waiver allowing Iran to continue working on the Iraq plutonium-producing reactor, which Secretary Pompeo has rightly said needs to be shut down anyway.

Is it not time to end these waivers and shut down the Fordow nuclear bunker and the Iraq plutonium-producing facility?

Mr. HOOK. You are correct that the current—there are five restrictions that are currently in place. Secretary Pompeo extended those restrictions on June 30. You are correct. Those are going to expire very soon on October 29.

What we have done is we have, over the course of a couple of years now, tightened the restrictions on Iran's nuclear program. We did sanction the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran in November of 2018. In March of this year, we imposed new sanctions on nuclear scientists who were linked to Iran's WMD proliferation-sensitive activities. Secretary Pompeo on July 30 then extended those five restrictions around Iraq, Fordow, Bushehr, the Tehran research reactor. So he will have a decision to make coming up.

You have been a thought leader on this subject, and we will make sure that that is all before the Secretary before he makes this decision.

Senator CRUZ. Well, I would strongly urge that you not extend the waivers, particularly given Iran's spectacularly bad conduct.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cruz.

Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Mr. Hook, in a July 23 interview, Secretary Pompeo said that Iran *before* the Trump administration came into office violated the nuclear deal, "and continued to work on their nuclear program."

Mr. Hook, in your opinion, was Iran working on its nuclear weapons program during our period of compliance with the JCPOA?

Mr. HOOK. It is the case that Iran was hiding under armed guard in a warehouse in the heart of Tehran half a ton of materials——

Senator MARKEY. Were they out of compliance with the JCPOA in your opinion?

Mr. HOOK. I think if Iran is housing an atomic archive and keeping it from the International Atomic Energy Association that they are not in compliance.

Senator MARKEY. So you disagree with Secretary Mattis, Secretary Tillerson, and the generals in the Joint Chiefs of Staff that they were not out of compliance with the JCPOA?

Mr. HOOK. Well, it depends on, in this case—under I think a statute passed by Congress, the President had to certify on a fairly regular basis whether Iran was or was not in compliance with the deal.

The discovery of the atomic archive happened just a couple of months before the President left the deal, and I think that that was a factor.

Senator MARKEY. So—you disagree with Secretary Tillerson and Secretary Mattis that they were—you believe they were out of compliance. Is that what you are saying?

Mr. HOOK. No. What I am saying—I would have to look at the dates that both Secretary Tillerson and Secretary Mattis said that, and so that is relevant to this because the atomic archive was discovered only a month or two before——

Senator MARKEY. I appreciate that. Do you agree that the IAEA inspectors have not found that Iran is out of compliance and definitely was not out of compliance before Donald Trump took office?

Mr. HOOK. I think in the reports that the IAEA—the IAEA does not certify that Iran is in compliance. That is something which the member states do. I think that the Iran nuclear deal set such a low bar for compliance——

Senator MARKEY. Well, that is separate from whether or not they are in compliance.

Is Secretary Pompeo correct that they were not in compliance?

Mr. HOOK. I would have to see exactly what he said and when he said it.

Senator MARKEY. Well, let me just say this. Secretary Pompeo's suggestions have consequences because the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia stated in March of 2018 that without a doubt if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit. Again, that gets into the question of the 123 agreement with Saudi Arabia in terms of the United States agreeing that Saudi Arabia would not have to, in fact, comply with the gold standard for securing uranium and plutonium on Saudi territory. So that just would then call into question whether or not they—that is, the Saudis—would, in fact, act in a way that would be reacting to an Iranian active nuclear weapons program.

Mr. HOOK. Could I speak to that, Senator?

Senator MARKEY. So, from my perspective, the goal has to be that the Trump administration is *not* saying that there is an active program that has been certified by the IAEA if that is not the case because it triggers a reaction in Saudi Arabia that is very, very dangerous.

I want to reach one other question and that is the issue of not whether or not we might differ on the Iranian nuclear deal, but we know that Turkey has undermined Iran sanctions across administrations. Do you agree with that?

Mr. HOOK. I can only speak to the Iran file. Turkey has been in compliance with Iran sanctions.

Senator MARKEY. You think they are in compliance—Turkey.

Mr. HOOK. In terms of the key factor on oil, Turkey is not importing Iranian crude oil.

Senator MARKEY. So you do not think Turkey has been out of compliance, which is important for me to understand.

What the problem is right now is that Turkey is endangering U.S. troops after another rash decision by President Trump, but that is happening near the Syrian border where we reportedly store 50 U.S. nuclear weapons at the Incirlik Air Base inside of Turkey. So the question then is, will we, as a country remove those nuclear weapons from Turkey? They are right now endangering U.S. assets inside of Syria. They are at the border. We have nuclear weapons, reportedly 50 nuclear weapons, on the Incirlik Air Base, and Erdogan has become a less and less reliable partner.

So the President just moments ago said he is confident that the weapons are secure because they are at a, "large, powerful airbase." Well, that large, powerful airbase is inside of Turkey with Erdogan, right now, undermining American security in a way that is almost impossible to fully understand the magnitude, right now, the ripple effect. The law of unintended consequences is just happening and happening and happening. Turkey has actually previously *restricted* our access to that base during a crisis.

So from my perspective, instead of irresponsibly pulling our troops back from the Turkish border, President Trump should be pulling our nuclear weapons out of Turkey instead. That is the right kind of signal to send. That is an accurate reflection of the reliability of the Erdogan administration in terms of American security.

So this whole dynamic in the Trump administration has tremendous ripple effects—pulling out of the Iranian deal; playing footsy with the Saudis in terms of a 123 agreement that is less than the gold standard with uranium and plutonium; having the Saudi prince say they are going to pursue nuclear weapons if they believe the Iranians are; and having our Administration saying they are. So *that* creates a ripple effect. Then turning a blind eye to the Turkish aggressive military action along our border that endangers our interest and if things really go awry, could potentially endanger the security of the nuclear weapons inside of Turkey that are made in the U.S.A.

So all of this is basically something that basically points to the result from my perspective is that the nuclear weapons of the United States in Turkey is a relic of the Cold War. They are not necessary. They should not be there. It is highly unclear that the Turks would *ever* allow us to be using those weapons in a retaliatory strike against Russia with whom at least ostensibly right now they are partnering in this effort in Syria. It is absolutely a crazy policy. We got to get those nukes out of Turkey and do so immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you want to comment?

Mr. HOOK. Yes. Could I just say on the first part of the question about Saudi, prior to the Iran nuclear deal—and Senator Markey and I have had many conversations about nonproliferation, advocate for nonproliferation. Prior to the Iran nuclear deal, the U.N. Security Council passed resolution 1737, and under chapter 7, article 39, it prohibited Iran from enriching. By the way, that is the right standard. There should be no enrichment for the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

I know that you like the 123 agreement that was negotiated in the Bush administration with the UAE. That agreement allows UAE to have a peaceful nuclear program, but they cannot enrich.

Unfortunately, the Iran nuclear deal lifted the prohibition in 1737 and then conceded the point that Iran can enrich. Once you do that, you are not going to be able to sign up anybody for a 123 agreement because you have already breached that standard of no enrichment. We were able to get a 123 agreement because we had a standard of no enrichment.

So I think the Iran nuclear deal has caused all of these countries around the Middle East to look at Iran enriching and ask themselves why can I not enrich. It is much better to restore. So if you look at Secretary Pompeo's list of 12, at the very top is to restore the standard of no enrichment, and that is the best thing that we can be doing. That standard was voted unanimously by China, Russia, the P3, all 10 elected members of the council repeatedly. It was the——

Senator GRAHAM. Mr. Chairman, I have been patiently waiting. Could you please put this in writing?

Senator MARKEY. I will just say, Mr. Chairman, a bad deal with Iran should not be the justification for a bad deal with the Saudi Arabians. We are trying to walk back a bad deal historically. We should not create that as a precedent that allows for a bad deal with——

The CHAIRMAN. Let us turn to Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. All right. Mr. Hook, is Assad a friend of the United States?

Mr. HOOK. No.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you consider him a war criminal?

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Is he aligned with Iran?

Mr. HOOK. Iran has been supporting Assad——

Senator GRAHAM. Without Iran helping Assad, he would not be around because Hezbollah came to his aid when nobody else would. Do you agree with that?

Mr. HOOK. Yes. Iran was an early supporter of Assad.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, Russia and Iran keep Assad functioning.

You are a good man. You are a good choice for this. So my questions are really not about you and your policies. It is about this President's policies. I could not agree more with Senator Markey. This is the most screwed up decision I have seen since I have been in Congress.

When the President said today Syria—Turkey's invasion of Syria is really of no consequence to us, do you know why we sanctioned Turkey if that is true, Mr. Hook?

Mr. HOOK. The President did threaten sanctions on Friday and it has imposed some of them on Monday.

Senator GRAHAM. I cheered them on.

I do not know how in the world Pompeo and Pence bring it into the bloodshed before they leave the present Syria. If Syria wants to fight for their land, that is up to Turkey and Syria. So I view the situation on the Turkish border with Syria to be, for the United States, strategically brilliant. I do not see anything brilliant about this.

Do you believe the Kurds are safer today than they were before Turkey's invasion?

Mr. HOOK. That is a question for Ambassador Jeffrey. I understand there is a member briefing happening. I am the Special Representative for Iran.

Senator GRAHAM. Fair enough.

Mr. HOOK. I can answer the Iran questions on Syria, but——

Senator GRAHAM. Fair enough. Okay.

Do you see Iran moving in to take the oilfields from Syria if we withdraw all of our forces?

Mr. HOOK. I have not seen any intelligence on that yet, but that does not——

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think that would be a logical move for Iran if America abandoned Syria?

Mr. HOOK. Iran's interests in Syria are mostly around supporting Assad and creating a——

Senator GRAHAM. Well, if the oilfields are there for the taking and we leave, what is the likelihood that Iran would go in, and would it matter?

Mr. HOOK. That is not something which I am at liberty to speculate on.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I will speculate. Iran is amassing at the border as I speak. If we withdraw all of our forces and abandon the oilfields, Iran would surely go in and seize the oilfields. It will undercut the maximum pressure campaign, and our friends in Israel would be in a world of hurt.

Do you agree with this? If Iran gets stronger in Syria, it is to the detriment of Israel.

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree that it is in our national security interests to make sure that we have a partnership in Syria that will contain Iran's ambitions?

Mr. HOOK. Yes, that is our strategy, to reverse Iran's power projection and to deny them the revenues——

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree with me that if ISIS comes roaring back, it will be very difficult to contain. The Kurds will have a hard time fighting Turkey and taking care of the ISIS prisoners. That is a bad spot for the Kurds to be in. Do you agree?

Mr. HOOK. In terms of the position the Kurds are in, it is a question for Jim Jeffrey.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, who would be the biggest winner of a breakdown in Syria? Would it be the Iranians? If there is a vacuum created by an American withdrawal, do you see Iran as a potential big winner?

Mr. HOOK. So I think we need to—this is obviously a very fluid situation. We do not want anything done in Syria to be to the detriment of our Iran policy.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Now, Iran policy is to contain Iran, reduce their ability to project power and create upheaval. Do you agree with that?

Mr. HOOK. I did not hear the last part. To do what?

Senator GRAHAM. To create upheaval.

Mr. HOOK. Yes. We are trying to minimize Iran's ability to do that.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree that if they seize the oilfields in Syria, they will be stronger and have more resources, not less?

Mr. HOOK. I do not know the odds of Iran taking the oilfields in Syria.

Senator GRAHAM. If they did.

Mr. HOOK. I can say that so what we have tried to do is that Iran——

Senator GRAHAM. It is a simple question. If they did seize the oilfields in Syria, would it help their regime in terms of their capability?

Mr. HOOK. If they are able to get more revenue, then that is always a bad thing.

Senator GRAHAM. All I can say—that is not a hard question. The answer is yes.

So my view is that the biggest winner of this decision by the President, if he follows through with it, to abandon Syria will be Iran, ISIS, and the biggest loser is going to be our Kurdish allies who fought bravely with us, our friends in Israel.

Do you see Turkey's action going into Syria as undercutting our policies toward Iran?

Mr. HOOK. Our diplomacy—so I would say our troops in the northeast are there to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS. Our diplomats working on Syria are there to——

Senator GRAHAM. Let us just talk about the troops are there to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS by partnering with the Kurds. Is that not correct? The Syrian Democratic Forces.

Mr. HOOK. Beyond the ISIS mission and how it is accomplished——

Senator GRAHAM. We are not there in large enough numbers. We are there in hundreds. It is the thousands of Kurdish fighters and Arab fighters and the Syrian Democratic Forces that we rely upon. Do you agree with that?

Mr. HOOK. That is a question I think for the person—I am the U.S. Special Representative for Iran. I can speak to the Iran——

Senator GRAHAM. I will end this. I ask you a very simple question. Does Erdogan's invasion of Syria putting our Kurdish allies at risk, driving President Trump out of Syria in terms of our military presence—do you think over time that will inure to the benefit of Iran?

Mr. HOOK. I believe that the strategy that we have put in place will accomplish our objectives to deny Iran the revenue it needs.

Senator GRAHAM. Does your strategy include allowing Erdogan to slaughter the Kurds?

Mr. HOOK. That is not part of our strategy.

Senator GRAHAM. Does your strategy include leaving the oilfields in Syria for the taking by Iran?

Mr. HOOK. I have not heard any proposal to enable Iran to take oilfields in Syria.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. I will just associate myself with Senator Graham's line of questioning, and it is a very legitimate line of questioning and it is a very serious one.

Mr. Hook, you referenced EU actions, but the EU actions, some of which you read, are nowhere in line with the sanctions that we have levied against Iran. That is a fair statement. Right?

Mr. HOOK. No, it is not true because——

Senator MENENDEZ. The EU has the same set of sanctions as we have against Iran?

Mr. HOOK. Yes, I am sorry. The EU, unfortunately—and this is one of the weaknesses of the deal—is that the European Union I think——

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Hook, I am sorry. You are an excellent lawyer and you have developed the expertise of the State Department to go on and on without being specific to an answer to a question.

I have a very simple question. Do the EU sanctions line up with our sanctions against Iran? Yes or no.

Mr. HOOK. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. So they have all the sanctions we have.

Mr. HOOK. I did not—no.

Senator MENENDEZ. They are not as strong as the United States' sanctions. You before heralded that our sanctions were more powerful and more consequential than when we had the EU with us.

Mr. HOOK. Well, that is true.

Senator MENENDEZ. The EU sanctions are not the same as ours.

Mr. HOOK. They are, I think, complementary because——

Senator MENENDEZ. I did not ask you if they are complementary. I asked you are they the same as ours. What is so difficult about that answer?

Mr. HOOK. I never said they are the same. I am happy to review the transcript. I never said that.

Senator MENENDEZ. You suggested that there are a series of EU sanctions that were EU sanctions and actions that have——

Mr. HOOK. No. I said European. I said European.

Senator MENENDEZ. Let me finish.

Mr. HOOK. I did not say EU——

Senator MENENDEZ. I get to ask the questions. You get to answer them.

Mr. HOOK. I am happy to.

Senator MENENDEZ. The EU's actions do not equate to the sanctions that the United States has levied against Iran. That is a fair statement. Is it not?

Mr. HOOK. Can you repeat it so that I understand it precisely?

Senator MENENDEZ. The EU actions do not equate to the sanctions the United States has levied against Iran. Is that fair?

Mr. HOOK. They do not equate and I never said they equate.

Senator MENENDEZ. Fine.

Now, you also said that Iran has a history of coming to the table because of sanctions. I was the author of most of those sanctions. The reality is, however, those sanctions were multilateralized by the European Union and others and therefore the magnitude of the consequence was greater. That brought them to the table. Your sanctions unilaterally have not brought them to the table.

You talked about having diplomatic leverage in Syria to deal and thwart Iran from where we want them. Well, the President just made a statement that Russia's expansion after the U.S. departs is fine, and all they are fighting over there is a lot of sand.

Well, when you have 14,000 to 18,000 ISIS fighters, when you have another 10,000 that were imprisoned by the Kurds that may be released—several hundred have already been released—and regroups with them, that is about more than a lot of sand. When you

create a land bridge for Iran to come into Syria and attack our ally, the state of Israel, that is about a lot more than sand.

So I do not know what leverage you are referring to that we have in Syria because we have outsourced Syria to Russia. Talking about reconstruction funds as our leverage, not only is it years away, but I am sure others will fill the void economically with Syria when and if that time ever comes because they already have a big stake in it, i.e., Russia just to mention a few. So we do not really have any leverage in Syria. Except that which we have we just expended.

So my question is, at what point, if Iran continues to enrich and do all the things that you admitted they were doing as a result of them feeling that we walked away and they have no obligation anymore—if they continue to do that, at what point will the size and sophistication of Iran's nuclear program force the Administration to consider whether military action is necessary to restrain Iran's nuclear program?

Mr. HOOK. I think that question is probably best left to a classified briefing.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, without getting into the specifics, have you come to such a determination?

Mr. HOOK. A determination of what?

Senator MENENDEZ. As to what is the size and sophistication of Iran's nuclear program that would force the Administration to consider military action? Without getting into what it is, have you come to a conclusion of——

Mr. HOOK. In an unclassified setting, I cannot have that discussion. I am happy to——

Senator MENENDEZ. This is a simple answer that has nothing to do with classification.

Mr. HOOK. Oh, it does because you have asked how close is Iran to a nuclear weapon, and you have also asked——

Senator MENENDEZ. That is all a matter of public information. I do not need you to testify to that or to speak to it. I am not asking you about that.

I am asking you have you come to a conclusion that if Iran reaches X dimension and X sophistication, that will cause a necessity for military action because the sanctions have not worked.

Mr. HOOK. Our military is always prepared for any contingency.

Senator MENENDEZ. That is not an answer.

Finally, you agree that the full enforcement of sanctions on Iran is incredibly important. Right?

Mr. HOOK. Correct, yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. In our sanctions regime, it is weaker when people figure out how to evade them to the benefit of Iran. Is that not a fair statement?

Mr. HOOK. Correct.

Senator MENENDEZ. Do you believe that those who seek to evade U.S. sanctions on Iran should be prosecuted or fined to the fullest extent of the law?

Mr. HOOK. That is our policy, yes. We will sanction any sanctionable behavior.

Senator MENENDEZ. So in the case of Reza Zarrab, who ran the biggest sanctions evasion scheme in recent history in which Turk-

ish gold was traded for Iranian oil, he paid off Turkish Government officials, as well as officials at the Turkish HalkBank to facilitate the transactions. Erdogan, who was the Prime Minister at the time, reportedly knew about the scheme. Zarrab was arrested in March of 2016 by U.S. authorities and then hired Rudy Giuliani and former Attorney General Michael Mukasey to represent him. You have testified here that General Mukasey asked to come see you.

When he asked to come see you, did you know that Rudy Giuliani was going to accompany him?

Mr. HOOK. I do not recall if that was mentioned. I just know that he was there.

Senator MENENDEZ. He was there. He just showed up.

When he came the second time, did you know that he was going to accompany Mr. Mukasey?

Mr. HOOK. I may or may not have. I am not sure how it is material. I just honored the request of General Mukasey to do a meeting, and I did the meeting. Then no action was taken.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, the price must have been right because both were willing to put their reputations on the line to represent someone who worked so hard to undermine U.S. national security interests.

Are you familiar with the report that the *Washington Post* had that both Mr. Giuliani and Mukasey directly appealed to the President to exchange Zarrab for an imprisoned American in the fall of 2017 in an Oval Office meeting that included then Secretary Tillerson?

Mr. HOOK. I have not read the Post story, and I am not aware of the meeting.

Senator MENENDEZ. You are not aware of the meeting. Mr. Tillerson never spoke to you about such an effort.

Mr. HOOK. No.

Senator MENENDEZ. The October 10 report also says, as you have stated before, that Mr. Giuliani, in addition to Mr. Mukasey, met with you to discuss the case at the State Department. Is that true?

Mr. HOOK. There were two meetings early in the Administration.

Senator MENENDEZ. It was about Mr. Zarrab. Right?

Mr. HOOK. I have not said that. I just said it was on a consular issue.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, first of all, a consular issue is about visas. It is about whether or not a visa has been given for a visitor's visa, for a work permit, for investor permits. That is a consular issue. You are trying to hide behind the term "consular issue" when this was a meeting about someone who was in prison seeking to evade U.S. sanctions on Iran through Turkey. That is not a consular issue.

Mr. HOOK. It was presented as a consular issue.

Senator MENENDEZ. That is not a consular issue.

Mr. HOOK. But it was presented as a consular issue.

Senator MENENDEZ. I could call a dog a cat. That does not mean that ultimately it is a cat. Right? I could call it anything to try to avoid it, but that does not mean that is what it is.

Mr. HOOK. The meeting did concern a consular proposal, and it was not acted upon. I think anybody who knows me knows that I vigorously enforce all sanctions against Iran.

Senator MENENDEZ. When we have the highest office in the land empowering people to seek to make a deal, when you have the biggest violator of U.S. sanctions on Iran, it is hard to believe that we have a universal message on Iran that our sanctions will be vigorously enforced and preserved. It breaks credibility at the end of the day.

Mr. HOOK. I do not see how it does. There is no Administration in history that has imposed more sanctions on Iran than this Administration. There is no historic precedent for greater enforcement of our sanctions, and there was nothing that impacted our sanctions at all as a consequence of those two meetings. Nothing.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Zarrab was the biggest violator of U.S. Iran sanctions of any single individual. Is that not true?

Mr. HOOK. In the prior Administration, yes, and he is in jail.

Senator MENENDEZ. It was not the prior Administration who was letting free agents go to make a deal to let him loose. Come on. Come on. Stop with that prior Administration stuff.

Mr. HOOK. No. But this is a question for——

Senator MENENDEZ. This is a question that you met with them, not the prior Administration. You met with them.

Mr. HOOK. Then took no action. So we are in full agreement on this that we need to vigorously enforce our sanctions, and we have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, gentlemen. That will conclude the hearing.

A sincere thank you to you, Mr. Hook. I said at the beginning of the hearing that you were the right man for the job, and certainly you have proven that to be the case. I thank you for your service to the country. I think you have been an excellent witness as far as describing how we are attempting to handle a very difficult situation, and I want you to know the appreciation of the American people is there for you.

So thank you so much. For the information of the members, the record will remain open until the close of business on Friday. We would ask, Mr. Hook, if you get questions, to respond as promptly as possible, and those responses will be included in the record.

The committee is hereby adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

THE COMMITTEE RECEIVED NO RESPONSE FROM SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN HOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

IRAN STRATEGY

This Administration has pursued its maximum pressure campaign to constrain Iran's ability to destabilize the region and threaten U.S. interests and our allies but does not seem to have a strategy for taking advantage of that pressure. In fact, it seems that we have reached an impasse with the maximum pressure campaign and lost any ability to deter Iranian behavior.

Question. Do you believe you have successfully countered Iranian aggression in the short term and long term?

[No Response Received]

NEGOTIATIONS

You've said that the purpose of the maximum pressure campaign was to get Iran to and return to the negotiating table, where a new, more restrictive agreement would be crafted that eliminated its nuclear enrichment program, curtailed its ballistic missile program and reduced its influence in the Gulf. Secretary Pompeo has also said, "Iran knows what it needs to do."

Question. What steps does Iran need to take to get back to the negotiating table?

[No Response Received]

Question. Iran has repeatedly said it will not come back to the negotiating table without preconditions. To date, it has not. Do you believe under any circumstances Iran will start negotiations without some kind of guarantees of relief from the United States or the international community?

[No Response Received]

Question. Has this been communicated to the Iranians? How?

[No Response Received]

Question. What does a new, more restrictive agreement look like?

[No Response Received]

Question. Have you developed specific parameters that have been communicated to the Iranians? On inspections? On heavy water reprocessing or shipment of spent fuel? On ballistic missiles?

[No Response Received]

Question. How have you engaged with our international partners regarding a new agreement with Iran?

[No Response Received]

SAUDI ATTACK

Following the Aramco attacks, the Administration announced it would send additional troops and enhanced air and missile defense systems to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in response to the attacks. Secretary Pompeo referred to the attack as an "act of war."

Question. Under what authorities did the President deploy troops to Saudi Arabia? What direct threat to the United States are they protecting? Is the Administration planning to come to Congress for an appropriate authorization?

[No Response Received]

Question. What assistance has the Saudi Government requested? This President seems focused on burden-sharing; how are the Saudis sharing the burden of our protecting their oil facilities and territories?

[No Response Received]

Question. How can the President tell the American people he is withdrawing troops from forever wars across the Middle East when in fact he's deploying thousands?

[No Response Received]

Question. What message do you think it sends to our allies around the world that the President has withdrawn troops who were supporting our partners in the fight against ISIS as they are actively being slaughtered—and Russian forces are now running around U.S. military bases—but that we will send our men and women to protect Saudi Arabia?

[No Response Received]

AUMF

Question. Will the Administration come to Congress for an Authorization for the Use of Military Force?

[No Response Received]

JCPOA

The Administration's maximum pressure campaign has prompted Iran to renounce many of the nuclear commitments it made in the JCPOA. Since July, Iran has exceeded the limits imposed on its stockpile of uranium, it has enriched ura-

nium to higher levels of concentration than permissible in the JCPOA, and it has begun using more advanced centrifuges for enrichment. The Institute for Science and International Studies warned in early September that over time these steps could "shrink precipitously" the amount of time Iran needs to produce the material for one nuclear weapon, known as breakout time.

Question. Would you agree that the nuclear steps Iran has taken since July have shrunk their break-out time below 1 year? In other words that Iran is now closer to achieving its goal of building a nuclear weapon than it was before the maximum pressure campaign was initiated?

[No Response Received]

Question. Do you have a current estimate for Iran's breakout time?

[No Response Received]

Question. What is the Administration's strategy for reining in Iran's nuclear program now that Iran has said it is no longer bound by the commitments it made in the JCPOA?

[No Response Received]

IRAQ

Iraq now finds itself wedged perilously between the Administration's maximum pressure campaign and its reckless decision to abandon the counter-ISIS fight in Syria. Both are creating spillover effects in Iraq that threaten that country's stability. Yet the Administration continues to drawdown staff at Embassy Baghdad and Consulate Erbil, to say nothing of its earlier closure of our Basra consulate.

Question. How can the U.S. Government effectively work with the Iraqi government to limit Iranian influence given our significantly reduced diplomatic footprint in the country?

[No Response Received]

Question. What is the Administration's plan to maintain a high-level of diplomatic outreach in this regard in spite of the drawdown?

[No Response Received]

TROOPS

I was under the impression that this President, this Administration, wanted to remove or reduce U.S. troop presence in the Middle East. Yet, at the same time the President is withdrawing 1,000 troops from Syria and creating havoc across the region, he is adding 3,000 troops to Saudi Arabia to "enhance defensive assets." There are conflicting messages here. On the one hand, he wants troops of the Middle East. He has said that sending troops was one of the biggest mistakes in the history of America. Yet, on the other he is sending 3,000 troops to Saudi Arabia, with a promise of 14,000 more. There is a fundamental contradiction here.

Question. How does this make sense? Do you see the threat from Iran to be such that this is absolutely necessary to regain the deterrent factor?

[No Response Received]

TREATIES

At the Hudson Institute last year you argued the JCPOA, which was agreed to by the United National Security Council was "insufficient in our system of government if you want to have something enduring and sustainable." You went on to say the Trump administration would improve upon the Obama administration efforts by negotiating a treaty with Iran, requiring the advise and consent of the Senate. While I applaud your desire to work with the Senate I must say your views on this issue are at odds with every other action the Trump administration has taken. The Trump administration policy again and again has been to cavalierly abandon U.S. legally binding international commitments including those contained in long-standing treaties.

Question. Why should Iran or any other international actor believe the Trump administration is less willing walk away from treaties that other types of international agreements?

[No Response Received]

Question. In your opinion are the criteria for withdrawing from a treaty, for example the Open Skies Treaty which the Administration is threatening to pull out of, different than pulling out of the JCPOA?

[No Response Received]

Question. Do you believe the Trump administration's policy of withdrawing the United States from legal binding international instruments are undermining attempts to reach a future agreement with Iran?

[No Response Received]

POLITICAL RETALIATION

For more than 2 years now, there have been disturbing reports about politically-motivated retaliation against career State Department career employees.

Question. Do you agree that retaliation of any kind has no place in Federal Government? And that anyone found to have engaged in it should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

[No Response Received]

Question. I'm sure you won't be surprised when I raise that you have allegedly engaged in retaliation against at least one career employee—and, at a minimum, appear to have done nothing to stand up when that employee was subject to unfounded attacks about her "loyalty." Do you believe that public servants must be "loyal" to a President?

Background: A career State employee who was detailed to the Policy Planning shop, headed by Hook, was the subject of conservative media attacks for being "Iranian" and having worked on JCPOA under Obama. After they surfaced, her detail to Hook's shop was cut short.

[No Response Received]

Question. Have you used the perceived loyalties of federal employees as a factor in whether or not they should work on certain policy portfolios? What about their ethnic heritage?

Background: Well, I certainly hope not. But I have seen some troubling evidence that indicates otherwise. As you know, we are awaiting an IG report that is expected to cover the conduct of officials in your former shop, the policy planning office. I look forward to reviewing that report and expect that the Department will act swiftly to address any misconduct.

[No Response Received]

Question. Can you explain why an email you reportedly sent yourself included a list of names including notes next to them that included things like "leaker and troublemaker" and "turncoat"? Is that conduct that we should expect from senior officials at the State Department?

Background: An email that has been publicly reported that Hook sent to himself included a list of names with questions about their loyalties, including the charges that one was a "leaker and troublemaker" and another a "turncoat."

Note: If he refuses to answer because the Inspector General investigation is "ongoing": *First, that is not a legal basis for not answer the question. Second, that review has actually concluded and already gone to the Department for comment. We are just awaiting its final release. So there is no basis for not answering because of an ongoing investigation.*

[No Response Received]

U.S. CITIZENS DETAINED IN IRAN

Question. What steps have you specifically taken in the past 12 months to secure the release of Princeton University student Xiyue Wang, Robert Levinson, and Siamak Namazi?

[No Response Received]

RESPONSES OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN HOOK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. In light of the continuation of Iran-sponsored attacks on Gulf shipping and its neighbors, what is the basis for arguing that the maximum pressure campaign has been effective in countering the threat posed by Iran?

Answer. The maximum pressure campaign is working. We have taken 2 million barrels per day of Iranian crude off the market, and purchases of Iranian crude now are subject to U.S. sanctions. More than 30 countries that once purchased Iranian oil have zeroed out their imports. With the drastic reduction in export revenue, Iran has had to make tough choices between meeting the needs of its own people and financing proxy militant groups abroad. As a result of our pressure campaign, Iranian-backed militias have had to institute austerity plans due to reductions in Iran's financial support—directly countering the threat posed by Iran to us and our allies and partners in the region.

Question. To what extent does President Trump's willingness to meet with President Rouhani support or conflict with the maximum pressure campaign?

Answer. The maximum pressure campaign is designed to bring Iran to the negotiating table, where we can broker a deal that comprehensively addresses the Iranian regime's destabilizing behavior—not just their nuclear program but also their missile program, support for terrorism, and malign regional behavior. The President's repeated statements that he is willing to meet with Iran underscores our commitment to seeking a deal through negotiations and is an intrinsic part of the maximum pressure campaign.

Question. Rather than continue to fuel Saudi Arabia's proxy war with Iran, shouldn't the U.S. be pursuing diplomacy with Iran to dial down tensions?

Answer. President Trump has made clear that he is willing to talk with the Iranian regime without preconditions when the time is right. He wants to solve problems and is seeking a deal with Iran that comprehensively addresses Iran's destabilizing behavior.

Question. To what extent does the Administration take cues from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia when it comes to regional security?

Answer. The Administration's actions in the Middle East are strictly based on U.S. national security priorities and not dictated by other actors. In line with U.S. priorities, our longstanding partnership with Saudi Arabia allows us to advance long-term stability and development of the region. Supporting a key Gulf partner like Saudi Arabia—particularly after major attacks on its territory from forces hostile to both our nations—advances U.S. national security, protects the lives of over 100,000 Americans in the country, and supports our long-term economic and energy security.

Question. A letter from the State Department in June to the House Foreign Affairs Committee stated that no determination as to whether the 2001 AUMF authorizes military force against Iran.

Has the State Department since made any such determination?

Answer. The June letter stated that the Administration had not, to date, interpreted either the 2001 or 2002 AUMF as authorizing military force against Iran, except as may be necessary to defend U.S. or partner forces engaged in counterterrorism operations or operations to establish a stable, democratic Iraq. That statement remains true today.

Question. Does the President require prior authorization from Congress before initiating hostilities with Iran? If so, what actions under what circumstances, ought to be covered by such an authorization?

Answer. As Secretary Pompeo has noted, the Administration's goal is to find a diplomatic solution to Iran's activities, not to engage in conflict with Iran. The Department of State has great respect for Congress's role in authorizing the use of military force. And the Administration has not, to date, interpreted either the 2001 or 2002 AUMF as authorizing military force against Iran, except as may be necessary to defend U.S. or partner forces engaged in counterterrorism operations or operations to establish a stable, democratic Iraq.

Acting Legal Adviser Marik String appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July and elaborated on when the President can authorize a use of force without prior congressional approval. He explained that Article II of the Constitution empowers the President, as Commander-in-Chief, to order certain military action to protect the Nation from an attack or threat of imminent attack and to protect important national interests. The Office of Legal Counsel at the U.S. Department of Justice (OLC) has issued a series of opinions about the President's Article II authority over the years under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. I would refer you to those opinions, and Mr. String's testimony, for greater detail, and reiterate that the Administration is committed to keeping Congress informed about these very important matters.

Question. Should U.S. armed forces be operating in a region of great uncertainty and danger without the certainty of the proper authority to carry out their mission?

Answer. As Secretary Pompeo has noted, the Administration's goal is to find a diplomatic solution to Iran's activities, not to engage in conflict with Iran. But, we will retain a robust military capability in the region that is ready to respond to any crisis and will defend U.S. forces and interests in the region, consistent with our legal authorities.

The Administration has sufficient legal authority to prosecute the campaign against al Qa'ida, the Taliban, and associated forces, including against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The President does not need a new or revised AUMF.

Question. Is it important to determine what constitutional and legislative authorities permit the President to introduce U.S. armed forces into hostilities before such hostilities commence?

At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on April 10, 2019, Secretary Pompeo suggested that the 2001 authorization for force against those responsible for the September 11 terrorist attacks could potentially apply to Iran, asserting that "[Iran has] hosted Al Qaida. They have permitted Al Qaida to transit their country. There-there's no doubt there is a connection between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Al Qaida. Period."

Answer. The Administration has not, to date, interpreted either the 2001 or 2002 AUMF as authorizing military force against Iran, except as may be necessary to defend U.S. or partner forces engaged in counterterrorism operations or operations to establish a stable, democratic Iraq.

The Secretary made a factual assertion and was careful not to make a legal assessment. A determination that a group is covered by the 2001 AUMF is made at the most senior levels of the U.S. Government only after a careful evaluation of the intelligence, including concerning each group's organization, links with al-Qa'ida or the Taliban, and its participation in al-Qa'ida or the Taliban's ongoing hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners. To date, such a determination has not been made with respect to Iran.

Question. Short of a formal determination, is it your opinion that Iran is targetable under the 2001 AUMF?

Answer. A determination that a group is covered by the 2001 AUMF is made at the most senior levels of the U.S. Government only after a careful evaluation of the intelligence, including concerning each group's organization, links with al-Qa'ida or the Taliban, and its participation in al-Qa'ida or the Taliban's ongoing hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners. To date, such a determination has not been made with respect to Iran.

Question. What further considerations must be made to determine whether 2001 AUMF authority applies to Iran?

Answer. A determination that a group is covered by the 2001 AUMF is made at the most senior levels of the U.S. Government only after a careful evaluation of the intelligence, including concerning each group's organization, links with al-Qa'ida or the Taliban, and its participation in al-Qa'ida or the Taliban's ongoing hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners. To date, such a determination has not been made with respect to Iran.

Question. In May 2018, Secretary Pompeo outlined 12 demands that the United States would insist be included in a revised JCPOA. From what I can tell, absolutely none of the Administration's 12 goals for negotiations have been accomplished. To what extend do these conditions still apply? If not, what revised demands are there, if any?

Answer. The 12 points are largely derived from talks with allies and partners around the world and there is a great deal of consensus around these points. These requirements are not difficult for any normal country to meet. The maximum pressure campaign has successfully imposed historic strain on the Iranian economy, and preventing Iran from sending financial support to its proxies and exporting weapons to them. We will continue to apply maximum pressure on the Iranian regime until it returns to the negotiating table. That's Iran's only option for alleviating pressure.

Question. What is the Administration's position on whether EU parties to the JCPOA should invoke "snap back" provisions if Iran continues to violate the terms of the agreement (e.g. by stockpiling enriched uranium?)

Answer. Cooperation with our European partners and allies to address the range of threats posed by Iran remains robust. We made the choice that departing the

JCPOA is in the best security interest of our nation. It is up to each country to make their own choices about their participation in the JCPOA.

Question. How might Iran react to re-imposition of pre-JCPOA sanctions?

Answer. Iran is now subject to the majority of U.S. sanctions that were lifted during the JCPOA. The Iranian regime has a long history of engaging in malign behavior. The Iranian regime uses its nuclear program to extort the international community and threaten regional security. Iran is the world's leading state sponsor of terror. It has made it a policy of state to actively direct, facilitate, and engage in terrorist activity globally.

ATTACKS ON SAUDI OIL INFRASTRUCTURE

The attacks on Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure and the resulting bellicose rhetoric from Iran and President Trump's twitter feed were the latest example of the ease with which a military conflict with Iran could break out.

Question. INR clear with NEA. To what extent did the attacks suggest that Iran's military technology capabilities might have advanced further than U.S. officials and the U.S. intelligence community have estimated?

Answer. This response contains classified information and will be sent via secure correspondence.

Question. Why did U.S.-provided defenses fail to intercept the September 14 strike? What additional missile defense equipment, beyond that announced on September 26, might be deployed in the Gulf states to prevent or deter a similar attack in the future?

Answer. I cannot provide information on partner nation capabilities or capability gaps in an unclassified forum. Further information may be provided in a classified briefing.

Question. Why have the additional U.S. military deployments to the region since May not deterred Iran from continuing its attacks on shipping and infrastructure? What additional U.S. steps might be required to deter Iran from future Iranian or Iran-backed attacks?

Answer. In response to Iran's attacks, we have increased economic pressure, increased the presence of defensive forces in the region, and spearheaded an international maritime initiative to promote maritime awareness and the freedom of navigation. All these efforts increase deterrence and provide our partners with reassurance.

We have also held Iran publicly accountable and clearly identified Iran as responsible for attacks, which has had a deterrent effect. Iran often seeks to maintain deniability for its actions. We noted that France, Germany, and the United Kingdom came to this same conclusion recently and identified Iran as responsible for the September 14 attacks in Saudi Arabia. When we prevent Iran from hiding in the shadows or behind its proxies, we raise the costs of its malign activity.

Question. To what extent are there U.S. security guarantees to the Gulf states?

Answer. The United States has strong partnerships in the Gulf and a significant military presence in the region, which can quickly respond to crises, deter aggression, and assure our partners and allies. A recent example of such partnership is the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC). The IMSC is a multinational maritime security coalition established in the wake of attacks in the Arabian Gulf since May, including mine attacks on six commercial vessels, to safeguard commercial shipping routes and freedom of navigation in and around the Strait of Hormuz. The IMSC is based in Bahrain and participants include Australia, Albania, Bahrain, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

As noted in the 2016 Report to Congress on Security Guarantees to Countries in the Middle East, there are no international agreements that provide security commitments by the United States to any of the Gulf States.

Question. What might be the international legal ramifications if the United States were to undertake retaliatory, preventive, or preemptive strikes against Iran without a U.N. Security Council mandate?

Answer. I am not going to address a hypothetical question like this one. As Secretary Pompeo has noted, the Administration's goal is to find a diplomatic solution to Iran's activities, not to engage in conflict with Iran.

Question. What steps would the Department of State take to protect U.S. citizens overseas in the event of a military confrontation with Iran?

Answer. The welfare and safety of U.S. citizens abroad is the highest priority of the Department of State and consequently the reason we recommend against U.S. citizen travel to Iran. U.S. citizens present in the region should exercise extra caution by monitoring the news, following instructions from local authorities, consulting the Travel Advisory for Iran, enrolling in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to receive important emergency information, and following the Department of State, along with relevant Embassies and Consulates, on Twitter (@travelgov/Mission account) and Facebook http://www.facebook.com/travelgov for additional updates.

Question. How do you respond to assessments by some experts that these sanctions will slow the importation of humanitarian items into Iran—items that normally are immune from sanctions? Following the snapback of nuclear-related sanctions, reports indicate that the Iranian people have experienced a shortage of cancer medication, the blockage of pharmaceutical supply chains, and skyrocketing healthcare costs.

Answer. Our sanctions target the regime and those that support its malign activities. It is the Iranian regime that deprives its people of investment, resources, and dignity. Our sanctions contain broad authorizations and exceptions for the export to Iran of food, medicine, medical devices, and agricultural products. It has never been, nor is it now, our policy to target humanitarian trade with Iran. Many of these shortages are due to regime corruption and mismanagement. For example, in July 2019, President Rouhani's Chief of Staff sent a letter to ministers because over 1 billion Euros intended for medical supplies has "disappeared." Iran's deputy health minister admitted in July 2019 that over $170 million dollars intended for medical supplies were then instead spent on tobacco and cigarette paper.

Question. How do we ensure that Syria is not lost to Russia and Iran—or is it too late?

Answer. We have in no way ceded our influence in Syria or in the region. We remain committed to pushing back on malign Iranian influence in the region, the withdrawal of all Iranian-commanded forces from Syria, full support of Israel's right to self-defense against Iran, the enduring defeat of ISIS, and a political resolution to the Syria conflict consistent with U.N. Resolution 2254.

The United States is conducting an ongoing campaign of economic pressure to deny the Iranian regime funds that it uses in furtherance of its malign regional activities. We are achieving a tremendous amount of economic pushback on Iran in response to its destabilizing regional activities, including denying the Iranian regime as much as $10 billion in oil revenue since May 2018. We are exercising a tremendous whole-of-government approach that is putting effective pressure on Iran for the first time in a long time.

We have used and will continue to use our diplomatic and economic leverage to ensure that Russia cannot single-handedly dictate Syria's future. We actively support the U.N.-led Geneva political process, ensuring that Russia cannot use its own separate formats to seize the initiative from the U.N. We have imposed a series of sanctions on Russian companies for their material support to the Assad regime.

At the same time that we are finding space where we can work with Russia—areas where Russian and American interests overlap, allowing us to tackle difficult problems together. De-confliction mechanisms have enabled both U.S. and Russian forces to conduct D–ISIS operations without creating unnecessary risk of unintended incidents in an increasingly complex battlespace. U.S.-Russian discussions on long-term stability in Syria under UNSCR 2254 continue at various levels.

Question. Is it your expectation that Iran and Russia will "win" northern Syria, or at the least, change the course of history for Syria?

Answer. No, that is not our expectation. We have in no way ceded our influence in Syria or in the region. We remain committed to pushing back on malign Iranian influence in the region, the withdrawal of all Iranian-commanded forces from Syria, full support of Israel's right to self-defense against Iran, and the enduring defeat of ISIS and resolution in Syria consistent with U.N. Resolution 2254.

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RESPONSES OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN HOOK TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. How, specifically, does this action go beyond existing authorities in stopping the flow of funds to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps or to Hizballah?

Answer. The United States has a longstanding policy of supporting the Iranian people in the face of continued corruption and oppression by the Iranian regime. Unfortunately, the Iranian regime, including the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), has directed billions of dollars to entities like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hizballah instead of providing public services to the Iranian people. Designating the CBI under counterterrorism authorities sends an important message about the CBI's involvement in these activities and will further restrict its access to the funds it uses to support the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Hizballah, and other terrorist groups.

The Department of the Treasury can provide additional information on the designation of the CBI pursuant to its authorities under Executive Order 13224.

Question. Given that this action raises barriers to humanitarian transactions that were already high, what does the action say about the Trump administration's concern for the Iranian people?

Answer. Secretary Pompeo has made it clear that we continue to stand in solidarity with the Iranian people, the longest suffering victims of the Iranian regime. We are committed to promoting accountability for the regime's human rights violations and abuses, whether through public statements raising awareness about individual cases, imposing sanctions against Iranian officials who commit human rights violations and abuses, or cooperation in U.N. forums to strengthen the international community's resolve to insist on better treatment for the Iranian people.

The Department of State must refer all questions pertaining to the recent designation of the Central Bank of Iran under Executive Order 13224 to the Department of the Treasury.

Question. You reportedly authored a May 2017 memo to then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson arguing that human rights concerns should be used to pressure U.S. adversaries and not to "badger" U.S. partners and allies, including Saudi Arabia and the Philippines.

What, in your view, are some of the risks of not raising human rights concerns in discussions with partners and allies?

Answer. The State Department consistently raises human rights concerns in discussions with partners and allies, in addition to spotlighting human rights concerns in countries where we have a more adversarial relationship or where we do not have diplomatic relations at all. Part of our relationship with partners and allies involves having frank discussions in areas where we disagree, whether that be human rights or other issues. As Secretary Pompeo said upon the release of the Department's Human Rights Reports in March 2019, "even some of our friends, allies, and partners around the world have human rights violations. We document those reports with equal force. Our aim is always to identify human rights challenges and use American influence and power to move every nation towards better, more consistent human rights practices."

Question. Your testimony noted Iran's involvement in the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Do you believe that necessary and appropriate criticisms of Iran on human rights grounds would be more effective if the United States appeared credibly to voice concerns about human rights violations regardless of who perpetrates them?

Answer. The United States voices concerns about human rights violations regardless of who perpetrates them. The Department's most recent Human Rights Report on Yemen, for example, documents at length allegations of human rights violations and abuses by Houthi forces, the Saudi-led Coalition, and other state and non-state actors. Department officials have also spoken out consistently about allegations of

human rights violations and abuses by all of these actors, and, as appropriate, have called for investigations and accountability.

Question. Is it possible that partners and allies may backslide on human rights when they expect the United States to de-emphasize human rights issues?

Answer. It is a government's responsibility to protect the human rights of all persons in their country, regardless of any perception they have of United States policy. The United States continues to take a leadership role on global human rights issues, as exemplified in the President's National Security Strategy, and we have frank discussions with partners and allies all over the world in cases where we believe they can take steps to improve their human rights record.

FACT SHEET—IRANIAN REGIME MALIGN ACTIVITIES DURING NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN AND DURING JCPOA

- During the period of JCPOA negotiations, Iran continued to provide arms, financing, training, and the facilitation of Shia fighters to the Assad regime.
- Between late 2011 and mid-2013, IRGC-linked entities conducted a coordinated distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) campaign against the U.S. financial sector, threatening the international global financial system. The DDoS campaign disabled bank websites, prevented customers from accessing their accounts online, and collectively cost the victims tens of millions of dollars in remediation costs as the banks worked to neutralize and mitigate the attacks.
- In 2013, one of the Iranian hackers involved in the DDoS campaign also conducted an intrusion into the industrial control system of a U.S. dam just north of New York City.
- In 2013, Iran further integrated the IRGC–QF into forces loyal to Assad.
- On January 23, 2013, Yemeni authorities seized an Iranian dhow, the Jihan, off the coast of Yemen. The dhow was carrying sophisticated Chinese anti-aircraft missiles, C–4 explosives, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and a number of other weapons and explosives. The shipment of lethal aid was likely headed to Houthi separatists in Northern Yemen.
- On February 20, 2013, the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) announced the December 2012 arrest of three Nigerian members of an Iranian terrorist cell. Two of the men, Abdullahi Mustapha Berende and Saheed Oluremi Adewumi, were officially charged on August 28, 2013. Nigerian authorities claim the cell was conducting surveillance on American and Israeli targets in Nigeria for a possible terrorist attack.
- In April 2013, an Iranian traveling on a fake Israeli passport was arrested for conducting surveillance of the Israeli Embassy.
- In late April 2013, the Government of Bosnia declared two Iranian diplomats, Jadidi Sohrab and Hamzeh Dolab Ahmad, persona non grata after Israeli intelligence reported they were, in fact, members of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). One of the two men had been spotted in India, Georgia and Thailand, all of which were sites of a simultaneous bombing campaign in February of 2012, according to Israeli intelligence. Both diplomats were subsequently expelled from Bosnia.
- On September 1, 2013, an attack by Iranian proxies Kata'ib Hezballah (KH) and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) on Camp Ashraf in Iraq, led to the deaths of 50 members of the Mujahedeen-e Khalq, or MeK. Press reports claim members of the QF not only planned the attack, but also played a direct combat role in it. The QF, along with KH and AAH members, also abducted seven MeK members and smuggled them back to Iran, according to the press. The missing seven members haven't been seen or heard from since the attack.
- On December 29, 2013, the Bahraini Coast Guard interdicted a speedboat filled with weapons and explosives that was likely bound for Shia oppositionists in Bahrain, specifically the 14 February Youth Coalition (14 FYC). Bahraini authorities accused the QF of providing opposition militants with explosives training in order to carry out attacks in Bahrain. The interdiction led to the discovery of a two weapons and explosives cache sites in Bahrain, the dismantling of a car bomb, and the arrest of 15 Bahraini nationals.
- Iran continued its terrorist-related activity during the period of JCPOA negotiations, including support for Lebanese Hizballah, Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza, and various groups in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

- In 2014, Iran dramatically increased the arming and funding of Shia militant groups in Iraq, including the terrorist group Kata'ib Hezballah, and incorporated these groups into the Popular Mobilization Force, a militant organization separate from the Iraqi Government that today wields enormous influence and power outside the democratically elected government.
- In 2015, the U.S. Navy recorded 22 incidents of IRGC Navy fast-attack small crafts engaging in "unsafe and unprofessional" harassment of U.S. naval vessels in international waters.
- In January 2015, a senior Iranian diplomat was expelled for planning an attack near the Israeli Embassy in Montevideo, Uruguay.
- In March 2015, Iran began mass production of its Qadir cruise missile.
- In April 2015, Iran dramatically increased its support to the Houthis in Yemen and attempted to send a large naval supply convoy to Yemen to support the Houthis.
- In April 2015, IRGC Navy vessels fired shots across the bow of the Marshall Islands-flagged cargo ship Maersk Tigris near the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC Navy then forced the vessel to dock at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. Iranian officials held the vessel for a week.
- In August 2015, the Iranian military unveiled the Fateh-313, a solid-fuel missile with a reported range of up to 500 km.
- In October 2015, Iran's Defense Ministry announced the successful test of the Emad, a ballistic missile with a range of 1,700 km. A later report of a U.N. Panel of Experts determined that the Emad launch was a violation of U.N. resolution 1929.
- In November 2015, Iran tested Ghadr-110, an improved version of the Shahab-3, with a range of about 1,900 km.
- In 2015 in Syria, Iran more openly acknowledged the deaths of Iranian personnel, including several senior commanders, and increased Iranian troop levels, while continuing to claim publicly that Iranian forces had only deployed in an advisory role.
- In 2015, the Government of Bahrain raided, interdicted, and rounded up numerous Iran-sponsored weapons caches, arms transfers, and militants. This included the Bahraini Government's September 2015 discovery of a bomb-making facility with 1.5 tons of high-grade explosives.
- Iran continued to declare its vocal support for Palestinian terrorist groups and its hostility to Israel in 2015.
- On January 6, 2016, Bahraini security officials dismantled a terrorist cell, linked to IRGC–QF, planning to carry out a series of bombings throughout the country.
- On January 12, 2016, the IRGC Navy seized two U.S. Navy riverine command boats near Iran's Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf and held the U.S. sailors for 15 hours, in contravention of their rights under the Geneva Convention.
- In February 2016, Philippine authorities thwarted an Iranian plot to hijack a Saudi Arabian civilian aircraft.
- In August 2016, Kuwaiti authorities intercepted and arrested 10 Iranian nationals attempting to enter Kuwaiti waters illegally.
- The Assad regime's relationship with Hizballah and Iran grew stronger in 2016 as the regime became more reliant on external actors to militarily fight the Syrian opposition.
- In 2016, German authorities convicted an IRGC–QF operative for spying on the ex-head of a German-Israeli group and people close to him.
- In November 2016, two Iranian operatives and their Kenyan driver, a local embassy employee, were arrested and charged with information collection in connection with a terrorist act after surveilling the Israeli embassy.
- In 2016, the U.S. Navy recorded 36 incidents of IRGC Navy fast-attack small crafts engaging in "unsafe and unprofessional" harassment of U.S. naval vessels in international waters.
- In October 2016, the Iranian-supported Houthi militants fired anti-ship cruise missiles at U.S. warships in international waters just north of the Bab-al-Mandeb. The attacks came just one week after militants struck the Emirati vessel Swift, disabling the transport ship.
- In 2016, the U.N. Secretary General expressed concern over Iran's illicit arms shipments following the seizure of an arms shipment by the U.S. Navy in the

Gulf of Oman. The U.S. concluded that the shipment originated from Iran and was bound for Yemen, in clear violation of a U.N. Security Council arms embargo on Houthi militants.

- In 2016, an Iranian cyber attack resulted in the destruction of databases affecting the Saudi Government and elements of its private sector, including the General Authority for Civil Aviation and the Central Bank.
- In January 2017, a recruiter for the IRGC claimed that thousands Afghans were currently fighting in Syria to defend the regime of Iran's ally Bashar al-Assad.
- On January 29, 2017, Iran tested a Khorramshahr medium range ballistic missile.
- On January 30, 2017, Houthis attacked a Saudi frigate in the Red Sea with three unmanned explosive boats, killing two sailors.
- In February 2017, Conflict Armament Research documented Iranian designed UAVs provided to Houthis to use as 'Kamikaze' drones.
- On March 30, 2017, Iran test-fired a ballistic missile.
- On June 8, 2017, DOJ announced the arrest of two members of Hizballah for allegedly conducting attack preparations in the U.S. and abroad.
- On June 14, 2017, Houthis fired missile at Emirati ship in the Red Sea.
- On June 20, 2017, armed pro-regime Shaheed-129 UAV was shot down by the U.S. after it displayed hostile intent and advanced on Coalition forces in Syria.
- On July 27, 2017, Iran test-fired its Simorgh satellite launch vehicle, which Iranian officials claim is capable of carrying a satellite/payload of up to 250 kg.
- On July 25, 2017, FBI Cyber Division indicates a group of Iranian based malicious cyber actors use U.S. infrastructure to compromise government, corporate and academic computer networks in the Middle East, Europe and the United States.
- On July 27, 2017, Houthis launch a Burkhan missile toward King Fahd airbase near Mecca.
- In August 2017, Iranian appeals court upheld 10-year prison sentences against three U.S. citizens unjustly imprisoned on fabricated national security-related charges.
- On August 28, 2017, Israeli PM reported the Iranian regime is helping Hizbollah produce precision guided missiles in Lebanon and Syria threatening Israel.
- On September 14, 2017, Iranian Regime-backed Houthi leader announced that his forces had the capability to strike targets anywhere in the UAE.
- On September 23, 2017, Iran test-fired a ballistic missile.
- A German intelligence report released in October 2017 revealed that Iran made 32 attempts in 2016 to procure technology for the its ballistic missile program from North-Rhine-Westphalia.
- On November 4, 2017, Houthis launched a Burkhan missile toward Riyadh's Kind Khalid International Airport. The debris indicated that at least components of the missile were produced by two Iranian entities.
- On November 12, 2017, Houthis threatened to target coalition warships and oil tankers in response to Saudi Arabia's closure of Yemeni ports.
- On December 19, 2017, Houthis launched a ballistic missile targeting the royal Yamama Palace in southern Riyadh.
- On January 4, 2018, Ukrainian authorities arrested two Iranian nationals accused of procuring missile parts.
- The U.N. Panel of Experts on Yemen concluded in January 2018 that the debris recovered from the July and November 2017 Houthi ballistic missiles were "almost certainly" Iran-origin.
- On January 9, 2018, Houthis threatened to block international navigation through the Red Sea if the Saudi-led Coalition continued its advance toward al-Hudeidah.
- On January 10, 2018, the Saudi-led Coalition announced it had foiled a Houthi attack on a Saudi oil tanker near al-Hudeidah port, destroying a boat carrying explosives it attributed to the Houthis.
- On January 16, 2018, Houthis launched a ballistic missile toward a regional airport in Jizan province.

- On January 30, 2018, Houthis launched a ballistic missile toward Riyadh's King Khaled International Airport.
- On February 10, 2018, Israel shot down an armed Iranian drone that crossed into Israeli airspace. The IDF later concluded in April 2018 that the drone was "tasked to attack" in Israeli territory.
- Israeli satellite photos published by Fox News on February 27, 2018, showed an IRGC–QF military base northeast of Damascus, Syria.
- On March 7, 2018, IRGC Aerospace Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh, overseeing Iran's ballistic missile program, stated that Iran had tripled its defense-related production.
- On March 25, 2018, Houthis launched seven ballistic missiles toward four different Saudi cities, including three missiles directed at the capital Riyadh. The missile debris resulted in one civilian fatality.
- On March 31, 2018, Houthis fired a ballistic missile targeting a Saudi National Guard base in Saudi border city of Najran.
- On April 3, 2018, Houthis fired a missile at a Saudi oil tanker near the port city of al-Hudeidah, prompting a Saudi-led Coalition warship to intervene to escort the tanker.
- On April 20, 2018, then-deputy commander of IRGC Hossein Salami threatened that Iran's "hands are on the trigger and missiles are ready" to strike Israeli air bases.
- In a speech on April 21, 2018, commander of Iran's conventional Army Abdolrahim Mousavi said that the Army would work together with the IRGC to annihilate Israel within 25 years.
- On April 11, 2018, Houthis fired a Burkhan ballistic missile at Riyadh and targeted southern areas of Saudi Arabia using Qasif-1 drones, both probably provided by Iran.
- On May 9, 2018, Houthis fired several ballistic missiles at "economic" targets in Riyadh.
- On May 10, 2018, IRGC–QF fired 32 rockets toward Israeli military positions in the Golan.
- On May 14, 2018, Houthis launched ballistic missiles targeting a Saudi Aramco facility in the Saudi port city of Jizan.

DOCUMENT—COOPERATION WITH EUROPEAN PARTNERS AND ALLIES FROM JULY 28, 2017 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 24, 2019 ADDRESSING RANGE OF THREATS POSED BY IRAN

Cooperation with our European partners and allies to address the range of threats posed by Iran remains robust:

- July 28, 2017: Joint U.S.–E3 statement on Iran's Space Launch Vehicle: https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/07/272934.htm.
- June 2018: The Austrian, Belgian, French, and German governments exposed an Iranian plot to bomb an oppositionist rally in Paris and arrest several Iranian operatives.
- June 2018: The Netherlands expelled two Iranian diplomats in connection with the November 2017 Nissi assassination.
- July 1, 2018: Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi was arrested in Bavaria in connection to a plot to bomb a Paris rally.
- September 17, 2018: French FM Le Drian condemned Iran's attacks on U.S. diplomatic missions in Iraq.
- September 20, 2018: France announced it had frozen the nomination of its new ambassador to Tehran in relation to the terror plot on a Paris rally.
- October 2, 2018: France froze assets of an MOIS unit and two agents in connection with the Paris bomb plot.
- October 9, 2018: Belgium announced the extradition of Asadollah Assadi from Germany for his role in the Paris terrorist plot.
- October 17, 2018: Serbia revoked visa-free travel for Iranian citizens.
- October 30, 2018: Denmark recalled its Ambassador to Tehran and condemned an Iranian plot to assassinate members of a dissident group on its soil.

- November 20, 2018: E3 sent letter to U.N. Security Council raising concerns about Iran's launching of short range ballistic missiles on targets in Syria.
- December 3, 2018: France condemned medium range ballistic missile launch: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/iran/events/article/iran-ballistic-missile-test-01-12-18#.
- December 12, 2018: E3, Poland, Netherlands and the European Union raised concerns regarding Iran's ballistic missile program at a U.N. Security Council meeting.
- December 17, 2018: Albania expelled Iran's Ambassador to Tirana and another Iranian diplomat for involvement in thwarted terrorist plots.
- December 18, 2018: E3 sent letter to U.N. Security Council raising concerns about Iran's testing of medium range ballistic missile.
- December 21, 2018: German media reported (unconfirmed) that the German Government will ban Mahan flights into Germany beginning January 2019.
- January 8, 2019: The EU sanctioned an MOIS Unit and two agents in response to the terrorist and assassination plots uncovered in Paris and Denmark in 2018.
    - The Danish Prime Minister issued a statement saying, the "EU stands united—such actions are unacceptable and must have consequences," in response to announcement of new EU sanctions on Iran.
    - The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs underscored its condemnation of Iran's planned covert actions in Europe and called Iranian intelligence activities in Europe "unacceptable."
- January 8, 2019: Netherlands, U.K., France, Germany, Denmark, and Belgium provide Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran with a demarche laying out new sanctions.
- January 8, 2019: Netherlands for the first time announced that Iran was likely behind the murders of two Dutch citizens who were Iranian dissidents.
- January 15, 2019: German authorities announced that a German civilian working as a translator for the Bundeswehr was arrested for allegedly passing sensitive information to the Iranian intelligence service.
- January 16, 2019: France strongly condemned Iran's launch of a space launch vehicle, which it said was not in conformity with UNSCR 2231.
- January 21, 2019: Germany announced it was banning all Mahan Air flights from landing in the country, citing security concerns and the airline's involvement in Syria.
- February 4, 2019: The EU Foreign Affairs Council issued conclusions regarding Iran. While reaffirming support for the JCPOA, the conclusions raise very explicit concerns with Iran's missile program, support of terrorism, and role in regional conflicts.
- February 13–14, 2019: All EU 28 member states attended the Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East in Warsaw.
- February 25, 2019: The U.K. announced it was listing Hizballah as a terrorist group, noting that there is no longer a distinction between its political and military wings.
- March 25, 2019: France banned flights in and out of the country by Mahan Air, accusing it of transporting military equipment and personnel to Syria and other war zones.
- June 18, 2019: German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Germany had seen "strong evidence" of Iran's responsibility in the attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman.
- September 24, 2019: The E3 condemned (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-by-the-heads-of-state-and-government-of-france-germany-and-the-united-kingdom) the attack on the Saudi oil facilities at Abqaiq and attributed the attack to Saudi Arabia. They urged Iran to accept negotiations on its nuclear program, ballistic missiles, and regional activity.

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