

successful confirmation later this week. As such, I will not be making a unanimous consent request today, but I intend to come here as long as it takes, to keep up the pressure and to monitor this process, to ensure that it has a successful resolution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, earlier this month, the Governor of Iran's central bank, Dr. Valiollah Seif, spoke at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington and he made three primary claims. First, he said sanctions did not, in fact, lead Iran to agree to the terms of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the EU, Russia, and China. He said sanctions did not force Iran to agree. Second, he said Iran's nuclear program has always been entirely peaceful. Third, he said that the United States and our European allies have not honored our commitments under the terms of the nuclear deal also known as the JCPOA.

Today I wish to push back against all three of these claims.

First, on sanctions, Governor Seif said: “Contrary to baseless allegation[s] that some people made, sanctions did not and could not force [Iran] to engage into a negotiation with our P5+1 colleague[s],” the nations I referenced.

The facts clearly say otherwise.

U.S. sanctions have been a major feature of U.S. policy toward Iran since Iran's 1979 revolution. The imposition of international sanctions and worldwide bilateral sanctions on Iran began in 2006 and increased dramatically in 2010.

In June of 2010, the Congress passed the Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act, also known as CISADA, which weakened Iran's access to the international financial system and bolstered existing sanctions specifically against Iran's human rights abuse.

That same month, with the support not just of our European allies but also Russia and China, the Obama administration and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton led the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929, which created the most comprehensive and stinging international sanctions the Iranian regime has ever faced.

Two years later, in 2012, the National Defense Authorization Act designated the Central Bank of Iran for additional sanctions, which the Obama adminis-

tration successfully used to undermine Iran's ability to sell oil on world markets.

The Obama administration also convinced key allies, such as Japan, Australia, South Korea, and Canada, to agree to additional bilateral measures that increased pressure on Iran's financial banking, insurance, transportation, and energy sectors.

The effects of these coordinated sanctions were clear, swift, and direct. The value of the Iranian currency decreased dramatically. Obstacles to Iranian trade forced businesses to close and increased inflation within Iran. Iran's oil exports and government revenues declined sharply. In 2011, for example, Iran exported about 2.4 million barrels of oil per day. By March of 2014, Iran's exports were down to just 1 million barrels a day—in a nation for which petroleum makes up 80 percent of all commodity exports.

In July of 2012, former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called the sanctions regime “the most severe and strictest sanctions ever imposed on a country.”

The coordinated sanctions regime was so effective that Iran's current President even described Iran's economic situation as if the country had “returned to the 19th century” under the sanctions regime. I think it is clear on this first point that sanctions imposed an unsustainable cost on Iran and forced it to the table to engage in negotiations with the West regarding its nuclear program.

That brings me to his second erroneous argument that Iran has pursued nuclear technology with only peaceful purposes in mind. Iran's actions directly contradict this claim.

In 2002, members of the international community revealed that Iran had, in fact, been attempting to build a secret uranium enrichment facility at Natanz in Central Iran and a heavy water plutonium reactor at its Arak facility in the northwestern part of the country. Only because Iran failed to keep these facilities secret did the IAEA—or the International Atomic Energy Agency—finally begin having the opportunity to monitor these sites in 2002.

In 2009, the United States, France, and Britain revealed the existence of another uranium enrichment plant buried deep under a mountain near the city of Qom.

The evidence continues. In 2011, the IAEA released a report on the “possible military dimensions” of Iran's nuclear effort, known as PMD. The report detailed areas in which the agency had evidence of Iran's past—and potentially ongoing—work on nuclear weaponization and the development of nuclear warheads for missile delivery systems.

The IAEA's final report on the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program, issued in December of 2015, found “a range of activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device were conducted in Iran

prior to the end of 2003 as a coordinated effort.” The report also found that Iran conducted certain activities relevant to nuclear weaponization for at least several years after 2003 and that some of these activities didn't end until 2009.

It is not just on-the-ground reports and secret nuclear facilities that suggest that Iran's nuclear efforts have not always been entirely peaceful. Let me remind my colleagues that just last month Iran tested a ballistic missile that supposedly had a message on its side proclaiming in Hebrew: “Israel must be wiped off the Earth.”

An Iranian regime that continues to advocate for the destruction of Israel, America's vital ally Israel, does not sound like a nation that has been and hopes to continue to develop nuclear technology for anything remotely peaceful.

An Iranian regime that ships illicit weapons to support the murderous regime of Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria or the Houthi rebels in Yemen or Hezbollah in Lebanon is not seeking to develop weapons for peaceful purposes.

An Iranian regime that illegally tests dangerous ballistic missile technology—some of which is capable of carrying a nuclear weapon, all of which violates U.N. Security Council resolutions—does not have peaceful intentions.

Because of this behavior, we have every reason to distrust Iran's claims that its nuclear efforts were always peaceful. Iran continually misled the international community about the nature of its nuclear program, and it continually disguised its efforts to conduct research and other activities to help it better understand how to develop a nuclear weapon. It continues to threaten Israel, to test ballistic missiles, and to support terrorism throughout the Middle East.

That is why I simply cannot accept Seif's argument that Iran's nuclear program has always been entirely peaceful.

The third claim made by Seif last week was that the United States and our European allies have not honored our obligations under the nuclear deal known as the JCPOA. Iran's evidence for this claim is that the sanctions relief granted to Iran for complying with the terms of the agreement hasn't suddenly unleashed a flurry of Iranian economic activity. As Adam Szubin, our own Department of the Treasury's Acting Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, recently put it, throughout the negotiations between the United States, our allies, partners, and Iran, the U.S. and our allies “did not guarantee economic outcomes, or a flood of immediate business into Iran.”

Acting Under Secretary Szubin is right. Iran is responsible for making Iran an attractive, safe place to do business. For many individuals and businesses, Iran appears neither attractive nor safe. For example, in October,

Iran arrested Siamak Namazi, a businessman who is a dual American-Iranian citizen. Namazi worked for a petroleum company in the UAE and previously ran a consulting business in Iran. He still has not been charged. In fact, the only recent development in Mr. Namazi's case is his father Baquer—an 80-year-old man who suffers from heart problems—was arrested in February and sent to Iran's notorious Evin Prison. Why would Iranian leaders expect foreign investment to flow into their country when it arbitrarily arrests and detains those seeking business opportunities for their own country.

It is not only Iran's flawed legal system or its ongoing human rights violations, more than half of Iran's economy consists of shadowy organizations controlled in part by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the IRGC, the hard-line military force committed to the preservation of the Iranian regime. The pseudo-private entities that are tied to the IRGC include banks, businesses, religious foundations, pension funds, and welfare projects that also serve as front companies for the IRGC.

During his question-and-answer session at the Council on Foreign Relations, Mr. Seif was asked whether foreign businesses considering investing in Iran or doing business with Iran could be confident that the money invested in Iran would not fund the IRGC. He was unable to declare definitively that it would not.

The onus, the burden, is on Iran—not the international community or the United States—to reform Iran's domestic economy and to make sure its businesses are not linked to the IRGC, to make it a country—transparent and open—and to engage in actions that suggest to the world it is a trustworthy partner. The burden is on Iran to comply with the JCPOA. The burden is on Iran to stop testing ballistic missiles, abusing human rights, and supporting terrorists. If Iran is unhappy with the level of economic relief it has received since this agreement came into effect, it only has its own actions to blame.

As Acting Under Secretary Szubin put it, “the JCPOA [the nuclear deal] is an international arrangement, not a cashier's check.”

I commend Dr. Seif for his willingness to travel to the United States and to make his case in front of our Council on Foreign Relations. I think this is a constructive step, but as I have shown, I think the case he made is a weak one. The evidence is clear. A coordinated sanctions regime did, in fact, force Iran to negotiate. Iran's nuclear program was not entirely peaceful in its intent or execution. The United States and EU aren't holding the Iranian economy back—the Iranian Government is. The Iranian Government's actions are.

In my travels throughout the Middle East and in conversations with regional leaders and Ambassadors here, it is apparent these nations all share

one overriding concern, Iranian aggression. This challenge unites countries as diverse as Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

As my colleagues may have seen in an op-ed in the Washington Post just last week, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif sought to justify recent steps Iran has taken to dramatically build up its defenses.

Countries do, indeed, have a right to self-defense, but there is a difference between self-defense efforts undertaken by responsible members of the international community and some of Iran's recent aggressive and destabilizing actions.

Responsible nations don't support terrorist groups throughout the Middle East and stoke sectarianism to undermine the security of their neighbors. Responsible nations don't directly threaten the destruction of Israel. Responsible nations seek common ground and the pursuit of mutual interests with their neighbors. Responsible nations abide by U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Iran's actions make it clear it is not yet a responsible member of the international community. If Iran then has complaints about the relief it has received under this agreement, it should move its behavior and begin to uphold its commitments under the deal while changing the dangerous aspect of its ongoing behavior. Yet, instead, Iran continues to try and dominate its region, a valuable reminder we must continue to enforce the terms of the JCPOA strictly and push back on Iran's bad behavior that is outside the parameters of the agreement.

While I commend the Obama administration for its recent action in interdicting illicit arms shipments from Iran to the Houthis, continuing to designate IRGC-linked entities for more sanctions, and taking other critical steps to push back on Iran's bad behavior and destabilizing activities in the region, I also remain concerned about the administration's willingness to entertain Iranian complaints about sanctions relief.

I urge the United States and our allies to remain cautious in our dealings with Iran. We must remember that the most important contract with Iran is the one we have already agreed to—that is, this nuclear deal—and we must continue to remind Iran that its own behavior is the real cause of its continuing international isolation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ST. JUDE'S RANCH FOR CHILDREN, NEVADA CAMPUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 50th anniversary of the St. Jude's Ranch for Children, Nevada Campus.

St. Jude's Ranch for Children was founded by Father Jack Adam to support abused and neglected children and give them an opportunity to learn and grow. Father Adam initially faced challenges in acquiring funding for the project. However, with the help of Nevadan community leaders, including Claudine and Shelby Williams, Forrest Duke, and the Sisters of Charity, the project raised \$30,000, and the facility was built. Eddie, a resident of Elko, NV, became the first child to attend St. Jude's Ranch for Children. Since then, the organization has been a sanctuary for numerous abused and neglected children and is a recognized landmark in southern Nevada.

St. Jude's Ranch for children offers supportive housing and nutritional services for children and families. The Therapeutic Residential Foster Care program provides children an opportunity to live together, receive the nutritious foods they need to be successful, attend school, and participate in extracurricular activities. Children are nurtured in the program until they are ready to transition out of therapeutic care. Later, children are placed with loving foster families, and siblings are kept together.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention month. It is important that every April we work together to raise awareness for programs that support the physical and emotional well-being of children and recognize organizations, such as St. Jude's Ranch for Children, that transform the lives of children and families in our community.

Our youth are an important part of our history and future. We must ensure that children are protected and have a nurturing home that allows them to succeed. When a child suffers from abuse or neglect, the whole community and country suffers with them. The services provided by St. Jude's Ranch for Children ensure safety, health, and opportunity for many of our Nation's children. Their work is appreciated and admired, and I wish them continued success for years to come.

REMEMBERING RICHARD F. SCHOLZ, JR.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week the city of Quincy, in my home State of Illinois, lost a tough, principled, and fair public servant—but more importantly, a fine man. Judge Richard F. Scholz, Jr., passed away at the age of 87.

Judge Scholz was the quintessential public servant. He was a voice for the underprivileged and a passionate advocate for the most vulnerable in the community. He spent more than 24