

Chairman Kerry Opening Statement for Hearing on U.S. Strategy with Iran

I am very pleased today to welcome Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski and General Brent Scowcroft, two of our most insightful strategic thinkers and most distinguished public servants. I can think of no better way to cap off this week's series of events on Iran and its troubling nuclear program. If America is going to successfully overcome this most difficult and pressing foreign policy challenge, we are going to need the kind of wisdom and insight that today's witnesses have demonstrated throughout their careers.

On Tuesday, we heard from four top experts on Iran and its nuclear program about the difficulties the United States and our partners will face in dealing with that program. Frank Wisner, Richard Haass, Mark Fitzpatrick, and Karim Sadjadpour gave us some honest answers about the seriousness of the challenge, the realities we must confront when dealing with Iran, and the diplomatic effort that will be required to avoid someday being left with the unacceptable choice between accepting a nuclear-armed Iran or attacking its facilities.

Yesterday the Committee received a classified update from the Intelligence Community on the status of Iran's nuclear and missile programs, as well as its internal political dynamics and the regional situation.

Today we have asked Dr. Brzezinski and General Scowcroft to help us look broadly at the security challenges that Iran poses, so that we can set out a vision for the way forward. They know what it's like to come in to office staring at an almost overwhelming list of problems and having to figure out where the real priorities are and where the real opportunities for progress might be. They know how to construct and implement a multi-faceted approach to achieve an ultimate strategic goal.

Well, folks, if ever there was an urgent challenge that will require a multi-dimensional solution, surely it is Iran's nuclear program. We know this is a challenge that we cannot deal with in isolation. It is not just an American problem, and it cannot be just an American solution. And we know that although Iran may still have some distance to go before it can test or deploy a nuclear weapon, it is daily producing more reactor-grade uranium that could be further enriched to provide the guts of such a weapon.

I have long said that, following consultations with our allies and partners, we must engage directly with Iran, and I'm glad that this idea's day is coming. But as I said on Tuesday, we must be honest with ourselves: we will not solve this problem just by talking directly to Tehran. While Iran was just talking to the IAEA and the Europeans, it deftly sidestepped every supposed red-line laid down by the international community. While Iran was just talking to the world, it moved to the threshold of becoming a nuclear-capable state.

Iran's leaders need to understand that the full weight of the international community will come down on them if Iran continues to defy the United Nations Security Council and the International

Atomic Energy Agency. It also needs to understand that talks will not be a substitute for Iran meeting its international obligations.

At the same time, we have to understand that we will need to get other countries on board with our strategy. For diplomacy to succeed, we will need the full backing of our allies in Europe as well as Russia, China and other countries that trade extensively with Iran. We must quickly engage with those countries and construct a robust, sustainable strategy.

The President's recent announcement of a responsible redeployment plan for Iraq can be an additional source of leverage in dealing with Iran. But we will only be negotiating from a position of renewed strength if we also reassure our allies in the region that they will not be cut adrift for the sake of making progress with Iran.

In short, we need to act boldly, wisely, and quickly with our allies and partners to win agreement on the way forward, and to engage Iran backed by real consequences for its continued non-compliance. I am hopeful that a solution to this problem may yet lie within our reach, and I am looking forward to today's discussion and our witnesses' guidance and recommendations on how to actually do that.