

# **Senate Briefing**

## **Countering Iran Regime's Repression, Terrorism & Regional Meddling**

**Wednesday, November 6, 2019**

**Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G-50**



Senator Ted Cruz, Foreign Relations, and Judiciary Committees;

Senator John Boozman, Chairman, Subcommittee Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriation Committee;

Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr.; former Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs;

Ambassador Marc Ginsberg, former US Ambassador to Morocco;

Ambassador Robert G. Joseph, former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security;

Professor Ivan Sascha Sheehan, Executive Director, School of Public & International Affairs, University of Baltimore

## Senator Ted Cruz

### Foreign Relations, and Judiciary Committees



Thank you very much. It's a privilege to join you. Let me say thank you for having me here. And let me say a particular thank-you to the wonderful Iranian American community in Texas and all across the country.

The Iranian American community is a community that understands the price of freedom, and you heard briefly in the introduction a bit of my personal family story about being the son of a Cuban who was imprisoned and tortured and who came to America seeking freedom. That's powerful. And let me say in particular to the folks who are here, who fled oppression in Iran, who came to America; let me - if I may do something unusual, which is - let me speak on behalf of your kids, let me say thank you. Thank you for having the courage to risk everything, to seek freedom. You transform your children and your grandchildren because you had that courage. And it's one of the real blessings when you are the child of someone who has seen liberty taken, that makes you appreciate just how precious it is.

The government of Iran has been under a shroud of darkness for decades now. The Ayatollah Khamenei and the mullahs enforce brutal repression on the people, and I will say to the Iranian people, to the men and women of Iran: America is with you. America is with you and your struggle against cruel, oppressive, torturing, murderous tyrants. Freedom matters. I believe we can one day again, have a free Iran, not with the Ayatollah in power, and from the United States perspective, in my view, the threat of a nuclear Iran is the single greatest national security threat facing our country.

It's why, as I look back over the last three years, the biggest national security victory, I believe, of the Trump administration was pulling out of the disastrous Obama Iranian nuclear deal.

The Ayatollah routinely leads chants of death to America. If history teaches anything, it is that if somebody tells you they want to kill you, believe them, and at a very minimum, don't give them \$100 billion to carry out that stated intention.

The Obama Iranian nuclear deal was the most profoundly fool-hearted foreign policy deal of the modern age, giving billions of dollars to an Ayatollah who is laughing and proclaiming his intent to wage war with that money. The government of Iran is the world's number one and leading state sponsor of terrorism.....

Within the Trump administration, there was an enormous argument about whether to pull out of the deal or not. At the time, both the State Department and the Defense Department advised against pulling out of the deal and I engaged vigorously and directly with the President urging him that the right thing to do was pull out of the deal. And that's in fact what we did.

Not only that, after we pulled out of the deal, there remained in place a series of waivers that kept aspects of the Obama Iran deal in place. Perhaps the most significant of those waivers were the oil waivers. Waivers that allow the government of Iran to continue selling a million barrels a day of oil to fund their regime, to fund terrorists, to fund murder, to fund repression.

Earlier this year we had a big argument within the Trump administration. In this instance, there was a disagreement between agencies. The State Department argued if we ended the oil waivers, the global price of oil would skyrocket. The Energy Department who one might think would know something about energy argued: No, that was not the case. That there was plenty of global production and ending the Iran oil waivers would not cause the price of oil to skyrocket. Once again, I engaged actively and directly with the President, urging the administration, stop sending billions of dollars to theocratic lunatics who want to kill us.

And once again, the administration did the right thing and ended the oil waivers and it turned out Energy Department was right, and State was wrong. Price of oil did not skyrocket. We ended the oil waivers in the world market barely noticed, but I will tell you who did notice was the government in Tehran which saw suddenly the millions of dollars that had been flowing in to fund their brutal regime were shut off. That was the right thing to do. Now we continue to have debates about what the next steps are because as the economic pressure is weakening in the regime.

Two things are happening. One, the regime is afraid of its people. And this is the word of encouragement that I want to give the men and women here: Dictatorships can seem very, very strong until suddenly they're not. The Ayatollah and the mullahs are terrified of the people. They are terrified of truth, and as they lose the billions that have been funding their repressive regime, they are more and more vulnerable to the people demanding freedom.

But secondly, in the process, we've seen them lashing out. We've seen them carry out acts of war attacking their neighbors, Saudi Arabia attacking the oil facilities there and doing major damage to their production capability. Unequivocal act of war carried out by Iran, lashing out as the regime is becoming desperate to hold on to power.

I believe there are two steps the administration should take, now, in response to these Iranian violations of law and acts of war. First step we should do is we should end the so-called civilian nuclear waivers. These are the waivers that remain. There were total of seven civilian nuclear waivers that allowed additional research, allowed additional nuclear activity in a "civilian setting."

One of those waivers allows continued work in the Fordow facility. Fordow is a bunker built into the side of a mountain to develop nuclear weapons. We have right now a waiver in place saying: Oh, that's fine. We trust you. You're going to be just fine going on in Fordow. That is ridiculous, and the administration ended several of those waivers after I publicly called for it and made the case. They need to end the rest of them. They need to end all of the Iranian civil nuclear waivers.

Secondly, there is a remedy and even more powerful remedy that the President and the administration have at their hands was actually under the terms of the Obama Iran nuclear deal. If Iran violates the deal, any of the original signatories can invoke what are called snapback sanctions. Now Iran is openly violating the deal.

They are flouting the deal or they are flaunting it on the global stage, brazenly in violation, which means the administration has the authority to go into the UN Security Council, invoke the snapback sanctions. And what that will result is not just the U S having sanctions, but the world's remaining sanctions snapping back immediately so that "Maximum Pressure" in fact means maximum pressure. I think invoking the snapback sanctions is the next step. It is the critical step to cutting off the resources from the Ayatollah.... And I'll tell you, the Ayatollah and the mullahs are much, much weaker than many believe at the time. And I thank you for standing up for freedom because we will once again see a free Iran.

## Senator John Boozman

Chairman, Subcommittee Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriation Committee



I just wanted to come by and greet you all and tell you all how pleased that we were here and that it really does make a difference with your participation ...

We're glad that you do and you've got a real direct connection. He settled in a small town in Arkansas, not too far from where I live. In fact, my wife's cousin lives out by him and you know, it's just the American dream. He settles in, got active in local politics, got elected to the Court in the County government, you know, in Arkansas and you sell so well respected, But anyway, it's all about, you know, him getting involved and then getting his neighbors involved, coming to visit with me, and getting me involved. And that's really how the world works is through personal relationships. And so, I would be very

supportive anyway, but not as directly involved except for the fact that he took his time and effort and really to make me aware of his concerns and to make so many others in his community concerned...

So yes, I go over there now and he's got these guys ... that are telling me all about the problems in Iran and how I need to do a better job of being helpful in solving them. And like I say, that's really what it's all about. So thank you all for being here. I used to have an old football coach that used to say, past performance is indicative of future. We've been very helpful in the past and we will continue to be. And, like I said, thank you for being here. Thank you for the briefing. And again, there's just simply no substitute for you being in WASHINGTON and talking to Members, talking to staff about the importance of how we need to go forward and to continue to put as much pressure as we can. Thank you very much.

## Soona Samsami

### US Representative of National Council of Resistance of Iran



Dear Senators, Distinguished Speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I want to express my appreciation to be invited to speak before you today.

We are at a critical juncture as it pertains to the situation in Iran and in the Middle East.

The Iranian regime is reeling from international sanctions and the uprisings against its malign presence in Iraq and Lebanon, and unable to counter the increasing activities of the Iranian Resistance, specifically the Resistance Units inside Iran.

Indeed, the religious dictatorship ruling Iran is engulfed in profound political and economic crises. It faces increasing domestic and global isolation.

To find a way out, the mullahs have stepped up repression and executions in Iran, and export of terrorism and warmongering in the region. Unfortunately, decades of silence and inaction vis-à-vis the regime's aggressions had emboldened the mullahs.

Internally, in October 2019, defiant youths torched centers of the paramilitary Bassij, the Revolutionary Guards, and other suppressive agencies in many Iranian cities. They also defaced or set ablaze pictures of Khomeini, Khamenei, Soleimani, and other regime symbols in hundreds of locations in different Iranian cities. In October alone, there were more than 207 protest actions in 59 cities and in 24 provinces by workers, the merchants, farmers, teachers, students, retirees, defrauded investors, and political prisoners.

Last month, despite the clerical regime's suppressive measures, the Resistance Units hung large portraits of Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) from the overpasses on major expressways and posted them on walls in different parts of Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Coupled with endemic corruption, embezzlement and ineptitude, the economy is on the verge of collapse, with the IMF projecting a 9.5 percent decline in the economy. Tehran can no longer count on the United States to rush to its aid, as the policy of "maximum pressure" has denied the regime the badly-needed funds for its terrorism and belligerence.

Regionally, the nearly month-old uprisings in Iraq and Lebanon, where millions of people, especially the brave and daring youths, have defied brutal crackdown and risen in opposition to the Iranian regime's meddling in their countries, have delivered devastating blows to the mullahs. Khamenei, Rouhani and IRGC commanders had repeatedly boasted that Baghdad and Beirut represented the strategic depth to ensure the regime's survival.

Indeed, by propping up the criminal Bashar Al-Assad in Syria, providing hundreds of millions of dollars, weaponry and training to the terrorist Hezbollah in Lebanon, and creating, financing, arming and training proxy militias in Iraq, not to mention their full-fledged support for the Houthis in Yemen, the mullahs were trying to exert their hegemony in the region, in an attempt to conceal their Achilles Heel, the Iranian people and the organized Resistance, which they see as an existential threat.

But the tide has now turned against the regime.





While there were major differences as to how to respond to the Iran threat, as we saw in the policy divisions over the fatally flawed JCPOA, there was, with some notable exceptions, a clear-eyed view of Iran across party lines in Congress and within the administration.

Today, while Iran is still generally regarded as a threat, there is less apparent urgency and perhaps less priority given to countering the regime's malevolent influence and actions. There are also growing indicators of the return of the false hope, proven wrong over and over again, that with time the regime will become more normal, more moderate -- a regime with whom we can do business; a regime with whom we can negotiate.

There are a number of reasons for this loss of focus. Attention -- to the point of fixation -- first on Russian influence in the 2016 election and now on Ukraine -- which has contributed to the erosion of bipartisanship which characterized U.S. Iran policy for years -- and which is vital for the success of U.S. policy. Perhaps this loss of focus is also in part a consequence of the third year of an administration -- of any administration let alone one under siege -- when people and institutions simply tire out and complacency becomes the norm.

While we -- rightly -- continue the policy of maximum economic pressure primarily through sanctions, including recent additional actions aimed at the Supreme Leader's close associates and family members, sanctions alone do not constitute an effective strategy for dealing with the Iranian threat. To succeed, we must do more. And we must do more with greater intensity.

This takes me to my second point. In doing more to build an effective strategy we need to recognize -- and take into account -- the growing vulnerabilities of the regime. This past week the Wall Street Journal and other media outlets have carried multiple articles describing large-scale protests against the Iranian regime outside of Iran, especially in Lebanon and southern Iraq where, respectively, Hezbollah and Shia warlords have failed the people over which they rule.

In a piece yesterday in the Journal, entitled Arab Protesters Place Iran in the Crosshairs, the reporters state that these are the largest protests in decades and pose a direct challenge to Iran's influence from Iraq to Lebanon, undermining what the regime calls its strategic depth. People are fed up with the endemic corruption, the repression, and the malfeasance of the Iran-backed political order.

If Iran were to lose its hold over the Shias in Iraq and Lebanon, it would likely reverberate, igniting even greater anti-regime sentiment at home where many street protests have emphasized the futility of wasteful IRGC adventures abroad -- costing the Iranian people untold billions of dollars that could have been better used to improve the lives of the Iranian people.

And it is the Iranian people who represent the greatest vulnerability of the regime -- and the greatest threat to its continued existence. The economy is in shambles, with some reports placing 80 percent of the population below the poverty line. Unemployment, inflation and just about every other economic indicator, including those resulting from sanctions, suggest the people are approaching a breaking point.

Anger over wide-scale government corruption and incompetence only add to the threat to the regime. As does the desire to end the repression and the brutality of the theocratic dictatorship -- a dictatorship that has long lost its legitimacy with its own people. A dictatorship that is unable to reform to meet the needs and desires of its people.

My third point follows from the growing alienation of Iran's people. Here we need to acknowledge and support the role of the resistance inside and outside of Iran. This is something we have not done well, if at all, in the past. And yet it is the greatest potential leverage over the regime. It holds the key to building a future democratic Iran.

You have heard from Professor Sheehan about the visit this past August by a bipartisan delegation of senior former U.S. officials to Ashraf 3, the MEK's new home in Albania. The visit was a real eye-opener for me and for all of us, as well as for hundreds of others from more than 45 countries around the world.

For forty years, the regime in Iran has worked relentlessly to annihilate the MEK, its strongest and most influential opponent. It has executed tens of thousands of MEK followers inside Iran in what is increasingly recognized as a crime against humanity. And it has sought to neutralize all MEK support outside Iran, employing every political and propaganda tool that it controls.

The MEK's presence at the center of the NCRI – the National Council of Resistance of Iran -- the opposition's parliament-in-exile, makes the NCRI a viable and formidable alternative to the mullah's tyranny. The very existence of this alternative, and its platform of a free, democratic, secular, and non-nuclear Iran, represents an existential threat to the clerical dictatorship that controls the people of Iran through fear and brutality.

The argument that there is no popular or credible alternative to theocratic rule has sustained the regime's rulers for too long. This is not Iraq in 2003, or Libya in 2011, or Syria today. Iran will not become a failed state with the end of the religious dictatorship.

The MEK is well-organized, has capable leadership, espouses democratic values, has an impressive track record of resistance, and enjoys considerable support within Iran and among the diaspora. That the group is capable of coalescing domestic support while garnering international recognition means that it must be part of any effective policy toward Tehran.

Decades of false allegations against the MEK, many advanced by Iranian intelligence services, are aimed at convincing U.S. policy makers and influencers that the regime is an immovable fixture of the Middle East landscape. This falsehood has worked to limit policy options available to U.S. policymakers and curtailed the effectiveness of the country's most credible change agents: the Iranian people and their organized resistance.

My fourth point is that a return to appeasement or accommodation or minor tinkering with current policies will not achieve a democratic Iran. Instead, it is time to "re-set" U.S. policy and recognize the need for regime change. This is not about war or a U.S. invasion of Iran. In fact, the best means of avoiding war is to have a secular, democratic government in Tehran.

Fundamental change must come from within Iran and must be led by Iranians. While the United States and the international community can provide essential support to encourage and strengthen the opposition inside and outside of Iran, only the people of Iran can throw off the brutal yoke of the Mullahs. That is a challenge that they have taken up and I am confident they will succeed.

Just one final thought to close out my comments. Iran is moving step by step to openly reconstitute its nuclear weapons capability -- most recently with the announcement that it intends to begin to enrich uranium with over a thousand centrifuges at the Fordow facility starting today. The urgency to act should be evident to all.

## Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs;



Thanks to Hill staff – and the OIAC We're here to talk about Iran – a great nation of 80 million people, with so much potential, and a dictatorship that has somehow managed to stay in power for 40 years.

Here in the us – we take great pride in our economy and military being the strongest in the world, even now we are recognizing the rise of other competitors. But the regime in Iran holds one title that I find remarkable, for many reasons.

Three years ago, there was a broad consensus that Iran represented a clear and present danger – through its support for international terrorism, through its efforts to destabilize a region of vital interest by instigating and intervening in civil strife in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Afghanistan -- and through the direct military and subversion threats Iran posed to U.S. allies in the Gulf and beyond.



Last Friday – ambassador Nathan sales – 2018 country reports on terrorism.

Iran was named the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism – no surprise.

But ambassador sales said something else: he said Iran has led the world in state-sponsored terrorism every year since 1984, think about that – upwards of 200 countries, with conflicts raging around the world, with terrorists and militias, and still, Iran has been number one 35 years in a row.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is a lot of terrorism, and when you look closely at this regime, it is run by many of the same people who were in power back then.

- The young revolutionary guard officer who trained the initial Hezbollah forces in Lebanon and supervised the 1983 bombing of the us marine barracks in Beirut, became president Rohan’s defense minister in 2013.
- The young cleric who imposed a new rule within the Iranian army in early 1979 forcing all women to wear the hijab, is today the president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani. And the man who is alleged to have authorized the two most deadly terrorist bombings in the history of Argentina, in 1992 and 1994, is none other than the current supreme leader of Iran, ayatollah Ali Khamenei. With 35 years of sponsoring terrorism, i could go on all day.

But I mention this not to state the obvious – but to ask you all to think about how we in WASHINGTON are responding to this unrelenting source of terrorist violence. in the past year we have seen more and more Syrians bombed out of their homes as Iranian Quds forces and their Shia militias complete the destruction of that country; Shia militias loyal to Tehran threatening the unity and stability of Iraq; International shipping and the world’s energy supply repeatedly targeted by Iranian maritime forces; Houthi militia in Yemen shooting over 200 ballistic missiles into Saudi Arabia; and most recently, a deadly missile strike on the Saudi oil supply, and what is the reaction from the Iran-watchers in WASHINGTON?

- It is America’s fault because we did not remain in the nuclear accord.
- It is WASHINGTON’s fault because we are squeezing Iran too hard economically while giving them no diplomatic off-ramp to save face and talk with us;
- It is our fault because we are not showing Iran enough respect.

Yes, it is all our fault, ladies and gentlemen. We have undermined the moderates and strengthened the hard-liners. All of the tension in the region emanating from Tehran is because there are War-Mongers in WASHINGTON.

It is a curious phenomenon – and i have to say, the way our Iran-watchers and media correspondents cover this deadly, lawless regime – indeed the way many in our government have for years talked about this regime – i find very curious indeed.

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yes. as i said, these are untold stories. you won’t hear them from WASHINGTON journalists and think tank iran-watchers. no – they’re not stupid – they want to maintain their access to the regime’s officials. all of them will offer token criticism of the regime, but their main criticism will always be aimed at us policy and officials who are too critical of iran’s aggression.

just have a look at any interview with iran’s foreign minister Zarif. within the last two years, the iranian embassies under his ministry in Denmark, France, Belgium, Austria, albania, and probably others, have been a conduit for intelligence operatives and assassins planning terrorist operations in Europe, one of which could have harmed many of us in this room today. Has any American journalist or analyst challenged Zarif to answer for these crimes?

And that is why the OIAC sponsored the film series – because if they didn't tell the story about the organized resistance, no one else in the United States was going to tell it for them.

You may have heard people say that the MEK was a terrorist group, and even a cult, with a secretive culture, and a strange Marxist-Islamic ideology. Just google MEK, and you should find hundreds of articles repeating characterizations of this kind. These allegations became so commonplace over the years that many in the US government assumed they must be true, but they were not true. Others and I have published research definitively debunking these toxic descriptions, which have been promoted for many years by Tehran's robust propaganda operation. You can read the evidence, which is overwhelming, including the results of major court cases in France, the UK, the EU, and the United States --- all of which found no terrorism by the MEK or the NCRI.

the question i would pose to you today is why? – Why was it necessary for the Tehran regime to portray its political opponents as terrorists and a cult? The answer is quite simple: would you believe anything a terrorist told you about the Iranian regime's own transgressions? Would you listen to the opinions and personal stories of someone you believed to be part of a strange cult?, no you would not, and indeed, the dictatorship in Iran has succeeded in convincing much of WASHINGTON not to believe a word they hear from the NCRI or MEK, and this has gone on for many years.

so again, ask yourself why? What is it the NCRI and MEK have to say that Tehran is so desperate for you not to hear?

i will let them speak for themselves – but be sure and check out the NCRI's 10-point plan for the future of Iran. if you want to understand the history and politics of forty years of tyranny in Iran – you must listen to what the regime's most dedicated opponents have to say.

a good start for the Hill staff members here today would be to introduce yourselves to your fellow Americans from the OIAC who sponsored this event; ask them how they became involved. Every one of them has a story, and believe me when i tell you there are thousands upon thousands of Iranians, inside and outside of Iran, with similar stories, and they have remained untold for far too long.

so let us all work to peel away the propaganda from Tehran, and let the untold story – the true story – of heartbreaking loss and trauma by the brutal regime in Tehran, determined to demonize and thereby silence advocates for a free Iran, finally see the light of day.

Then, it will be time for the truly guilty party – the world's leading sponsor of terrorism – the world's

## Professor Ivan Sascha Sheehan

Executive Director, School of Public & International Affairs,  
University of Baltimore;



What an honor it is to join such distinguished speakers for this timely forum.

As I was preparing to speak to you today, I was reminded of a story involving the man for whom this building was named: The great statesman from Illinois, Senator Everett Dirksen.

In his efforts to secure passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Senator Dirksen is credited with remarking that "there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

At the vote prior to the passage of this most important legislation – legislation meant to guarantee the cause of freedom in this country – he declared that:

"The time has come for equality of opportunity in sharing of government, in education, and in employment. It must not be stayed or denied."

Well, today, I join you at another defining moment in history to speak about an idea whose time has long since come: Freedom and democracy in Iran.

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This week, we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Iran hostage crisis. In so doing, we marked four consecutive decades of terrorism and repression by the Islamic Republic.

We've watched as the regime's agents and allies have engaged in domestic repression, regional belligerence, and global hostilities. We've witnessed hostage-takings and proxy violence; We've seen arms shipments and the export of fundamentalism.

But through it all, for four decades, the U.S. and its allies have regrettably – but repeatedly – failed to address the looming Iran threat or the regime's underlying ideology.

As I speak to you today, at least 17 dual nationals are actively being held captive by Iranian authorities. At least four American citizens are currently serving 10-year sentences.

Most have been charged with espionage or similar national security crimes, but no justification has been offered for these charges and prisoners are often held under the flimsiest of pretenses.

And let's be honest: Iranian authorities have hinted that the American prisoners may be released early if the US government is willing to pay a ransom for their release. These aren't legitimate prisoners; They are pawns in a war waged by Tehran.

There are some in WASHINGTON who argue that the White House should do whatever is necessary to secure the freedom of falsely imprisoned US citizens.

And it's fair to acknowledge that there may be more at stake for those Americans than for the Iranians whom Tehran has identified.

But ending the false imprisonment of Americans, challenging the regime's hypocrisy, and addressing Iran's decades-long campaign of hostility will not be achieved through engagement.

Appeasing the ayatollahs is no recipe for success.

Now, in spite of all of the reasons the world has to be concerned with Tehran's violent arc of influence, nothing compares to the horrors experienced by the Iranian people at the hands of their own rulers.

Just as Tehran has taken aim at Western nationals, the plight of Iran's own population has worsened.

Amidst the regime's brutal suppression of pro-democracy protests in early 2018 – a nationwide uprising that featured citizens calling for a comprehensive change of government – the number of Iranian political prisoners swelled by the thousands.

Many of these detainees are facing lengthy prison sentences. But this isn't all.

Mass arrests are a reminder of the Islamic Republic's repeated crimes against humanity, particularly the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in the summer of 1988.

That incident stemmed from a fatwa by the Supreme Leader who declared that all opponents of the theocratic system were subject to summary execution.

Today, we know that the main target of this clerical edict was the highly capable opposition organization known as the MEK and this group made up the overwhelming majority of the massacre's victims.

But in spite of the fierce persecution, the movement endured and even thrived in the ensuing decades.

This is a topic on which Ambassador Bloomfield and I have written.

Last year, the MEK was credited with leading the countrywide anti-regime protests that swept over Iran, giving voice to the people's progressive aspirations.

Nevertheless, Khomeini's fatwa remains in effect today, and political prisoners have been executed for actual or perceived support of the MEK.

Although Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei acknowledged the MEK's role in the uprising, he also blamed the protests on a "triangle" of enemies in WASHINGTON, Tel Aviv, and Riyadh.

This reflects a longstanding strategy of conflating foreign and domestic opposition to the clerical regime, in hopes of directing supporters to reject both trends as one.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the discontent on the Iranian street demonstrates that there is no need for Western powers to actively pursue regime change.

The Iranian people will be the architects of the next Iranian Revolution.

But the U.S. and its allies should still endeavor to promote an alternative vision for Iran's future and they should offer moral encouragement and support to the Iranian opposition.

This summer, I had the rare privilege of joining a bipartisan delegation of senior U.S. officials at Ashraf 3, the MEK's new home in Albania.

Joining us in Tirana were more than 350 dignitaries from 47 countries.

During our trip we gathered firsthand insights that led us to conclude what scholars have long understood but policymakers have been reluctant to acknowledge:

Iran fears its own people more than it does regional or global powers.

What we witnessed was eye-opening and deeply promising: A cohesive, organized political opposition movement, with a long history of struggle against fundamentalism and dictatorship, guided by gifted female leadership, with a well-defined political platform, and an intricate network of passionate supporters inside Iran and across the world eager to topple the regime from within.

It was like looking into Iran's pluralistic and democratic future.

Our U.S. delegation included four-star generals, Democrats, Republicans, independents, liberals, conservatives, foreign policy experts, sitting members of Congress, former cabinet members, ambassadors, intelligence experts, military officers, governors, academics, and noted human rights advocates.

While in Albania, we encountered evidence of both horrific acts of tyranny and valiant acts of resistance. Our observations constitute a body of evidence and opinions that are regrettably too often excluded from the parochial view of Iranian politics in this city.

For decades, WASHINGTON has treated Iran as a fixture of the Middle East landscape while ignoring the most critical aspect of an effective Iran policy: The Iranian people.

I'm currently putting the finishing touches on a book that chronicles what we in the U.S. delegation saw when we traveled to Albania. I expect that it will be released in the coming weeks.

The book challenges the false narratives peddled by Tehran's apologists, examine the opposition's call for a democratic future, and outline the implications for a more effective U.S. policy toward Iran.

At the top of my remarks I noted that there are times in history when an idea's time has come.

We've reached such a moment.

Putting an end to the Iranian regime's repression, meddling, and terrorism means giving voice to the Iranian people's aspirations for freedom.

And there is no better way to do this than by standing with the only viable alternative to clerical rule – the Iranian opposition.

Thank you very much.

## Ambassador Marc Ginsberg

Former US Ambassador to Morocco



Ambassador Ladies and gentlemen, forty years ago I was serving in the US State Department. I was serving as the liaison for the Secretary of State who asked me to sit in on the meetings involving the growing unrest in Iran that was being promoted to overthrow the Shah of Iran. I sat in these meetings and came to witness what essentially was the poor sausage-making of American foreign policy when it came to the collision between naive democratic idealism and standing with an ally. During the course of that revolution and the taking of American hostages, I was also personally involved in helping to find ways to [inaudible – exit?] Americans out of Iran through the back door.

I was invited when Ronald Reagan became president to the White House to thank me for my work and I was merely 28 years old. And for those staffers who are here, some of whom may be older than me, some of whom very be younger, I can only tell you that it sears one in the memory when one serves this country to see fellow diplomats and fellow Americans who are being taken hostage, being terrorized, being murdered, being injured by the government of Iran, and it's even hard for me to basically call it a government because it is, ladies and gentlemen, a military dictatorship. The facade of a constitutional government of Iran is as real as, as real as the moon made out of green cheese. The fact that the president, the Supreme leader, the foreign minister, all talk about this great moderate regime that is the victim of an international conspiracy to overthrow it, is a hogwash as we say. The image of those American diplomats, who were paraded blindfolded through the streets of Iran by those who now lead the country, has been seared in my memory.

When the Obama administration began its, shall we say, naive journey to try to engage the [Iran] government with the President [Obama] sending best wishes to no less a Holocaust-denier than Ahmadinejad, those of us who are Democrats in this town and proud Democrats, recalled in horror that a Democratic administration would engage with a president who denied the Holocaust and who supported the idea of terrorism and propagated terrorism and it was not welcomed in the international community. You know, indeed, when the State Department this week issued its report designating Iran once again as the state sponsor of terror and Senator Cruz said that in that report, 1 billion, \$1 billion is spent every year by the government of Iran on terrorist activities around the world, ladies and gentlemen, you've got to ask yourself, who in the right mind in this city is prepared to stand up and defend this regime other than those who are paid off by this regime and who are trying to cater to gain privilege by this regime?

The State Department report goes on and on to lay culpability at the hands of this regime and irrefutable indictment of Iran's nefarious global contact is an inconvenient truth. It's an inconvenient truth to send to former Secretary of State, John Kerry, who wants to continue to promote the belief that the Obama administration's bet that in Iran nuclear deal would lead to a more moderate regime has become unfortunately the Holy grail of many of my colleagues who had friends who were running for president who insists that a return to the Iran nuclear deal represents the beginning and middle and end of U.S. foreign policy towards Iran.

The last few years had been difficult once you've lived with, for those of us who are wrestled with the idea that this nuclear deal did stop the regime, but yet as Robert and Lincoln and others have indicated, and Senator Cruz indicated, why we had the right to withdraw, Iran solely had no right to begin violating this agreement and just the other day Iran took one more step by announcing that it was bringing back online the centrifuges that will enable it to enrich uranium far beyond any limitation that it agreed to any Iran nuclear agreement. If anyone has had any doubt in this room about Iran's intentions, let them understand one thing: Iran is determined to get nuclear weapons, Iran has determined to inflict pain and suffering on America and its allies in the middle East, all in the name of creating a Shiite Crescent that would stretch from Tehran through Baghdad, all the way across Damascus into Lebanon.

This is not a fiction of some think tank writer. This is the tried and true objective of the regime and it is not by accident that Iran has overplayed its hand tremendously in in Iraq. The uprisings that are taking place throughout the cities and streets of major towns in Iraq are demonstrative of how even Iraqis are fed up with the role that Iran is playing in trying to enslave Iraq under this Shiite Crescent. Ayatollah Sistani than most notable and respected Shiite cleric in Iraq issued a statement after Iraqi's tore down the flag of the Iranian consulate and Karbala and demanded Iranians to leave because they

know what we know: When the Supreme leader's henchmen get a hold of power and get a hold of money, it's all about themselves. It's all about them. It is not about the people. Those uprisings have continued all the way to the streets of Beirut.

The people who have taken to the streets of Beirut are fed up with the corruption of their government and those Shiite in Lebanon who are the target of this Iranian Crescent project, have stood up against their own leadership and Hezbollah has threatened to mow them down in the streets and indeed there have been deaths inflicted by Hezbollah at the orders of Iran to stop this uprising from the people who want democracy and corruption ended.

The specter of these growing uprisings in no way suggests that the Iranian regime is in trouble, but it should be. The fact of the matter is that while this regime has continued to attack American installations in the Gulf and commercial tankers, inflicted attacks on the Saudi oil installations, and believes it can get away with, this is an indication of how fractured the international response has been so far. I'm concerned about what's taking place in our own government. Secretary of State pump payer was under a lather of concern about his role in this investigation involving mayor Giuliani and he has lost the confidence of the professional foreign service. This is not a time when a maximum pressure on Iran needs to be relinquished because of domestic concerns. Iran's military forces are working very closely about what's taking place here in WASHINGTON. You were here from the Senate, your members will have an increasingly important role to make sure that this administration keeps its eye on the ball and does not get distracted because of the problems at the top when what we need right now is a concerted, clear message to Iran that the United States will not tolerate attacks on our allies, attacks on our military, attacks on international shipping and most importantly, as Senator Cruz said, the uprising that will inevitably take place on the streets of Tehran need to be supported by the American people. The National Council of Resistance of Iran is doing everything it can to ensure that the Iran's project against its own people comes to a quick end as soon as possible.

I'll close by saying one thing about what I believe about where we are. The people of Iran represented here by these communities today who sponsored this event and the people of Iran are true American friends. They care to be and to engage with us. They want to see this regime gone.

I want to thank you for being here today. I want to thank all of my friends from the Iranian community. I especially want to thank my friends from the Senate who I respect so much and who I admire so much as a former colleague of theirs for taking the time to be here with you and with us. And I wish you well, and I hope that you'll continue to advocate to your members and to your colleagues the importance of ensuring that as soon as you have a chance to serve in a next administration or whatever administration that you're being able to say, I was part of the effort to free Iran.

## Farideh Sedighi

Representative of Organization of Iranian American Communities



Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of organization of Iranian American communities, especially our communities in Missouri, Texas, Arkansas and all the states who have co-sponsored this event, I welcome all of you. Our event today focuses on Countering Iranian Regime's Repression, Terrorism and Regional Meddling. We are coming together in such a critical time. The world is watching the events in Iraq and Lebanon as they continue to denounce the terrorist regime of Iran, especially the Supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. This week, the Administration move forward with additional sanctions against those tied with the supreme leader, including his son. The level of corruption, crimes, terrorism and violence committed by this regime is unmatched in the world. It is for this reason that we welcome the maximum pressure on this regime. We welcome a firm policy. We welcome a strong bipartisan congressional voice on the issue of Iran. This regime only understands the language of strength.

I want to thank the members of senate, the offices and our distinguished guests and speakers for accepting our invitation to this event. We are delighted to have such an impressive lineup of speakers joining us.





## **Senators Ted Cruz and John Boozman addressing the Iranian Regime's Repression, Terrorism & Regional Meddling**



**I will say to the Iranian people, to the men and women of Iran: America is with you. America is with you and your struggle against cruel, oppressive, torturing, murderous tyrants. Freedom matters."**

— Sen. Ted Cruz

WASHINGTON, DC, U.S.A, November 8, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On November 6, 2019, Organization of the Iranian American Communities (OIAC), held a congressional briefing in the U.S. Senate, to discuss the rise of domestic suppression and regional aggression by Tehran as anti-regime protests spread in Iran and intensify in Iraq and Lebanon. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), member of the Foreign Relations Committee and Senator John Boozman (R-AR), Chairman of Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies, addressed the event. Other speakers included Soona Samsami, Ambassador Robert Joseph, Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr., Ambassador Marc Ginsberg, and Professor Ivan Sascha Sheehan.

In his keynote remarks, Senator Cruz applauded the struggle for democracy in Iran and said "The government of Iran has been under a shroud of darkness for decades now. The Ayatollah Khamenei and the mullahs enforce brutal repression on the people. And I will say to the Iranian people, to the men and women of Iran: America is with you. America is with you and your struggle against cruel, oppressive, torturing, murderous tyrants. Freedom matters. I believe we can one day again have a free Iran, not with the Ayatollah in power."

The Texas senator added that "Two things are happening. One, the regime is afraid of its people and this is the word of encouragement that I want to give the men and women here: Dictatorships can seem very, very strong until suddenly they're not. The Ayatollah and the mullahs are terrified of the people. They're terrified of truth. And as they lose the billions that have been funding their repressive regime, they are more and more vulnerable to the people demanding freedom. But secondly, in the process, we've seen them lashing out. We've seen them carry out acts of war attacking their neighbors, Saudi Arabia, attacking the oil facilities there and doing major damage to their production capability. Unequivocal act of war carried out by Iran, lashing out as the regime is becoming desperate to hold on to power... the Ayatollah and the mullahs are much, much weaker than many believe at the time."

"The Obama Iranian nuclear deal was the most profoundly fool-hearted foreign policy deal of the modern age, giving billions of dollars to an ayatollah who is laughing and proclaiming his intent to wage war with that money. The government of Iran is the world's number one and leading state sponsor of terrorism. Those dollars under the Obama Iran nuclear deal went straight to murdering Americans, to murdering American servicemen and women, to murdering innocent civilians, and to murdering our friends and allies," remarked Senator Cruz regarding the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Senator John Boozman recognized the great work of the Iranian community in the state of Arkansas and their effort to raise public awareness on the situation in Iran adding how it is important to make the connection across the United States by sharing the personal stories of Iranian diaspora. He said, "I welcome you being here to talk about the importance on how to move forward and continue the pressure on the regime in Iran."

Ms. Soona Samsami, US representative of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), emphasized how "the mullahs have stepped up repression and executions in Iran, and export of terrorism and war-mongering in the region. Unfortunately, decades of silence and inaction vis-à-vis the regime's aggressions had emboldened the mullahs." She added the "moment has now arrived for the elected representatives of the American people to declare their unequivocal support for the Iranian people's demand to overthrow the clerical regime and to hold its officials accountable for their crimes and terrorism."

Ambassador Robert Joseph also acknowledged how the people of Iraq and Lebanon "are fed up with the endemic corruption, the repression, and the malfeasance of the Iran-backed political order." He added, the "MEK's presence at the center of the NCRI – the opposition's parliament-in-exile, makes the NCRI a viable and formidable alternative to the mullah's tyranny. The very existence of this alternative, and its platform of a free, democratic, secular, and non-nuclear Iran, represents an existential threat to the clerical dictatorship that controls the people of Iran through fear and brutality."

Ambassador Ginsberg noted that the Iranian people, just like the people of Iraq and Lebanon "want to see this regime gone." He added the mullahs' regime "has fed its terrorist activities on the backs of the Iranian people and we hope that when next year rolls around this regime will no longer be in a position to engage in the activities that it is engaging."

Ambassador Bloomfield stressed how the Iranian regime has been considered as the most active state sponsor of terrorism by the State Department since 1984. Detailing the regime's tactics at home and abroad, he added in Iran "we have seen the nationwide protests calling for political change since December 2017. And now we see people taking to the streets in Lebanon and Iraq – in both cases, demanding that they have a constitutional government free from Iranian influence."





Professor Ivan Sascha Sheehan noted the "Iranian people will be the architects of the next Iranian Revolution" adding his assessment of the MEK in their new home at Ashraf 3 in Albania as a "cohesive, organized political opposition movement, with a long history of struggle against fundamentalism and dictatorship, guided by gifted female leadership, with a well-defined political platform, and an intricate network of passionate supporters inside Iran and across the world eager to topple the regime from within."

The policy briefing was organized by the Iranian American communities of Texas in Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and El Paso, and Iranian-American Cultural Association of Missouri, both members of the Organization of Iranian-American Communities (OIAC), the largest, most active and enduring grass root organization of Iranian-Americans in the United States.

**Compiled by :**  
Organization of Iranian American  
Communities - US



1717 Pennsylvania Ave NW Suite 1025  
Washington DC 20006

-  202-559-9232
-  [OIAC.ORG](http://OIAC.ORG)
-  [@OrgIAC](https://twitter.com/OrgIAC)
-  [Senate.Advocacy@OIAC.ORG](mailto:Senate.Advocacy@OIAC.ORG)