

Foundation for the Defense of Democracies

Congressional Remarks

**Introduction:
Mark Argosh**

**Speaker:
Representative Ed Royce (R-CA)**

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MARK ARGOSH: Welcome. Welcome again to the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies' annual Washington forum. My name is Mark Argosh, and I'm a proud supporter of FDD. It brings me great pleasure to introduce another senior official doing great work on Capitol Hill. Congressman Ed Royce currently chairs the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade. Last week, he was selected to be the next chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Congratulations, Congressman, on this new and important role. (Applause.)

It's no surprise that Congressman Royce has been entrusted by his colleagues with the committee's gavel. He stands consistently at the forefront in the fight against global terrorist groups that threaten the United States, including al-Qaida. In his unusual prescience, Congressman Royce has also, of course, seen many of the developments we have witnessed of late in the Middle East. In his statement during the Gaza War in the middle of last month, before Egyptian President Morsi had attempted to eliminate all judiciary checks on his powers, the congressman made the United States interests plain – quote, "President Morsi insists that he rejects violence and is a force for moderation. Now is the time for him to prove it."

Congressman Royce has also shown deep commitment to holding the Palestinian Authority accountable for inciting its people to violence against Israel and authored a bill to that effect this year. Congressman Royce understands the danger posed by a nuclear Iran, recently calling it the gravest threat facing the U.S. and our allies. As a respected bipartisan leader in the House, Congressman Royce was appointed as a conferee to the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010.

He's also considered the challenges posed by the current situation in Syria and continues to work toward a forward-looking U.S. approach, calling Syria a chemical weapon superpower. Congressman Royce has been especially concerned about the Syrian regime's chemical weapons stockpile, which includes mustard gas, sarin and VX, some of the most dangerous chemicals on the planet. Where are these stockpiles? What happens when the regime falls? How do we ensure these weapons do not end up in the hands of al-Qaida, Iranian agents or Hezbollah? These are all questions Congressman Royce is exploring.

America's influence works in ways large and small. Few people understand that better than incoming House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce. Please join me in welcoming him to FDD's Washington forum. (Applause.)

REPRESENTATIVE ED ROYCE (R-CA): Well, let me thank Mark here and thank the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Really, what I want to express is my appreciation as a member of the House for the work that you do, for the work product that you provide us. I can say I only wish we had deployed that more decisively sooner. But in terms of what you do in research, in terms of the analysis that you provide, in terms of the communication, the ability to communicate that to the members of the Senate and the House, I have to say it's the whole package, and it is very important work. And I think if I could share one thought in particular, it's your work on sanctions, especially energy sanctions, that I think has been critical.

And I want to say congratulations. I saw – I saw Director Woolsey when I came in, and I so much appreciate the briefings that we've received from him and the ability to get the type of analysis also from Cliff and Mark and the whole FDD team. It's so helpful.

If you were to ask me what is going to be the focal point of the – what's the main concern we have, I think it has been and it's going to be continue to be Iran, for the Foreign Affairs Committee. And I think the administration, frankly, has lagged far behind the House. We've been far ahead in pressuring Iran. And a lot of that is because of your help. I think we have been united in the House in our effort to do that. I think that that congressional pressure, frankly, is building – building quickly in light of recent events. And I'm looking forward, of course, to the conference report that we're going to see now from the National Defense Authorization Act, where we're going to have another chance to tighten the noose. And I want to say that the NDAA amendment that would shut down most business with key sectors in the Iranian economy, with energy and shipbuilding and shipping and the ports – this amendment that would shut down businesses that are involved in sectors which fund the proliferation activities of Iran, of that regime, is crucial.

In addition, the amendment is going to prohibit business with all designated persons connected to the Iranian government. It bans trades and commodities used in these key sectors. It's designed to stop Iran from busting sanctions by receiving payment in gold or using oil payments in local currency then to buy gold. And we've got to stop an effort to water down these sanctions. I say that because I remember the votes in the past. I remember our effort on the central bank. It was only because we got unanimous votes, frankly, because we got so much support that we were able to deploy those.

But let me add that there's another portion of the amendment here that targets the regime for their human rights abuses. And I think one of the areas where we've really been short, for those of you who have talked to those who have been in the prisons there, who have experienced the torture, who've seen the murder, who've experienced the rapes, those are routine there, today in Iran. Iranian officials are involved in that activity, but also in massive corruption preventing humanitarian assistance, food and medicine from reaching the Iranian people. They're the beneficiaries in some of this. And this new amendment would authorize the administration to designate these regime officials for human rights violations.

Now we know that the officials in Iran are indifferent to the suffering of the Iranian people, but we also know that that brutal disregard they show to their own people will only be intensified if Iran is successful in its nuclear weapons drive. Next week, I'm going to join my colleagues in the conference committee to make certain that the administration does not water down these important new measures. And frankly, the original measures submitted were even harsher. And I would like to see us move in that direction, because I have been watching for years the foot-dragging that has gone on in terms of the ability to deploy the types of sanctions that would really be successful. I sit on the CISADA conference. I saw the administration's strong resistance to congressionally mandated sanctions. They were far too concerned about getting ahead of other countries. What they should have been doing was leading. And they had no interest, frankly, in crippling the Iranian economy. If you look at the messaging, frankly, that's just what we need to do. But you look at that messaging and you see the problem.

And they were wrong then, and I suspect their resistance to dropping the hammer is going to continue. But I suspect also that we have a renewed understanding, interest in the importance of moving quickly and intensifying this effort, because the stakes couldn't be higher. Iran is in violation of its international obligations, from the pace of its nuclear development cited by the International Atomic Energy Agency, to its refusal to open Parchin to IAEA inspectors where it

is suspected of conducting weaponization tests. I have seen the handiwork of the terrorist-sponsoring country of Iran, because I was in Haifa in 2006 during the war with Hezbollah as Iranian- and Syrian-made missiles slammed into neighborhoods in Haifa, slammed into the port. At one point they even targeted the trauma hospital there. In that hospital I saw 600 civilian victims of these missiles, Iranian-made and Syrian-made. And that inventory of Iranian-supplied weapons continues to increase arithmetically, as Hezbollah expands its delivery capability.

Those of us who have seen the consequence of that kind of carnage, can only contemplate the consequences if it happens that this terrorist-sponsoring, genocide-threatening regime ends up with the world's most destructive weapon. We know that the president has said, not on my watch. But we have to see the administration act with the urgency that this threat demands.

We cannot have opposition to the latest sanction efforts. We can't have business as it's been done before. We need sanctions that are going to turn the Iranian people against the regime as fast as they can be turned. Iran's leadership must feel that their survival is at grave risk if they continue on the nuclear path. And if they don't see it that way and relent, with broad sanctions we have a better chance of bringing about the fundamental type of government change that would better assure a non-nuclear Iran in the future.

This strategy demands effective communication in Farsi. The message, in short, has to be, our issue is not with the Iranian people. Our issue is the – with the same regime that you take issue with. We know that there is considerable resistance to the regime with Iran. We saw great evidence of that during the Green Movement. We saw something to build on.

Unfortunately, we're not doing a very good job communicating with the Iranian people, especially the young, those who really despise their rulers. The big missed communications opportunity, of course, was the president's shameful silence when brave Iranians took to the streets and craved moral support. When Neda and others died in the streets of Iran at the hands of the Basij-e, our president was silent. But it is every day that we are missing opportunities with our ineffectual public diplomacy. The regime is telling its side of the story, and Iranians, in turn, go to great lengths, at great personal risk, to hear the other side of the story. What are we telling young Iranians about their government, about its atrocious human rights record, the deliberate – the debilitating corruption of that regime, or about our respect for Persian and Azeri culture, or asking why is it that this regime is plowing money into nuclear weapons and giving the type of support they do to the Assad regime in Syria when its own people suffer? We need to be explaining as best as possible that their economic suffering is because of their leaders' reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Public diplomacy is a critical mission, even more so in this digital age, but it's one that gets lost among traditional state-to-state relations. So public diplomacy is an area that I'll be bearing down on as a committee chairman as well. Our efforts to date on Iran haven't been anywhere near effective. Some have been harmful. Our radio and television broadcasts in particular have got to be improved. Enough with poor broadcasting decisions, the in-house fighting, the outright nepotism at the broadcasting agencies. Those committed to democracy need to work harder and smarter at making allies in that country. Right now, 67 percent of the Iranian people want an end to that regime, want a Western-style democracy, do not want a theocracy. And there's no reason that number shouldn't be 87 percent. This isn't the carrot and stick of traditional diplomacy. It's certainly not some grand bargain with the regime, but it's a

focus on the people of Iran with a message that they are better than their government, and I think that is the heart of FDD's philosophy.

Unfortunately, let me make this point, because I've seen this in administration after administration. I've seen this mistake. I saw the Bush administration go silent on North Korean human rights abuses when it bargained with the regime during the end of that administration. We'll likely see an impulse for the same with the Obama administration in Iran. And that means Congress will have to push very hard to see that human rights and democracy and the promotion of those principles in Iran is on that agenda – foremost on that agenda. And with the help of FDD, we'll do that.

And to that very issue, congratulations on your human rights panel this morning. Congratulations on all you do. And one more time, I want to tell you, the intellectual information, the data that you provide is absolutely essential. I thank you for that. And I think at that point we'll take some questions. Thank you. (Applause.)

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