

Letter to the President on the Anniversary of the Nuclear Agreement with Iran

July 12, 2016

Dear Mr. President,

On the first anniversary of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, Americans should be proud of your leadership in bringing about this landmark diplomatic agreement.

As a result of the JCPOA all pathways to an Iranian nuclear weapon have been blocked, thereby providing greater security to our friends and partners in the region and to the world. From November 2013, when the interim nuclear agreement was reached, until today, Iran has remained in compliance with its commitments as verified by regular reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

We applaud your Administration's commitment to the rigorous verification of Iran's compliance and remaining in close contact with the U.S. negotiating partners on the JCPOA implementation. This will be essential to ensure their cooperation should action be required to respond to an Iranian violation. As your policies have shown, it will also be essential for the U.S. to continue to assure Israel and the Gulf states of its resolute commitment to their security as our traditional partners in the region. It will be necessary to ensure adequate long-term funding for the IAEA so that it can carry out its inspection and reporting functions as required by the JCPOA.

Future relations with Iran can improve or get worse and become dangerous for U.S. interests in the region as Iran continues to support the Assad regime and Hezbollah. The U.S. should develop policies that increase the chances of cooperation with Iran, minimize confrontation, and influence Iran's actions in the region. We acknowledge that opportunities will be limited for testing Iran's willingness to work directly with the U.S. due to the political uncertainties in both countries in the coming year, but engagement should be the U.S. government's long-term goal.

Your diplomatic undertaking with Iran was to seek a safer world and stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons. To achieve those ambitious goals you engaged in prolonged and intense diplomatic negotiations that enabled you to deal directly with Iran and to test its willingness to work with the U.S. and others in some areas of common purpose. The alternative strategy would be to return to an earlier era of treating Iran as America's principal enemy in the region, thereby: risking the unraveling of the JCPOA; drawing strong opposition from negotiating partners; returning to a period of nuclear danger; missing important opportunities for collaboration in the fight against ISIS and the search for solutions to other regional problems; and risking another armed conflict involving the U.S. in the Middle East.

We, therefore, encourage your Administration to put in place an institutional structure for conducting relations with Iran in all areas essential to U.S. interests. We suggest several channels that could be set up for your successor:

- ◆ A direct diplomatic channel at the deputy level to continue the communications currently being conducted between the Secretary of State and Iranian Foreign Minister. Without such continuity during the transition period, the next Administration will lack the diplomatic means to enlist or pressure Iran in the management of important and urgent issues such as ISIS, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan where the U.S. and Iran have some common but often clashing interests.
- ◆ An emergency communications capability with Iran's government to avoid misunderstandings or the escalation of incidents or accidents.
- ◆ A regular and direct bilateral channel between the U.S. Treasury and Iranian Central Bank to address all U.S. and Iranian questions about the implementation of sanctions relief commitments under the JCPOA. Treasury and State will need to stay in close harmony in talks with Iran on sanctions relief.

Iran's leaders appear reluctant now to engage the U.S. beyond the implementation of the JCPOA, and Iran's actions in the region may make engagement difficult for the U.S. But the one lesson learned from your diplomatic efforts with Iran is that persevering patiently in pursuit of careful diplomacy can lead to progress. A variety of channels with Iran will be needed to drive home messages and to improve mutual understanding on our positions on issues of importance to the U.S. – including regional security questions and the treatment of dual nationals – among others.

You have shown that well-conceived and tough-minded diplomacy can protect U.S. national security interests. Given the stakes, the U.S. will need more, not less, engagement with Iran.

With respect,

Amb. (ret.) Morton Abramowitz, *Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research,
Ambassador to Thailand and Turkey*

Graham Allison, *Assistant Secretary of Defense*

Les AuCoin, *U.S. Representative*

Amb. (ret.) Barbara K. Bodine, *Ambassador to Yemen*

David Bonior, *U.S. Representative*

BGen Stephen A. Cheney (ret.), *U.S. Marine Corps*

Joseph Cirincione, *President of the Ploughshares Fund*

Amb. (ret.) James F. Collins, *Ambassador at Large for the New Independent States and to the Russian Federation*

Leon N. Cooper, *Brown University, Nobel Laureate Physics*

Amb. (ret.) Chester A. Crocker, *Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs*

Amb. (ret.) James B. Cunningham, *Ambassador to Israel, Afghanistan, and the United Nations*

Tom Daschle, *U.S. Senator, Senate Majority Leader*

Suzanne DiMaggio, *Director and Senior Fellow at New America*

Amb. (ret.) James Dobbins, *Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan*

Freeman Dyson, *Professor of Physics Emeritus, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University*

Major General Paul D. Eaton (ret.), *U.S. Army, Managing Director Vet Voice Foundation*

Robert Einhorn, *Assistant Secretary for Nonproliferation, the Secretary of State's Special Advisor for Nonproliferation and Arms Control*

Harold A. Feiveson (ret.), *Senior Research Scientist, Princeton University*

Richard L. Garwin, *Chair of the Arms Control and Nonproliferation Advisory Board*

F. Gregory Gause III, *Chairman and Head of the International Affairs Department at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University*

Leslie H. Gelb, *Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, Director of Policy Planning and Arms Control at the Department of Defense*

Amb. (ret.) Marc Grossman, *Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Ambassador to Turkey*

Morton H. Halperin, *Director of Policy Planning Department of State, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Planning and Arms Control*

Lee H. Hamilton, *U.S. Representative, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee*

Gary Hart, *U.S. Senator, Special Envoy to Northern Ireland*

Amb. (ret.) William C. Harrop, *Ambassador to Israel, Inspector General of the State Department*

Stephen B. Heintz, *President, Rockefeller Brothers Fund*

James Hoge, *Former Editor of Foreign Affairs Magazine*

Amb. (ret.) Robert Hunter, *National Security Council Director of Middle East Affairs and Ambassador to NATO*

Lt. Gen. (ret.) Arlen D. Jameson, *U.S. Air Force, Deputy Commander U.S. Strategic Command*

J. Bennett Johnston, *U.S. Senator*

Nancy Landon Kassebaum, *U.S. Senator*

LTG. Frank Kearney (ret.), *U.S. Army, Deputy Director for Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counter-Terrorism Center*

LTG. Claudia J Kennedy (ret.), *U.S. Army, Former Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence*

Amb. (ret.) Daniel Kurtzer, *Ambassador to Israel and Egypt*

Ellen Laipson, *Vice Chair of the National Intelligence Council, President Emeritus of Stimson Center*

Carl Levin, *U.S. Senator and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services*

Mel Levine, *U.S. Representative*

Amb. (ret.) John Limbert, *Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran*

Amb. (ret.) Winston Lord, *Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific; Ambassador to China, Director of Policy Planning, Department of State*

Amb. (ret.) William H. Luers, *Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Venezuela*

Richard G. Lugar, *U.S. Senator, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*

Suzanne Maloney, *Policy Planning Department of State, Deputy Director of the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution*

Jessica T. Mathews, *Director of the Office of Global Issues, National Security Council*

Gen. (ret.) Merrill McPeak, *U.S. Air Force, Chief of Staff*

Amb. (ret.) William G. Miller, *Ambassador to Ukraine*

Amb. (ret.) Cameron Munter, *Ambassador to Pakistan and Serbia*

Amb. (ret.) Richard W. Murphy, *Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs*

Vali Nasr, *Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Dean of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies*

Richard Nephew, *Director for Iran at the National Security Council, Deputy Coordinator for Sanctions Policy at the Department of State*

Amb. (ret.) Ronald E. Neumann, *Ambassador to Afghanistan, Algeria, and Bahrain*

Gen. (ret.) Lloyd Fig Newton, *U.S. Air Force, Commander, Air Education and Training Command*

Joseph Nye, *Assistant Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the National Intelligence Council*

Admiral (ret.) Eric Olson, *U.S. Navy, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command*

Amb. (ret.) Thomas Pickering, *Permanent Representative to the United Nations; Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs; Ambassador to Israel, Russia, India, El Salvador, Nigeria and Jordan*

Paul R. Pillar, *National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia*

Amb. (ret.) Nicholas Platt, *Ambassador to Pakistan, Philippines, and Zambia*

Joe R. Reeder, *Deputy Secretary of the Army, Chairman of the Panama Canal Commission*

Amb. (ret.) Francis J. Ricciardone, *Ambassador to Egypt, Turkey, the Philippines, and Palau*

Burton Richter, *Professor Emeritus, Stanford University; Nobel Laureate in Physics*

Barnett R. Rubin, *Senior Adviser to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan*

Gary S. Samore, *White House Coordinator for Arms Control and Weapons of Mass Destruction, Senior Director for Nonproliferation and Export Controls at the National Security Council*

Gen. Brent Scowcroft (ret.), *U.S. National Security Advisor*

Patricia Schroeder, *U.S. Representative*

Gary Sick, *Director of the Office of Iran and the Persian Gulf of the National Security Council*

Jim Slattery, *U.S. Representative*

Mark Udall, *U.S. Senator*

Amb. (ret.) Bill vanden Heuvel, *Ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations,
Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations*

Frank N. von Hippel, *Assistant Director for National Security, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy*

Jane Wales, *Special Assistant to the President, Senior Director of the National Security Council,
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State*

Amb. (ret.) Edward S. Walker, Jr., *Ambassador to Israel, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates*

James Walsh, *Research Associate at Massachusetts Institute of Technology Security Studies Program*

Frank Wilczek, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Nobel Laureate in Physics*

Timothy E. Wirth, *U.S. Senator*

Amb. (ret.) Frank Wisner, *Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs; Ambassador to India,
Egypt, the Philippines, and Zambia*

** The signers of this statement are either former senior officials of the U.S. government or prominent national security leaders who have not held senior government positions. The positions listed after the names of the former government officials are the senior posts held while in government. The positions listed after the names of those who were not from the government are listed with their current position.*

End

For Press Inquiries Contact: IRIS BIERI (212) 812-4372

THE IRAN PROJECT 475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE SUITE 900, NEW YORK, NY 10115 EMAIL: IRANPROJECT@FCSNY.ORG