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## “U.S. Policy Toward Iran”

United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Wednesday, May 15, 2013 9:00-11:00 am

444 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 419, Washington, D.C., 20510

On Wednesday, May 15, 2013, the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations held a hearing titled "U.S. Policy Toward Iran." **Wendy Sherman**, State Department Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and **David Cohen**, Treasury Department Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, testified. Chairman **Robert Menendez** (D-NJ) presided.

In Chairman Menendez's opening statement, he said the United States needs to "double down on four fronts" in order to prevent a nuclear Iran. First, the U.S. should "encourage further reductions in energy sector purchases from Iran." Second, ensure that trade is prohibited with Iran "with respect to all dual-use items that can be used in Iran's nuclear program." Third, ask the international community to ramp up the pressure and change Tehran's calculus. Fourth, the time may have come to look "more seriously at all options – and that would include increasing military pressure against Iran."

In **Wendy Sherman's** prepared statement, she discussed Iran's nuclear ambitions and support for terrorism and the Assad regime. On human rights, she stated, "We are equally disturbed by the regime's ongoing campaign of repression against its own people." Sherman quoted Dr. **Martin Luther King**, who said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," and added, "This is true, too, as we advocate for the rights and freedoms of the Iranian people." Sherman also stated, "We have stood – and will continue to stand – fully and firmly behind the aspirations of the Iranian people." She then mentioned the State Department's public outreach efforts, including Virtual Embassy Tehran and Farsi-language Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube channels. Sherman concluded by addressing the upcoming presidential elections. "The decision about who leads Iran is for the Iranian people, who should have every opportunity to express freely and openly their opinions, ideas, and hopes for the future of their country. But we do call on the Iranian authorities to conduct a free and fair election that not only conforms to international standards of transparency and accountability but is just and represents the will of the Iranian people."

The prepared opening statement of **David Cohen** discussed ways of "increasing pressure on Iran" and recent actions taken by the Obama administration against Iran. With regard to human rights, Cohen stated, "Under E.O. 13628, we recently sanctioned the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting and its managing director, the Iranian Cyber Police, and nearly a dozen other entities and individuals for their involvement in abusing the human and democratic rights of Iran's citizens." Cohen addressed claims that American sanctions have caused shortages of food and medicine in Iran, stating, "Whatever shortages may exist, and whatever reluctance foreign banks may have to process transactions, the root cause is not our sanctions programs, it is the actions of the Iranian government."

After opening statements, Chairman Menendez asked Cohen about the enforcement of sanctions and bans on precious metals. Menendez stated, "Enforcement of sanctions is more important than sanctions themselves, otherwise it's a toothless tiger."

Senator **Bob Corker** (R-TN) also asked about sanctions and stated, "I'm impressed with what the sanctions have done, but very unimpressed with the behavior change it has created." Corker then asked if any potential Iranian presidential candidates would be more productive to deal with on the nuclear issue. Sherman stated that the "nuclear file is held by the Supreme Leader." She also noted, "Some people speculate that Rasfanjani might drop out."

Senator **Ron Johnson** (R-WI) asked about the state of Iran's political opposition, mentioning the Green Movement from the 2009 elections. Sherman responded, saying that the Green Movement was non-existent inside Iran and that the government's repression has depressed the opposition's capability. She added, "We are doing whatever we can" to encourage voices inside Iran and to press for "the kind of freedom and fair election that the Iranian people deserve." She noted, "We don't expect a free and fair election but we want to help people speak with the voice they have."

Senator **Bob Casey** (D-PA) questioned Sherman about the tools used by the State Department to support human rights in Iran. He said, "Despite the brutal repression of that Green Movement and efforts like it, I don't think there's any question that what stirred in the hearts of Iranians at that time is enduring," adding, "It's very difficult to suppress it over time." He argued that Congress and the President don't talk enough about "our strategy on human rights," and then asked what the State Department has planned in order to "put pressure" on the Iranian regime regarding human rights abuses and to "open" the country.

Sherman told Senator Casey that the State Department was doing "everything we can so that the people of Iran have a way to make their voices heard," and pointed to programs that prevent signal jamming and improve phone access. Sherman also stated that the U.S. led the effort to create the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran and released a report on human rights in Iran among other things. She stated that there is "not enough we can do with regard to human rights abuses in Iran."

Cohen added that the Treasury Department was working with State to apply sanctions with regard to human rights abuses. He said that these sanctions "shine a spotlight" on those involved with human rights abuses.

Senator **John McCain** (R-AZ) discussed Afghanistan, the progress of the P5+1 talks, and Iranian support for Syria.

Senator **Ben Cardin** (D-MD) raised questions about China's support of potential UN Security Council resolutions.

Senator **Tim Kaine** (D-VA) discussed sanctions, arguing that Iran is not likely to back away from its nuclear program due to U.S. sanctions. "That would mean a complete loss of internal political legitimacy," he said.

Senator **James Risch** (R-ID) expressed his frustration with the ineffectiveness of sanctions to this point. He also brought up the fact that one of his constituents, **Saeed Abedini**, is currently detained in Iran and "his crime is preaching the Christian religion." He acknowledged that there wasn't much the State Department could do but that "people want to see this brought to an end."

Senator **Chris Coons** (D-DE) asked about Iran's influence in Africa.