

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER JACKIE SPEIER (D-CA)

**Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence
and the Subcommittee on Oversight Investigations and Management Joint Hearing on:**

“Iranian Terror Operations on American Soil”

**October 26, 2011 at 10:00 AM
311 Cannon House Office Building**

First I would like to congratulate the people of Libya for ending the reign of Moammar Qaddafi last week. It is now time for the Libyan people to begin the long process of rebuilding their country and regaining Libya's standing in the international community.

I would also like to commend President Obama on yet another major national security victory, for helping to assemble the coalition that supported the Libyans in deposing this dictator, all without placing any of our forces in harm's way.

Those developments in North Africa should hold some relevance for the topic of today, as well, because it stands as yet another example that in our increasingly interconnected world, brutal regimes cannot continue to suppress their citizens' desire for freedom and democracy.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here with us today to discuss the Iranian threat, which is a discussion that has grown in significance following the foiled plot to assassinate the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States by an Iranian-American man allegedly acting on behalf of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - Quds Force.

But though this plot has refocused the debate on threats to our security from Iran, we all know that Iran has been a primary security concern for America for a long time.

Earlier this year, we held a Subcommittee hearing on Hezbollah that examined the close links between the Iranian government, including the Quds Force, and Hezbollah, a group responsible for devastating attacks against the U.S., including deadly bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine Corps Barracks in Lebanon.

Iran continues to provide support for Hezbollah and other terror groups, including Hamas.

Through some of these proxy groups, Iran has been tied to attacks on U.S. troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and Iranian-made weapons have caused the deaths of many American servicemembers.

And of course, the recently foiled plot, which was allegedly authorized, funded, and planned by members of the Quds Force, opens up a new dimension to the threat we face from Iran.

If the version of events laid out by the Justice Department in its complaint is true, that this plot was authorized by members of the Iranian government, what does it mean for the overall threat we face from Iran?

Given that the target of this plot was not American, how does this change our estimation of the Iranian's capabilities and intent to strike the U.S.?

And does the alleged attempt to partner with a Mexican drug cartel member indicate a greater collusion between Iran and drug trafficking organizations?

We still need to learn all the facts in this troubling case, but one thing is for sure: we need sober, reasoned discussion of the foreign policy challenge we face with Iran, not the inflammatory sound bites that have been characteristic of the debate up until now.

The heated rhetoric from both sides over the past decade brings back memories of the darkest days of the Cold War.

Before this recent plot was uncovered the US and Iran had been contemplating a 'hotline' between the two countries, to provide a direct line for top leaders to communicate during a crisis, in the hopes that cooler heads may prevail; a similar solution was adopted by the U.S. and Soviet Union during the Cold War.

With the arrests earlier this month sparking a lot more of this heated rhetoric, I can't help but think that such a hotline could have helped.

We must carefully assess the most effective path forward for dealing with Iran.

America needs to send a message that Iran's leaders must be held accountable for their actions, but we cannot take any reckless actions which may lead to opening another front in the 'War on Terror', which the American people do not want and cannot afford.

We need to work with our international partners to find the right balance in making Iran accountable. As we showed in Libya, the best approach is to build a coalition and avoid unilateral actions.

Though many people have criticized our sanctions of Iran for lacking 'teeth,' just last week the *Washington Post* reported that Iran's nuclear program faced major setbacks in part due to "poorly performing equipment [and] shortages of parts as global sanctions exert a mounting toll."

Even China has recently slowed oil and energy investments in Iran to be more in compliance with the sanctions program, reportedly angering the Iranians.

Working with our partners will enhance our sanctions program and increase the pressure on Iran, further isolating the regime and providing a path forward that does not put our troops at risk.

I hope today to gain new insights into these and other challenges, in the hopes we can move towards building a strategy for dealing with Iran that is both effective and responsible.