

## **Ranking Member Brian Higgins Opening Statement**

### **"The Future of Iranian Terror and Its Threat to the US Homeland"**

**Thursday, February 11, 2016**

Over the past two years negotiations, debates, and intelligence reports over Iran's nuclear program have largely overshadowed the regime's status as the most dangerous state sponsor of terror in the world. With nuclear negotiations dominating the discussion, fewer and fewer conversations are being had regarding Iranian's creation, funding, and continuing support for Hezbollah.

As Congress continues to move legislation, provide resources, and maintain our vigilance over the chaos that has erupted in Syria's civil war, Iran continues to support the Assad regime. Iran is continuing to support a regime that has massacred hundreds of thousands of its own people. While I am aware of the current intelligence reporting and assessments that Hezbollah may only be fundraising in North America, it is not reassuring.

What's more, this reporting is a warning that we must remain vigilant and take the necessary precautions to keep our communities safe. We cannot forget that with Iranian support, Hezbollah has conducted numerous attacks against U.S. facilities, persons, and interests abroad:

- In 1983, 241 American servicemen were killed when a truck bomb destroyed their barracks in Beirut.
- In 1988, Colonel William Higgins, a U.S. Marine involved in a UN observer mission in Lebanon was kidnapped and murdered.
- The 1992 and 1994 bombings of Jewish cultural institutions in Argentina, in which Iran was directly implicated.
- The 1996 truck bombing of Khobar Towers, a U.S. military residence in Saudi Arabia, which killed nineteen U.S. servicemen.
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There is no doubt that Iran's terrorist ties extend beyond the Middle East, to the Western Hemisphere, where in conjunction with Hezbollah, it has engaged in fundraising, illicit financing schemes, and several devastating terrorist attacks. We cannot afford to become complacent. These activities constitute a real and continuing threat to our national security.

In 2011, before this very same subcommittee with many of the same Members you see here today, we heard expert testimony that Hezbollah was active and present in 15 cities in the United States and 4 cities in Canada, including Toronto, which is 90 miles from my district. Today, there will be a lot of discussion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Iran Nuclear Agreement.

As we engage today, I hope that we can have a serious dialogue about the dangers of Iran using an improved economy to fund its terrorist proxies across the world and the United States' role at preventing these dangerous actions. I think we can all agree that this issue is both complicated and delicate and there were tradeoffs that we had to make.

Ultimately, I believe the agreement provided the United States with an opportunity to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program and thereby prevents a nuclear arms race, which would have overtaken the Middle East. The Nuclear Agreement provides the best, verifiable option we have to block Iran's pathway to a nuclear bomb.

It is imperative that we continue to check Iranian influence around the globe, and thwart future attacks.