

Rep. Henry A. Waxman
H.Res.750/H.R. 1905, the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act
August 1, 2012

Mr. Speaker. The Iranian nuclear threat is a daunting and dangerous challenge. With Iran stalling diplomatic talks, adding enrichment centrifuges, and continuing work at unmonitored enrichment sites, there is frustration and alarm that time may be running out. But time has not run out and if we are to avert a military confrontation with Iran over its nuclear weapons ambitions, we must make use of every opportunity to pressure Iran to change course. This bill achieves that goal with sanctions that are deeper and stronger than any we have ever seen.

Without a doubt sanctions against Iran are having a powerful impact. In the last year alone, exports of Iranian oil have dropped by sixty percent. The value of Iran's currency has plummeted by more than one-third. Full tankers are idling in Iranian harbors unable to sell crude in the world market. Although Iran has attempted to work around the sanctions by reflagging vessels and hiding transactions, the shell game isn't sustainable. Sanctions announced by President Obama in recent days and weeks and those authorized in the bill before us today will tighten the grip.

Our message to Iran is loud and clear – there is no escaping accountability. The consequences of defying the international community and continuing an illegal nuclear program are severe and they will be gravely worse if the Iranian government continues on its current course.

This bill is our third round of congressional sanctions legislation since the Obama Administration successfully galvanized U.N. Security Council support for multilateral sanctions against the Iranian nuclear program in June 2010. Together with sanctions enacted in July 2010 and December 2011, the sanctions in the bill before us today reinforce the message to countries, companies and financial institutions that now is not the time for business as usual with Iran.

The bill gives the Administration an array of new tools to shore up international resolve. It has sharp enforcement mechanisms to help enlist other countries in the effort to starve the Iranian nuclear program of cash flows from Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, the National Iranian Oil Company, the National Iranian Tanker Company, and other Iranian banks, businesses and government entities being used to funnel money into nuclear activities.

The bill also expands sanctions against Iranian and Syrian officials responsible for human rights abuses by using electronic monitoring and tracking of regime opposition and specifically targets the paramilitary organizations that have been most insidious in terrorizing democracy activists.

But what this bill does not do is authorize war with Iran. In fact, the bill explicitly says so. I want to underscore that point, because the motivation of the sanctions is to pressure Iranian leaders to abide by the International Atomic Energy Agency's demands and negotiate in good faith and to avoid a military escalation.

As President Obama has stated clearly, the United States does not have a policy of containment. All options are on the table if Iran does not change course. By passing this legislation we will continue to leave no stone unturned in our determination to try and achieve a diplomatic resolution to this crisis.