The Biggest Threat to the United States

Though Iran has been pursuing a nuclear program for many years and has long been described by the State Department as the world's "most active state sponsor of terrorism," revelations over the past year have brought the danger the country poses into greater focus. Senior military officials recently described the Islamic Republic as the biggest threat to the United States and its allies.

An International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report released in November provided the agency's first public confirmation that Iran is closing in on the capability to produce nuclear weapons. The report contains a trove of evidence that Tehran has been working to produce a nuclear weapon that could fit inside the country's long-range missiles.

According to the report, Iranian scientists have created computer models of nuclear explosions and conducted experiments on nuclear triggers. Yukiya Amano, director general of the IAEA, said the agency had "tried without success to engage Iran in discussions about the information," but that "Iran continued to conceal nuclear activities."

Iran's leaders reacted furiously to the incriminating report. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed no retreat from the nuclear path and denounced Amano as a Washington stooge. He also lashed out at America, saying Iran does not need an atomic bomb to "cut off [the] U.S.'s hands."

Iran's proxies, including the terrorist groups Hamas and Hizballah, have long threatened the stability of the Middle East and undermined peace efforts in the region. Alongside its unrelenting nuclear efforts, Tehran has stepped up its support for terrorist attacks on targets belonging to the United States and its allies.

The Islamic Republic has provided weapons, financing and training to groups in Iraq and Afghanistan that have killed American troops. It has extended its global terrorist reach via al-Qaeda, helping the terrorist organization funnel cash and recruits into Pakistan. And in October it was revealed that elements in the Iranian government had directed a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador in Washington.

Iran's machinations in the Middle East and around the world are a reminder why it cannot be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapons capability. Such a capability would embolden the Islamic Republic to act more aggressively in its support for terror, and enable it to threaten international security and stability with impunity.