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AIPAC APPLAUDS U.S. SANCTIONS ON IRANIAN GROUPS

AIPAC applauds the Administration's decision announced today, backed by widespread congressional support, to sanction several Iranian organizations for their involvement in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorist activities. This is a landmark decision in line with the international community's call for Iran to end its illicit pursuit of nuclear weapons capability and marks a further effort to use key diplomatic and economic tools at our disposal to pressure Iran's regime. Both the U.S. House and Senate have passed measures calling for such a move.

Estimates peg the Revolutionary Guard's share of the Iran's economy at up to 40 percent, with much of their work concentrated within Iran's oil and gas industry. The IRGC controls more than 100 Iranian companies and supervises Iran's nuclear facilities and atomic activities. Inclusion of three of Iran's largest banks at the core of that nation's financial system underscores the breadth and seriousness of this effort to isolate institutions vital to Iran's economy, illicit nuclear programs and terrorist activity.

The designation subjects all companies doing business with the IRGC, Quds Force and the banks named to U.S. sanctions, cutting them off from the U.S. financial system. More importantly, the designations give the U.S. government the ability to sever access to the U.S. economy and banking system not only to sanctioned companies, but to any entity throughout the world that does business with them.

We call on America's allies in Europe and Asia to join the United States in sending a message of international unity in support of nonproliferation norms. AIPAC believes that biting diplomatic, economic and political sanctions provide the strongest possibility of pressuring Iran to stop its nuclear pursuit, and solely advocates these measures as the best way to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

This critical diplomatic effort sends a strong message that doing business with Iran is a dangerous proposition, and will deal a significant blow to Iran's nuclear ambitions. The designations target Iran's regime, not ordinary Iranian citizens, thereby capitalizing on widespread public dissatisfaction with the Iranian government.

The decision targets the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its elite Quds Force, Iranian military organizations that arm, fund and train terrorist groups around the world, as well as Iranian banks critical to Iran's illicit nuclear and terrorist activities. The IRGC and related industries were sanctioned as a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction. The Quds Force was designated for its involvement in terrorist activities and was placed on the list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT).

Not only does the IRGC play the central role in the actual work at the heart of Iran's nuclear program, but it uses the proceeds from its business empire to fund Iran's nuclear programs and terrorist activities around the world. The IRGC was at the heart of the brutal captivity of American diplomats in Iran in the late 1970s, and played the key supporting role in the development and funding of Hizballah, the terrorist group which has killed more Americans than any other except al Qaeda.

Among its litany of destabilizing activity, the Quds Force has been implicated in the 1994 terrorist bombing of the Jewish community centers in Argentina, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, and, most recently, the capture of British sailors in the Persian Gulf. The Quds (Jerusalem) Force is also providing funds, weapons, training and technology to terrorist groups such as Hamas, Hizballah and the Taliban.