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AIPAC Welcomes Obama Administration Sanctioning Iran, Naftiran

Positive First Step, More Must Be Done

AIPAC welcomes the Obama Administration's announcement of sanctions on the Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO), an Iranian owned entity based in Switzerland, as well as other recent steps to increase the pressure on Iran, including the blacklisting of several Iranian officials for their role in human rights abuses against the Iranian people.

The Administration has also begun enforcing the government procurement ban on companies doing proscribed business with Iran and ended the exemptions which allowed for certain Iranian imports to the United States, and we welcome those moves as well.

The Obama Administration has now taken some positive first steps to start implementing the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA) by sanctioning Naftiran, which plays a key role in financing Iranian energy projects, facilitating the trade of Iranian oil in Europe, and arranging for purchases of refined petroleum products from European suppliers.

The Administration has also received assurances from four major energy companies—Total of France, Statoil of Norway, ENI of Italy, and Royal Dutch Shell of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands—that they have or will cease investments in Iran's petroleum sector.

These actions are good initial steps. But much more must be done. Credible evidence of corporate investments in Iran's energy sector is long-standing and should require very brief investigations. State Department officials testified months ago that they had already initiated the process, but sanctions on these companies—with the exception of NICO—have yet to be enacted.

With each passing day, Iran advances in its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability – a direct threat to American interests, our allies and global stability. The regime also continues to sponsor terrorist groups seeking to destabilize Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Hamas and Hizballah, which itself has killed more Americans than any terrorist organization except Al Qaeda.

It is essential that the Administration quickly take additional steps to fully implement CISADA and increase economic pressure on the regime. As Secretary of State Clinton has said, "Let me be very clear: The United States is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. [A nuclear Iran] is unacceptable. Unacceptable to the United States. Unacceptable to Israel. And unacceptable to the region and the international community."

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