

**House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman
Tom Lantos
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Thank you, Cissie. Listening to the previous panel, a member of Congress is filled with humility and admiration. You heard the spirit of Israel: conflict, disagreement, optimism, determination, and it is a difficult undertaking for me to take you out of that vibrant energy-filled problem solving arena into another road. But that is my responsibility. All of the issues they discussed and the thousand other problems they didn't have time to touch upon are not existential issues. I want to devote a few minutes to the existential issue that faces Israel and ask you to join me in solving that problem for the State of Israel.

As you look at Israel's military and economic situation there is a whole range of positive and negative items non-existential except the nuclear threat from Ahmadinejad's Iran. That is the issue I want to deal with and that is the issue on which I ask for you to become my partner. There are really two issues. Ahmadinejad claims that Iran is entitled to develop civilian nuclear energy. He is correct. He is correct since as we move ahead into an era of dramatically increased energy consumption globally nuclear energy for civilian purposes will be part and parcel of the energy solution of all countries. The difficulty with respect to Iran is that if that country is allowed to develop the full nuclear cycle the nuclear energy it produces, the nuclear fuel it produces can be used for both civilian and military purposes. So a few days ago I introduced legislation which will not be controversial and on which I don't need your help. This legislation basically establishes a global nuclear fuel bank on the International Atomic Energy Agency auspices which will provide nuclear fuel to any country including Iran, retrieve the used fuel for reprocessing and guarantees that Iran and any country will have all the nuclear fuel for their civilian nuclear project that they could possibly need.

The Administration is strongly in support of my legislation; it is a bipartisan piece of legislation and I expect it to pass both the House and the Senate with huge majorities and I fully expect the President to sign it into law. Last week I was in Moscow to get Russian support for my legislation and I'm delighted to report to you that in meetings with the National Security Advisor in Moscow and the Foreign Minister that support was forthcoming and the Russians are looking forward to

cooperating with us in establishing an international nuclear fuel bank on their International Atomic Energy Agency auspices.

What this will do in addition to being a substantive and serious global effort to deal with the provision of nuclear fuel to all countries it will pull the rug out from under Mr. Ahmadinejad because he claims that his nuclear energy plans, his nuclear fuel cycle plans are designed purely for peaceful purposes. Now there isn't a person in this room, there isn't a person who is remotely rational who believes him but given the international climate which labels Israel and the United States the two most dangerous countries on the face of this planet there are hundreds of millions of people throughout the globe who take Ahmadinejad at face value that he's developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. My legislation once implemented will remove his excuse for having to develop a full nuclear cycle.

Now we come to my controversial piece of legislation; it is not controversial between Republicans and Democrats and my counterpart on the Foreign Affairs Committee, my dear friend, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican colleague from Florida and I are jointly introducing it, along with a distinguished group of Republicans and Democrats representing the broader spectrum of the Congress of the United States. My problem will be with the Administration not because the Administration is not supportive of Israel but because this Administration like all Administrations does not wish to have controls, does not wish to have mandates, does not wish to have its authority to waive Congressional legislation removed. Let me be specific. The legislation I am – I have introduced this week and the legislation on which I am asking you to lobby every member of Congress tomorrow is a very comprehensive legislative proposal. Let me set the framework.

In 1996 we passed a piece of legislation aimed at Iran and Libya called ILSA, the Iran Libya Sanctions Act, which had as its goal to prevent Libya and Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The legislation with respect to Libya has worked. I think much of the credit goes to the handful of people around Colonel Gaddafi, principally his son and some of his top aids whom over the course of the last three years I have come to know very well. So let me first tell you why the Iran Libya Sanctions Act, ILSA is now renamed ISA, the Iran Sanctions Act, and let me explain to you why and how and how significantly Libya has removed itself from the arena of our concern.

I will take you back a little over three years and when I tell you the day you will remember it. It was a Sunday in December of 2003. Annette and I were reading the Sunday *New York Times* and watching the television programs and suddenly the announcement came that Saddam Hussein was captured in his spider hole and you all remember

that fabulous picture of an American medic examining him. He had a beard and bushy hair and he didn't look particularly appetizing. I'm giving you this date not because it will give you a causal connection to what happened with Libya but it will give you a chronological connection. Three days after this very major event Saddam Hussein was captured, Colonel Gaddafi announced that he is giving up all of his nuclear plants, programs, and products. The following day, the day following this announcement I sent my Deputy Chief of Staff to Rome to meet with Gaddafi's most trusted aid, who was serving at that time as Libya's Ambassador to Italy. And in a few days of discussions and negotiations I succeeded in gaining entry to Libya, the first American public official to visit Libya in a long, long time. I arrived in Libya in January of 2004, had my first meeting with Colonel Gaddafi; Annette and I have now been back six times most recently during the Hezbollah war. Colonel Gaddafi and I decided to work for the re-establishment of full diplomatic relations between Libya and the United States and as we sit here this afternoon there is a full-fledged Libyan Embassy in Washington, a full-fledged American Embassy in Tripoli; there are American companies and tourists and visitors moving to Libya in great numbers and while I'm not suggesting all of our problems are behind us, Libya today unlike three and a half years ago, represents no nuclear threat to the State of Israel. All of her nuclear programs, facilities, materials – are under lock and key in the State of Tennessee.

So the Iran Libya Sanctions Act is a thing of the past. The Iran Sanctions Act which has been on the books for little over a decade had as all other provisions of a similar nature do a waiver provision for the Administration and the waiver position basically says if the President deems it to be in the national interest then the sanctions in this legislation can be waived. Every single occasion when the sanction legislation should have been invoked against countries and governments the sanctions were waived; not one single time was the sanction invoked and the Iran Sanctions Act now on the books, the one we passed in 1996 has been a meaningless, impotent toothless device. My legislation is a tough one; it dramatically enhances the sanctions vis-à-vis any country or any company shall – Malaysia, China, you name it – which invests in Iran's energy industry because these funds and we are talking about tens of billions of dollars sustain and support Iran's nuclear program. The only alternative which is peaceful, non-violent, diplomatic, economic, left between Iran developing its military nuclear capability and potentially using its weapon as Ahmadinejad has threatened to wipe Israel off the map and I take him very seriously. We made a mistake decades ago when Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was not taken seriously – I take Mr. Ahmadinejad

very seriously. Ahmadinejad, if he can continue to develop his nuclear capability within a relatively short period of time will have a nuclear weapon. Now if you're an optimist you can assume that he will not use his nuclear weapon and that's a possibility but even if he never uses a nuclear weapon the very possession of nuclear military capability by Iran will make all of Iran's neighbors listen very carefully to Ahmadinejad's policies and proposals. Iran's neighbors today are desperately afraid of Iran developing military nuclear capability. So whether Ahmadinejad in fact uses the bomb or only has it as a public relations device the shape, climate, atmosphere of the Middle East will undergo a dramatic change. There is no one else except the United States which is capable of exercising the economic muscle which we have to prevent Iran from receiving the tens of billions of additional resources and the technological knowledge without which it cannot complete a nuclear weapon.

What I'm asking you to do tomorrow is to go to the Hill and explain to the Congressional office where you will be visiting that this is the single most important piece of legislation of the current session of Congress, because all of the problems our guests from Israel discussed will fade into insignificance. They will become irrelevant, meaningless, nil – if Tehran under the current regime develops a nuclear weapon.

Now those of you who were here last night were as thrilled as I was to hear about Buffet's magnificent \$4 billion investment in an Israeli company which I strongly advise you to visit; Annette and I did sometime back. All of you were thrilled with the spectacular historical panorama of the US involvement in the Middle East, a historical perspective of unprecedented proportions and all of you were as moved as I was by that spectacular Evangelical Christian Pastor's commitment to Israel.

But none of those things will matter; Israel's economic success will not matter; the historical relationship will not matter; the support of the Christian Evangelical community will not matter if Iran develops a nuclear weapon. I cannot do it alone; I need your help. Please take this assignment as seriously as I do. And if we do it together – and if we do it together there will be countless AIPAC annual conferences celebrating the triumph of Israel as a democratic and peaceful State and we'll all be able to say *Am Yisrael Chai* [The nation of Israel lives].