Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary William J. Burns by
Representative Russ Carnahan (#1)
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
December 1, 2010

Question:

Under Secretary Burns, I commend this Administration for the priority it has placed on deterring Iran's nuclear weapons program, and more specifically, the multilateral approach it has taken on sanctions. With the passage of UNSC Resolution 1929, as well as sanctions laws in the EU, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Norway, we have seen the success in the Administration's diplomatic strategy to achieve unity among our international partners in sanctions implementation. Please give your analysis of what diplomatic tactics were most effective in achieving these positive results. Broadly speaking, what are the lessons learned for future diplomatic negotiations, especially with the UN? Specifically with respect to the Iranian regime, what opportunities do you see for us to further leverage support among the international community in new ways?

Answer:

UN Security Council Resolution 1929 dramatically expanded the breadth of multilateral sanctions on Iran and helped to reinforce international efforts to convince Iran to change its calculus and negotiate seriously to resolve concerns over its nuclear program. Iran is more isolated internationally than it has been in years because of its non-compliance with its international obligations, its dismal human rights record, and its conduct in the region.

A dual-track strategy combining direct engagement and pressure remains the best instrument for inducing changes to Iran's strategic posture.

In our phased approach, we view the first meeting as a test of Iran's seriousness of purpose and readiness to engage over a series of meetings aimed at an acceptable outcome. We will assess Iran's intentions based on those criteria. We remain united in our demand that Iran take steps required of it under its international obligations and we are willing to take confidence-building steps of our own to reassure Iran of our positive intentions.

Subsequent to the adoption of 1929, we have focused our international engagement on strengthening the international implementation of sanctions and reinvigorating the negotiations track. In our negotiations with our friends and allies on implementing USNCR 1929 and taking additional steps in support of the goals of the resolution, many of them noted that both elements of the dual-track strategy were necessary for them to be able to support these additional, strong measures.

On sanctions, our initial focus was on EU Member States and other countries that could serve as a model for effective UNSCR implementation and amplification. The United States government engaged at multiple levels with European Union member states, as well as with the governments of Australia, Canada, Norway, Japan, and South Korea to develop complementary and mutually-reinforcing packages of sanctions that fulfill

the mandate of UNSC Resolution 1929. We now are engaged with other countries to encourage similar implementation, particularly in those areas where Iran is trying to circumvent the sanctions.

We view this as an important part of our ongoing effort to bring the broadest and most stringent enforcement of international sanctions to bear on Iran so that it fully understands the costs of its continued non-compliance with its international obligations.

The most important metric for judging our success will be Iran's approach to its discussions with the P5+1 about its illicit nuclear program. We must see what the initial meetings accomplish and what grounds remain for additional discussions. This will be an iterative process: as we continue to implement sanctions, we will observe Iran's response.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Under Secretary William J. Burns by
Representative Russ Carnahan (#2)
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
December 1, 2010

Question:

Under Secretary Burns, please comment on the status of the measures included in CISADA to sanction human rights abusers in Iran. What is your assessment of the effectiveness of sanctions on human rights abuses and the extent to which such sanctions serve to enhance pressure on Iranian leadership to stop its nuclear weapons program? What are other viable options for the United States to help protect human rights in Iran?

Answer:

On September 28, the President designated eight Iranian officials for serious human rights abuses under Section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions and Divestment Act. These designations highlight the serious human rights abuses that continue to take place inside Iran and give a voice to those Iranians who cannot speak out themselves about the abuses committed against them by their own government. Our human rights sanctions were met with loud and public protests by Iranian officials who are not used to being held personally accountable for abusing the rights of their citizens.

We believe that these sanctions also serve to encourage other governments, NGOs, and multilateral institutions to continue highlighting

Iran's human rights situation while pressing Iran to abide by its international commitments and to allow UN Special Rapporteurs to visit Iran, as called for in seven human-rights related resolutions in the UN General Assembly. We will continue to designate additional officials as events unfold in Iran and as additional information and evidence becomes available.

In addition to these sanctions, the United States employs a wide range of tools to pressure Iran on its human rights record, including: high-level statements that spotlight Iran's most egregious human rights abuses; our work at the UN Human Rights Council and other international fora; our annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Iran and the annual International Religious Freedom report; and by pressing other countries to speak out loudly condemning the human rights situation in Iran. We believe that our actions, particularly when coordinated with our partners and allies, have a tangible effect on the human rights situation inside Iran. For example, there is evidence to suggest that our statements and that of our partners have reduced sentences and have stayed executions for political prisoners.