

Statement on Mark-up of HR 1905, the Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2011
House Foreign Affairs Committee

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November 2, 2011

I would like to express my concerns over the Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2011 and my opposition to it being brought to the Floor for a vote. Let us be clear on one critical matter: the sanctions against Iran mandated by this legislation are definite steps toward a US attack on Iran. They will also, if actually applied, severely disrupt global trade and undermine the US economy, thereby harming our national security.

I am surprised and disturbed that the committee viewed this aggressive legislation to be so bipartisan and uncontroversial that a recorded vote was not even called.

Some may argue that we are pursuing sanctions so as to avoid war with Iran, but recent history teaches us otherwise. For how many years were sanctions placed on Iraq while we were told they were necessary to avoid war? Thousands of innocent Iraqis suffered and died under US sanctions and still the US invaded, further destroying the country. Are we safer after spending a trillion dollars or more to destroy Iraq and then rebuild it?

These new sanctions against Iran increasingly target other countries that seek to trade with Iran. The legislation will severely punish foreign companies or foreign subsidiaries of US companies if they do not submit to the US trade embargo on Iran. Some 15 years after the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 failed to bring Iran to its knees, it is now to be US foreign policy to threaten foreign countries and companies.

During this mark-up one of my colleagues argued that if Mercedes-Benz wants to sell trucks to Iran, they should not be allowed to do business in the United States. Does anyone believe this is a good idea? I wonder how the Americans working at the Mercedes-Benz factory in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama would feel about banning Mercedes from the United States. Or perhaps we might ask the 7,600 Americans who work in the BMW factory in Spartanburg, SC how they would feel. Should the American consumer be denied the right to purchase these products? Is the United States really prepared to take such aggressive and radical action against its NATO ally Germany?

Likewise, the application of the sanctions in this legislation would have a dramatic impact on US commercial and diplomatic relations with Russia and China, who both do business with Iran. It would impose strong sanctions on these countries and would prohibit foreign business leaders – and their spouses and children – from entering the United States. Do we want to start a trade war – or worse – with Russia and China?

The Iran Threat Reduction Act authorizes what will no doubt be massive amounts of US taxpayer money to undermine the Iranian government and foment another "Green Revolution" there. We will establish and prop up certain factions over others, send them enormous amounts of money, and attempt to fix any resulting elections so that our preferred candidates win. Considering the disturbing aftermath of our "democracy promotion" operations in places like Egypt, Iraq, Libya, where radical forces have apparently come out on top, it may be fair to conclude that such actions actually undermine US national security rather than bolster it.

Sanctions do not work. They are precursors to war and usually lead to war. They undermine our economy and our national security. They result in terrible, unnecessary suffering among the civilian population in the target countries and rarely even inconvenience their leaders. We must change our foreign policy from one of interventionism and confrontation to cooperation and diplomacy. This race to war against Iran is foolhardy and dangerous. As with the war on Iraq, the arguments for further aggression and war on Iran are based on manipulations and untruths. We need to learn our lesson and reject this legislation and the push for war.