



**Statement before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs,
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa**

***“IRAN’S ENDURING MISSILE THREAT: THE
IMPACT OF NUCLEAR AND PRECISION
GUIDED WARHEADS”***

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Let me begin by thanking the Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today on what I believe is a critical aspect of the military balance in the Gulf and the potential threat that Iran can pose to its neighbors and the U.S.

Iran's Evolving Missile Threat

I have prepared a formal statement describing the Iranian missile threat and addressing what is and is not known in the unclassified domain regarding the full range of Iran's artillery rockets, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles. I respectfully request that this be included in the record.

This statement highlights five key themes:

1. Iran uses missiles as one of three key aspects of its military efforts. The other two include forces for asymmetric warfare in the Gulf and nearby waters, and efforts to use its Al Quds forces, other elements of its IRGC and intelligence services and arms transfers to expand its influence into nearby states and areas like Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.
2. Iran's missiles compensate in part for the age and limits to Iran's conventional forces – most of which are aging to the point of obsolescence – many dating back to the days of the Shah when I served in Iran, less capable systems Iran could buy after the West ceased supplying arms in 1980, and are worn in combat.
3. Missiles give Iran a way of threatening its neighbors – and potentially even the U.S. if Iran ever develops a functional ICBM – that can deter or limit attacks in response to the use of its shield, its asymmetric warfare forces and efforts in other countries; intimidate other states, and deter U.S., Gulf Arab, and Israeli use of far superior air strike capabilities backed by far superior air and missile defenses.
4. The credibility of Iran's longer-range missile threat is currently sharply limited by the real world accuracy and reliability of its missiles, and the lethality of their conventional warheads. These missiles are not lethal against most individual targets with a credible number of strikes. They are more terror weapons for area strikes against populated areas than credible ways of attacking critical civilian and military targets, and precision air strikes by Iran's neighbors can do far more real world damage to Iran.
5. This will change radically if Iran can develop one of two options. First, missiles armed with a nuclear warhead that can have a devastating effect on both populated cities and military area targets. Second, missiles with precision guided conventional warhead, accurate and reliable enough to kill critical point targets. Iran already is improving the accuracy of its shorter range ballistic missiles.

The Questions that Can Only Be Answered by Intelligence experts, Nuclear Weapons Designers, and Missile Designers at a Classified Level

My colleagues and I can provide some unclassified help to the Committee in addressing these issues. However, only the intelligence community – reporting at very sensitive levels – can properly inform the Congress about what is and is not known about several critical aspects of these issues.

There are eight critical questions that must be addressed at this level – including our level of uncertainty and what is and is not known about the Iranian effort:

1. How far has Iran already gotten in moving towards a nuclear or precision strike option?
2. How well can we determine and verify such progress with and without a nuclear agreement in the future? How much of the overall threat can we really verify rather than rely on trust?
3. What do we really know and not know about Iran's access to nuclear warhead design data, progress in this area to date, and probable capabilities over the next decade with – and without – a nuclear agreement?

4. How could Iran respond to any nuclear agreement that did not limit its ballistic and cruise missile capabilities? Could precision strike missile replace weapons of mass destruction with weapons of mass effectiveness?
5. How much of a threat could Iran credibly pose in terms of the real world performance of an ICBM without actual testing of a fissile device and what level of warhead design data has it already received or developed?
6. What level of Iranian testing of an ICBM – or IRBM and MRBM -- would be needed to create proven reliability data and accuracies determined by derived aim points rather than theoretical accuracies based on the limits of the guidance platform?
7. If a nuclear agreement is reached, what is the extent to which this could reduce the current UN limits on arms and technology transfers to Iran – including dual use technology? How could this aid Iran in developing precision guided ballistic and cruise missiles, or covert nuclear weapons efforts?
8. What level of real world technology exchange or transfer exists between Iran and North Korea? What other formal and covert channels exist or are likely to come into existence if a nuclear agreement assigned –includes Russian and Chinese companies?

Rethinking the Overall Balance of Deterrence

Finally, I would add a broader issue that the Committee should also consider.

For most of our post-war history, the nuclear balance has been dominated by the US and Russia, and Russia has been our only major threat.

Iran's potential acquisition of nuclear weapons and even a limited ICBM capability is only part of a future that could include similar threats from North Korea, a more hostile Russia with more advanced systems, and a far larger Chinese strategic capability with a much larger mix of MIRV'd ICBMs and SLBMs – and tactical/theater nuclear weapons.

Without being paranoid or focusing on worst cases, do we need to start thinking out of the U.S. vs. Russia box, or change the box, in measuring the overall *global* balance of risk, deterrence, missile defense, and nuclear arms control?