

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 7, 2015

The Honorable David Cicilline
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Cicilline:

I am writing in response to your August 31 letter on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and your concern for the safety of our allies in the region, especially Israel. I appreciate your careful consideration of the deal, and hope to directly address the questions you raise.

First, you asked if there are efforts underway to support Israel against external threats and furthermore to deepen our security relationship in order to find ways to confront regional threats, particularly those posed by Iran. As you know, throughout my time in office I have consistently viewed Israel's security as sacrosanct. My Administration's military, intelligence, and security cooperation with Israel has been unprecedented and grounded in bolstering Israel's security and maintaining its Qualitative Military Edge. We have also strengthened Israel's security with unparalleled U.S. foreign military financing (FMF) assistance, amounting to roughly 20 percent of Israel's annual defense budget. Furthermore, I am committed to continuing talks with Israel on a new 10-year Memorandum of Understanding on FMF that would cement for the next decade our unprecedented levels of support.

In this regard, I have directed the Departments of State and Defense to continue on a regular basis to engage in sensitive high-level discussions with Israeli defense officials as part of our robust defense partnership. We will also continue to consult with our Israeli partners on how we can further strengthen Israel's defensive capabilities in light of our longstanding shared concerns vis-à-vis Iran and its support to proxies in the region. My Administration is prepared to enhance the already intensive joint efforts underway to identify and counter the range of shared threats we face in the region, as well as to increase missile defense funding so that Israel and the United States can accelerate the co-development of the Arrow-3 and David's Sling missile defense systems. Together with Israel, we will identify ways to accelerate ongoing collaborative research and development for tunnel detection and mapping technologies to provide Israel new capabilities to detect and destroy tunnels before they could be used by Palestinian militants to threaten Israeli civilians. In addition, I recently authorized an unprecedented \$1.879 billion multi-year munitions resupply package, which will provide Israel continued access to state-of-the-art precision-guided munitions. These examples only skim the surface of our strong bilateral security relationship and cooperation, and underscore my commitment to Israel's security.

Second, you asked whether the resources will be made available to ensure we are positioned to verify that Iran is complying with its commitments under the JCPOA and to support the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its efforts to do so as well. The verification provisions in the JCPOA, including IAEA implementation of the Additional Protocol to Iran's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, combined with information collected by the United States and other entities, will be sufficient to verify that Iran is complying with its commitments under JCPOA, and I am committed to ensuring that those responsible for implementing the JCPOA have the necessary resources to carry out their respective roles. Throughout the negotiations, our experts maintained contact with the IAEA to ensure it would be capable of effectively monitoring and verifying the nuclear measures in the JCPOA. The United States has been pleased to make additional contributions to the IAEA in support of its verification activities under the Joint Plan of Action to date. We are similarly committed to working with other member states to ensure the IAEA has the resources it needs to verify Iran's nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, including through U.S. extra-budgetary contributions to the IAEA, as needed. Here at home, experts across the United States Government, including the Departments of State, the Treasury, and Energy, as well as the Intelligence Community, will be called upon to help implement this deal and deserve the tools and resources necessary to do their jobs.

Third, you asked whether we have sufficient options for dealing with potential Iranian violations of the deal. Let me assure you that there are a wide range of unilateral and multilateral responses that we and our partners can employ should Iran fail to meet its JCPOA commitments. We will take seriously any effort by Iran to test whether or not it can avoid consequences for violating the JCPOA.

It is important to recognize the unprecedented nature of the snap-back provision that we have secured in this deal. It ensures that the United Nations (UN) Security Council will re-impose UN sanctions, if the United States believes Iran has failed to meet its JCPOA commitments, and no state can block the snap-back of those multilateral sanctions. If we believe that there has been a violation related to any commitment in the JCPOA, we can refer the issue to the Joint Commission. If our concerns are not resolved to our satisfaction, we can unilaterally reinstate these sanctions. In the event of a full snap-back of sanctions, European businesses – like all others – would need to wind down contracts or be subject to sanctions. Because this gives us enormous leverage, we expect the Joint Commission to resolve a range of compliance issues that could arise. In the event it cannot, no state can block our ability to snap those sanctions back into place.

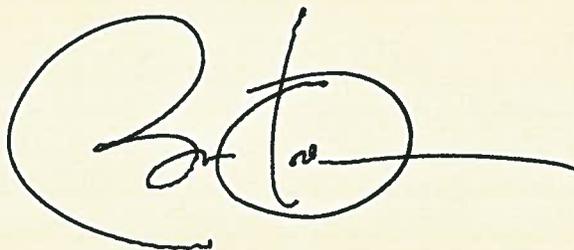
Precisely because of the diplomacy that we have pursued in building the sanctions regime and negotiating the JCPOA, I am confident that we can impose consequences for Iranian violations without having to do so alone. In addition to the multilateral snap-back provision, the United States and our European partners can snap our own sanctions back into place at any time should Iran fail to meet its commitments. Our European allies have made clear that they would join us in re-imposing unilateral sanctions and have conveyed to us that they stand ready to re-impose European Union sanctions in a calibrated manner as appropriate in the event Iran violates

the JCPOA incrementally, ensuring that we can deter such non-compliance as well. Given how closely we've worked with our European allies throughout this process and given the enormously negative implications for Europe of a nuclear-armed Iran, I have no doubt that our European allies will stand with us, if Iran fails to meet its JCPOA commitments. Every element of this arrangement was negotiated with our closest European allies, who all have made clear subsequently – in public and private settings – their assurance to fulfill their commitments under the JCPOA, and to ensure that Iran lives up to its end of the deal. This includes working with us to ensure that the JCPOA's unprecedented inspections, monitoring, and transparency regime that we negotiated together is effectively implemented.

The United States also has a range of other, more incremental options by which we can apply calibrated pressure in the event of non-compliance issues by Iran. For example, we can re-impose certain U.S. sanctions or seek certain designations related to Iran's non-compliance with the JCPOA. Alternatively, we could withhold approval of items to be transferred to Iran for its peaceful program under the procurement channel established pursuant to the JCPOA. Ultimately, however, it is essential that we retain the flexibility to decide what responsive measures we and our allies deem appropriate for any non-compliance.

The JCPOA prevents Iran from getting a nuclear weapon; indeed, it is by far the best option available for doing so. It does not take away any of our own capacity to continue to respond to Iranian threats to our friends and allies in the region, particularly Israel. So long as Iran's destabilizing actions in the Middle East continue, we can and will continue to counter them. I know that you have taken considerable time to think about this critical issue, and I thank you for your active engagement with me and my Administration on this matter of great importance to U.S. national security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style. The signature is centered below the word "Sincerely,".