

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concerns that the Administration is not appropriately responding to the serious threats posed by Iran's presence and activity in the Western Hemisphere. The United States must use all available tools to protect U.S. interests, prevent Iranian expansion, and undermine corroboration between Iran, foreign terrorist organizations, and drug trafficking organizations in the region. The Administration's apparent lack of commitment and resources towards addressing this critical issue leaves our embassies and U.S. personnel vulnerable and given the proximity to the U.S. border, poses a direct national-security risk to the United States.

Following the October 2011 Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the U.S. on American soil, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, in February 2012, testified that:

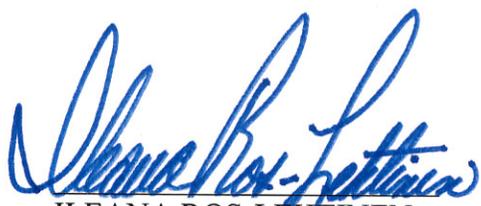
“Iranian officials – probably including Supreme Leader Ali Khameni – have changed their calculus and are now willing to conduct an attack in the United States.”

The threat was increasingly troubling because Iran sought the assistance of an undercover DEA informant that was posing as a member of the drug trafficking organization, Los Zetas, to carry out this plot. The threat of the Iranian presence was codified once again on March 13, 2012, when General Douglas Fraser, Commander of U.S. SOUTHCOM, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that:

“Iran is very engaged in the region. They have doubled their number of embassies in the last 7 years and they now have 11 embassies. They have 40 cultural centers in 17 different countries throughout the region...trying to circumvent international sanctions that are on their economy and on their activities. And they are seeing an opportunity with some of the anti-U.S. focused countries within the region as a method on being able to do that. Our concern remains their traditional connections with Hezbollah and Hamas who do have organizations in Latin America... primarily focused on financial support to organizations back in the Middle East but they are involved in illicit activity...that connection between the illicit activity and the potential pathway into the United States.”

Accordingly, we respectfully request a public response to the questions below within two weeks of the date of this letter. If a full response requires a classified answer, please provide a classified annex at the same time.

- What specified and implied taskings has the National Security Council undertaken to counter the Iranian threat from, and influence in, Latin America?
- Has the Administration established an interagency task force to review and respond to Iranian influence and activities in the region? If so, please describe the participants and process of the task force. If not, has the Administration otherwise developed a process for interagency coordination on these issues? If so, please describe that process.
- How is the Administration prioritizing tracking financial profits by designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) and their supporters, as well as Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO) and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) who are using the drug trafficking proceeds to support illicit activities?
- What kind of potential links exist between the Iranian regime and its proxy Hezbollah with drug trafficking organizations and other designated FTO's in the Western Hemisphere?
- What specific steps is the Administration undertaking to secure cooperation from countries in the region? What steps has the Department of State taken to prevent further expansion in the region?
- Are the Departments of State and Treasury currently investigating any entities in the region that may be in violation of U.S. sanctions on Iran, its proxies, and financiers? If so, please describe.
- What steps has the Administration taken to prevent the Iranian regime from gaining access to capital markets in the Western Hemisphere to evade sanctions?



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Sincerely,



HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee

CC: The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State  
The Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense