

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

September 2, 2015

Dear Member of Congress:

As Congress continues to review the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that will peacefully and verifiably cut off Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon, important questions have been raised concerning the need to increase security assistance to our allies and partners in the region and to enhance our efforts to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. We share the concern expressed by many in Congress regarding Iran's continued support for terrorist and proxy groups throughout the region, its propping up of the Assad regime in Syria, its efforts to undermine the stability of its regional neighbors, and the threat it poses to Israel. We have no illusion that this behavior will change following implementation of the JCPOA. That is precisely why we have been so focused on preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon – because it stands to common sense that any country with a nuclear weapon presents a different challenge than a country without one.

As we and our partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agreed in Doha in August, “once fully implemented, the JCPOA contributes to the region's long-term security, including by preventing Iran from developing or acquiring a military nuclear capability.” But it is far from the only action we are undertaking to address regional security concerns. I want to detail key steps the Administration has taken and will continue to take to enhance our support for and commitments to the security of Israel and our Gulf state partners.

The President has made clear that he views Israel's security as sacrosanct, and he has ensured that the United States has backed up this message with concrete actions that have increased U.S. military, intelligence, and security cooperation with Israel to their highest levels ever. Our assistance ensures that Israel can better meet its security challenges and protects Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME). The Departments of State and Defense regularly engage at the highest levels with our Israeli counterparts to ensure Israel has the capabilities it needs. Since 2009, with bipartisan congressional support, the United States has provided over \$20.5 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) assistance to Israel. Currently, our assistance averages approximately \$8.5 million per day in FMF alone. In addition, we provide Israel with access to some of the most advanced military equipment in the world, including the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and penetrating munitions. Israel's first F-35 aircraft will be delivered in 2016, making it the only country in the region with a U.S. fifth-generation fighter aircraft.

We have also provided vital funding – an additional \$3 billion – for Israel’s life-saving missile defense systems. This includes \$1.3 billion for the Iron Dome system, which saved hundreds of Israeli lives in 2014. In addition, we recently offered Israel a \$1.89 billion munitions resupply package that will replenish Israel’s inventories and will ensure its long-term continued access to sophisticated, state-of-the-art precision-guided munitions.

We are prepared to further strengthen our security relationship with Israel. First, we will continue talks with Israel on a new 10-year Memorandum of Understanding on FMF that would cement for the next decade our unprecedented levels of military assistance. Second, the 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 system. Third, our governments should identify ways to accelerate the 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 to threaten Israeli civilians. Fourth, President Obama has proposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu that we begin the process aimed at further strengthening our efforts to confront conventional and asymmetric threats. President Obama and this Administration firmly believe we have an opportunity now to build on and fortify the United States’ historic and enduring commitment to Israel’s security.

The United States has been partnering with the countries of the Arabian Peninsula for nearly eight decades. These relationships will remain at the core of our regional security strategy. We are actively expanding the strong foundation of defense cooperation with the GCC countries, building on the \$129 billion in authorized sales of advanced military systems since 2009. Out of the Camp David Summit in May, the Departments of State and Defense and our GCC partners have created working groups to strengthen our security cooperation with Gulf partners. As part of this effort, our arms transfer working group is working to expedite the delivery of capabilities needed to deter and combat regional threats, including terrorism and Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region. In July, we formally notified to Congress proposed major sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that will provide long-term strategic defense capabilities and support for their ongoing operations.

Our security initiatives with the GCC states span a range of issues, reflecting our comprehensive approach to bolstering our partners’ ability to deter and counter threats from Iran and regional terrorist groups. Additional U.S.-GCC working groups are focused on counterterrorism, military preparedness, cyber security, maritime security (including interdiction of illicit arms transfers), and the critical goal of building political support for multilateral U.S.-GCC ballistic missile defense (BMD) cooperation. BMD is a strategic imperative and an essential component to deterring Iranian aggression against any GCC member state. We have already made significant progress and are working with the GCC to propose a robust BMD early warning architecture to meet our partners’ needs. As part of our expanded counterterrorism cooperation, we are increasing our information sharing to ensure we and our GCC partners remain postured effectively to counter new threats. To continue the momentum from our August 3 meeting in

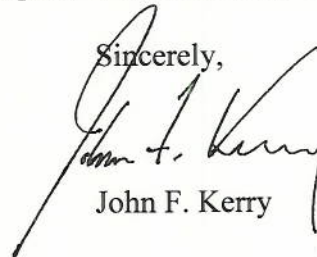
Doha, the GCC foreign ministers and I will meet again in September in New York to review the progress we have made in enhancing our security cooperation.

I would also point out that under this deal, the international community and the United States will retain a wide range of other tools to enable us to push back against Iran's destabilizing activities. These include UN Security Council resolutions prohibiting arms transfers to Iranian-backed Hizballah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, and Shia militants in Iraq, as well as transfers involving North Korea. We will also continue to use the full range of tools at our disposal to counter Iran's missile program, including the Missile Technology Control Regime, whose guidelines are strongly weighted toward denying transfers of sensitive systems like ballistic missile technology, and the Proliferation Security Initiative, whose more than 100 members are committed to limit missile related imports and exports. We also retain a host of authorities under United States law, including multiple statutes and executive orders under which the Administration will continue to impose sanctions to counter missile proliferation. Perhaps our most effective tool, however, will be continued bilateral cooperation with our partners in the region, who work with us to block Iranian access to their territory, air space, and waters for illicit shipments.

Many of the steps we have already taken to reinforce our commitment to the security of Israel and our Gulf partners have been made possible by strong bipartisan support in Congress. Just as Congress is now undertaking an important role in reviewing the JCPOA, we also believe that Congress must play a central role in moving forward with the increased security cooperation steps outlined above. Accordingly, the Administration stands ready to work with Congress on appropriate legislation that would endorse these measures and provide such authorities and resources as may be necessary. U.S. support for Israel and our Gulf partners has never been a partisan issue, and we believe these proposals would receive wide, bipartisan support.

The Administration negotiated the JCPOA to peacefully and verifiably deny Iran any pathway to a nuclear weapon, because the security of the United States, of Israel, and of our Gulf partners demands that Iran not acquire such a capability. At the same time, we will continue to provide Israel and our GCC partners the robust assistance and support they need to deter and combat Iranian destabilizing activity in the region. I welcome your continuing support for these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

John F. Kerry