



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1024 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3001

DISTRICT OFFICES:
2500 NORTH MILITARY TRAIL
BOCA RATON, FL 33431
(561) 988-6302

8461 LAKE WORTH ROAD
LAKE WORTH, FL 33467
(561) 732-4000

MARGATE CITY HALL
5790 MARGATE BLVD.
MARGATE, FL 33063
(954) 972-6454

TAMARAC CITY HALL
7525 NW 88TH AVENUE
TAMARAC, FL 33321
(954) 597-3990

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The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Madam Secretary:

It has come to my attention that the Iranian regime's new oil minister is General Rostam Ghasemi, a top commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). As Iranian oil minister, Ghasemi immediately becomes the de facto head of OPEC, since Iran currently holds the OPEC chairmanship. General Ghasemi is already subject to US and EU sanctions, including a travel ban. However, as the host country for OPEC headquarters, the Austrian government is required to let Ghasemi attend meetings in Vienna. While I understand that current EU sanctions law cannot prevent Ghasemi from traveling to Vienna, I urge the United States Department of State to utilize existing American sanctions law to prevent any company from providing fuel to the aircraft that facilitates General Ghasemi's air travel to and from Vienna.

United States sanctions on refined petroleum, as enacted under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010, have yielded dramatic results. The mere threat of U.S. sanctions has already resulted in nearly every major European oil firm refusing to provide refueling services to the state owned Iran Air. The US must continue its commitment to uphold the most stringent sanctions and ensure that Ghasemi's travel in Europe is as limited as possible. Additionally, the EU should continue to uphold Ghasemi's travel ban for all other European travel, and not, as in the case of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, suspend the ban in light of his new ministerial position. While I understand the rights of Iranian government officials to travel to international conventions, anyone previously subject to sanctions for their role in proliferation, terrorism, or human rights abuses should not be afforded that privilege.

Ghasemi heads the Khatam al-Anbia wing of the IRGC, also known as GHORB, the powerful economic arm of the IRGC with a wide range of interests, including oil and gas development, construction, and telecommunications. Ghasemi's appointment as oil minister is troubling in itself given his high-level position in the IRGC, a paramilitary group under international sanctions for nuclear proliferation activities and human rights abuses; from an international perspective, however, what is most troubling is the prospect of his becoming head of OPEC.

As head of OPEC, General Ghasemi will have significant influence over the world's oil market

and could use his position to provide the IRGC with a new level of access to the international marketplace. He would also be an important international voice on energy issues.

Under his direction since 2008, Khatam al-Anbia has received more than \$7 billion worth of contracts and is currently the largest developer of Iran's South Pars oil field. It is well known that the IRGC provides the regime with much of the manpower and funds necessary to exert maximum control over the people of Iran, as well as to continue its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Following the announcement of his nomination last week, General Ghasemi stated publicly that as minister he plans to continue his involvement with the IRGC, saying, "After my appointment is approved I will be using Khatam al-Anbiya for oil contracts along with other domestic contractors."

Despite finally feeling the squeeze of international economic sanctions, Iran continues to engage in brutal human rights violations not only against its own people, but also by aiding the Syrian regime's efforts to violently repress the Syrian people. We must not allow the IRGC's behavior to be rewarded with enhanced access to lucrative oil deals, and we should do our utmost to prevent its representatives from assuming positions of prominence on the world stage.

Secretary Clinton, Iran has repeatedly demonstrated flagrant disregard for international law. The regime continues to violate international sanctions targeting its illicit nuclear weapons program, in addition to United Nations Security Council sanctions banning Iranian export of arms and related materials. The Iranian government also engages in regular incitement against the West and our allies, and violently represses its own people. A United States decision to impose sanctions on oil companies choosing to provide support to Ghasemi would send an important message to the Iranian regime.

Cooperation between the United States, the European Union, and other responsible nations has led to progress with respect to Iran. We cannot allow this progress to be reversed at such a crucial time. We must stand firm in our resolve to prevent the Iranian regime from gaining economic momentum that will undoubtedly be used to fund its quest for a nuclear weapon. And we must demonstrate conclusively to leading human rights abusers and nuclear proliferators that they are not welcome guests in democratic societies.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Regards,



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress