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**BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS
ON THE FIRST STEP AGREEMENT ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM**

Via Conference Call
11:34 P.M. EST, November 23

MS. HAYDEN: Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining us tonight. We really appreciate your patience. I know this is starting a little later than we had hoped, but hopefully everyone got a chance to see Secretary Kerry speaking in Geneva. That's what we were waiting on.

Tonight's call is on background with senior officials. So there's no embargo on this call. Again, the call is on background. These are senior administration officials. And with that, I'll hand it over to senior administration official number one.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, everybody, for getting on the call. And again, thanks again for waiting. We were letting, of course, Secretary Kerry complete his remarks in Geneva.

I'll just make a few opening comments here. I know you have the fact sheet, but I think it's still worth running through some of the key elements of the agreement. And then my colleague will speak to the sanctions piece of our policy, as well as the limited relief in the agreement.

First of all, it's important to understand that this builds on a several-year effort, one of the leading priorities for President Obama, which is to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And the P5-plus-1 is the forum through which we negotiate with the Iranians, and this, as the President said, is the most meaningful agreement we've reached with the Iranians since we took office.

We have described this as a first step towards a comprehensive agreement, and it's a first step in that it halts the progress of the Iranian program, rolls it back in some important respects, but then provides a six-month window for us to test whether we can reach a comprehensive agreement.

Why a first step agreement? We believe it's very important that Iran not be able to make progress with its nuclear program during the course of the negotiation. One of the concerns in the past has been that Iran would use the cover of a negotiation to advance its program, and indeed were we not to reach this type of agreement, six months from now Iran could make significant progress in increasing its stockpiles and selling advanced centrifuges, moving towards bringing their reactor in Arak online. That is the outcome that we prevent with this agreement, by halting the progress of the program and rolling it back.

I'll now just go through the elements of the first step. Then my colleague can speak to the relief. Then I'll say a few words about the comprehensive solution that we're seeking. Then we'll take your questions.

First of all, Iran has committed to halt all enrichment above 5 percent and dismantle the technical connections required to enrich above 5 percent. Iran has committed to neutralize its stockpile of near 20 percent uranium, and this is, of course, what has been of principal concern to us in terms of their stockpile. It will dilute below 5 percent, or convert to a form that is not suitable for further enrichment, its entire stockpile of near 20-percent enriched uranium before the conclusion of this six-month phase.

So just to go through those elements specifically: Iran will also not install additional centrifuges of any type. Iran will not install or use any next-generation centrifuges to enrich uranium. Iran will leave inoperable roughly half of all centrifuges at Natanz and three-quarters of installed centrifuges at Fordo so they cannot be used to enrich uranium. Iran will limit its centrifuge production to those needed to replace damaged machines so that Iran cannot use the six months to stockpile additional centrifuges. And Iran will not construct additional enrichment facilities.

Iran will also commit to halt progress on the growth of its 3.5 percent stockpile. And this is an important point, because not only are they neutralizing the 20-percent stockpile, they, at the end of the six months, cannot have increased their stockpile of 3.5 percent. So that allows for the rollback on the 20 percent and the halting of any increase in the 3.5 percent stockpile.

Furthermore, Iran has committed to no further advances of its activities at Arak, and to halt progress on its plutonium track. Specifically, Iran will not commission the Arak reactor. Iran will not fuel the Arak reactor. Iran will halt the production of fuel for the Arak reactor. There will be no additional testing of fuel for the Arak reactor. Iran will not install any additional reactor components at Arak. Iran will not transfer fuel and heavy-water to the reactor site. Iran will not construct a facility capable of reprocessing. And without reprocessing, Iran cannot separate plutonium from spent fuel.

So just to pause here, there are essentially three different pathways towards a bomb that have been of concern to us. One is the 20 percent enrichment stockpile -- the 20 percent stockpile of enriched uranium. That goes away with this agreement at the end of the six months. The other is the combination of the 3.5 percent stockpile together with the advanced centrifuges that Iran has developed should they install them and move to break out. That is halted with this agreement, because they can't grow the 3.5 percent stockpile or install those advanced centrifuges.

And then the third track that we were concerned about was the Arak reactor. And this would give them a new pathway to having a heavy-water reactor, a plutonium track towards a weapon. That is halted.

So these are very important concessions and the most significant progress that has been made in halting the progress of the uranium program in a decade.

Along with those agreements come an unprecedented transparency and intrusive monitoring of the Iranian program. Iran has committed to daily access by IAEA inspectors at Natanz and Fordo. This daily access will permit inspectors to review surveillance camera footage to ensure comprehensive monitoring. This access will provide even greater transparency into enrichment at these sites and, of course, shorten the detection time for any noncompliance, so, therefore, also, getting eyes into those facilities in a way that would immediately detect any effort to break out or, of course, violate the agreement.

The IAEA will also have access to centrifuge assembly facilities, also, to centrifuge rotor component production and storage facilities, and also access to uranium mines and mills. So, importantly, these are not just inspections and access to the nuclear facilities; we also have access to the production facilities, whether it's a centrifuge production facility or even the raw materials at the uranium mines and mills. This is much more extensive monitoring than we have today, and it is a significant portion of this agreement.

Furthermore, Iran has agreed to provide design information for the Arak reactor that we have sought for a long time. This will give us insight into the reactor that that has not been previously available. They will also provide more frequent inspector access to the Arak reactor, and they will provide certain key data and information that is called for in the additional protocol to Iran's IAEA safeguard agreement and, in modified code, 3.1.

So, again, taken together these verification steps will allow us, of course, to detect any Iranian noncompliance with the agreement, will allow us to have unprecedented access to their facilities, and frankly, will allow us to learn a lot more about the Iranian program and its various elements.

The IAEA will perform many of these verification steps consistent with their role in Iran, but in addition, the P5-plus-1 in Iran have committed to establishing a joint commission that will work with the IAEA to monitor implementation and address issues that may arise. So this joint commission will work with the IAEA to facilitate resolution of past and present concerns with respect to Iran's nuclear program, including the possible military dimension of Iran's nuclear program and Iran's activities at Parchin. So, importantly, over this course of several months, we will be getting together those questions that we have about any potential military dimension associated with Iran's activities.

So, taken together, again, a halt of activities across the Iranian program, a rollback in certain important elements, and extensive and intrusive monitoring.

With that, I'll turn it over to my colleague to walk through the relief piece.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks. And good evening, everybody. I want to describe the contours of the limited relief in this deal, which we assess is worth at most about \$6-7 billion.

The components are as follows: We will pause efforts to further reduce Iran's crude oil sales. This means Iran's oil exports will remain steady at their current level of around 1 million barrels per day, which is down 60 percent since our oil sanctions took effect in late 2011. And with one exception, the revenue that Iran earns from these sales over the next six months will continue to be restricted by our sanctions, meaning that those funds will not be available to Iran for repatriation or cross-border transfer.

The one exception is that we will allow Iran to transfer \$4.2 billion in revenue from these sales in installments over the six-month period.

We will suspend U.S. sanctions on Iran's petrochemical exports. This could allow Iran to generate some revenue, which we estimate to be a maximum of a billion dollars in new revenue over the six-month period. We will suspend U.S. sanctions on Iran's trade in gold and precious metals. There is no economic value to Iran from this provision because Iran will have to spend its limited unrestricted foreign currency for any gold purchases. Iran cannot use restricted oil earnings to buy gold.

We will suspend U.S. sanctions on exports to Iran's auto industry. This could provide Iran some marginal benefit on the order of about \$500 million if Iran is able to resume its prior levels of production and revitalizes its auto exports. However, Iran's auto industry suffers from many problems beyond sanctions, many of which would have to be solved for Iran to benefit from this provision. Moreover, Iran would need to use some of its limited foreign currency to pay for car kits it would import from abroad.

We will allow \$400 million in governmental tuition assistance to be transferred from restricted Iranian funds overseas directly to recognized educational institutions in third countries to defray the tuition costs of Iranian students. We will license safety-related repairs and inspections inside Iran for certain Iranian airlines, and we will establish a financial channel to facilitate humanitarian trade in food, agricultural commodities, medicines, and medical devices for Iran's domestic needs. Humanitarian transactions have been explicitly exempted from sanctions by Congress, so this channel will not provide Iran access to any new source of funds.

Finally, to the extent permissible within our political system, we have committed to refrain from imposing new nuclear-related sanctions. That does not prevent us from implementing and enforcing our existing nuclear-related sanctions, which, of course, we will do, or from imposing new sanctions targeting Iran's sponsorship of terrorism or its abysmal human rights record.

Let me just make a few additional comments. First and most importantly, this relief is limited, temporary, targeted, and reversible. It is designed so that the core of our sanctions, the sanctions that have had a tremendous bite -- the oil, banking and financial sanctions -- all remain in place. So in that very important respect, this deal is limited.

It is temporary in that the relief automatically expires at the end of six months. It is targeted in that it allows Iran access to a set amount of funds in a controlled and controllable manner, and to permit specific additional commercial activity with quite limited upsides to the Iranians. It does not allow any open-ended financial or economic activity.

And it is reversible. If Iran fails to fulfill its commitments, the financial component, which is doled out in increments, can be turned off, and the sanctions that have been suspended can be put right back in place.

Second, the relief that Iran gets under this agreement is insignificant economically. The total maximum value of this deal, as I said, is about \$6 billion to \$7 billion. Compare that to the economic distress that Iran currently faces. Over the past year, Iran's economy has contracted by more than 5 percent. Its currency, the rial, has lost around 60 percent of its value against the dollar since 2011. Inflation is about 40 percent. Iran is in a deep recession. Because of our banking sanctions most of Iran's major banks, including its central bank, are unable to transact internationally. And because of our financial sanctions, the vast majority of Iran's \$100 billion in foreign exchange holdings are restricted or inaccessible.

Iran's oil exports currently average only around 1 million barrels per day. That, as I've noted before, is down 60 percent, from an average of about 2.5 million per day in 2011, and is costing Iran today about \$5 billion per month in lost sales. In fact, over the past two years, Iran has lost about \$100

billion in oil revenue due to sales it has not been able to make. That is lost revenue that Iran will never recoup.

None of this changes with this deal. In fact, looking ahead during the six-month duration of this first step deal, our oil sanctions alone will cost Iran around \$30 billion in lost revenues, or close to \$5 billion per month. And as for the oil revenue that Iran will earn during this time, those funds will continue to be restricted in overseas accounts due to our existing sanctions.

So just looking at oil revenue alone, Iran will actually be worse off at the end of this six-month deal than it is today. Its restricted foreign reserves will continue to grow and its budget gap -- estimated to be about \$36 billion -- will not be closed. What's more, the relief I just described is the sum total of the relief. All the rest of our sanctions remain in place and will be zealously enforced.

So, in addition to the sanctions that limit how much oil Iran can sell, our sanctions against the central bank of Iran and approximately two dozen other major Iranian banks and financial actors remain in place. Those banks will continue to be de-SWIFTED -- that is unable to access the SWIFT international financial messaging service.

Our key secondary sanctions that threaten to cut off from the U.S. any bank that does business with designated banks, individuals and entities in Iran remains in place. Sanctions on the over 600 individuals and entities targeted for supporting Iran's nuclear or ballistic missile program remain in effect. Sanctions on several sectors of Iran's economy, including shipping and shipbuilding, remain in effect. Sanctions on long-term investments in or providing technical services to Iran's energy sector remain in effect.

The longstanding and broad U.S. restrictions on trade with Iran remain in effect, depriving Iran of access to virtually all dealings with the world's biggest economy. All U.N. Security Council and EU sanctions remain in effect. And all of our targeted sanctions related to Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism, its destabilizing role in the Syrian conflict, and its abysmal human rights record, among other concerns, remain in effect.

And one final point. We will in utmost good faith work to deliver our commitment under this agreement. If Iran lives up to its obligations and commitments, it will get the benefit of its bargain. But at the same time, we will not turn a blind eye to sanctions evasion, circumvention, or any other attempts to take advantage of this situation by anyone or any person or any entity anywhere.

As I just described, the vast bulk of our sanctions remain in place. And as the President said just this evening, you can be sure that we will enforce those sanctions vigorously.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Great. I'll just say a couple of comments quickly about the comprehensive piece, and then I know we'll want to get to questions.

So, first of all, essentially what happens now is we have with this framework in place six months to see if we can negotiate a comprehensive resolution. It's an important point that this is an agreement that will have a duration of six months, and it would only be continued if it was mutually agreed upon. So there is an expiration date as it relates to the terms of the first step, unless there is either a comprehensive resolution agreed to or there is a mutually agreed decision to continue.

In terms of the end state, we do not recognize a right for Iran to enrich uranium. That is a specific issue that has, of course, at stake in the negotiation. What we are going to explore with the Iranians and our P5-plus-1 partners over the next six months is whether there can be an agreed upon comprehensive solution that assures us that the Iranian program is peaceful.

And with respect to that end state, there are many issues that will have to be addressed. I would note that in the agreement it is made clear that Iran will have to address the outstanding U.N. Security Council resolutions in which they have previously claimed to be illegal throughout the course of that negotiation. So there is not an end state that can be arrived at unless we address those U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Moreover, nothing is agreed to with respect to the end state until everything is agreed to. So when it comes to the various components of an end state, including those alluded to in the document today, which we can discuss, those are not agreed to unless we actually reach an comprehensive resolution that, again, gives us that assurance that the Iranian program is peaceful.

However, we have an opportunity here, as the President said -- our goal has always been to resolve this issue peacefully through a diplomatic resolution, both because we believe that that is the more durable way of solving the problem, because diplomacy allows you the assurance that you have an agreement that is verifiable and puts limits and constraints on the Iranian program that can be checked over time; and similarly, because, of course, the enormous costs and consequences that would come with any potential military action were it to come to conflict.

So this is an opportunity that we aim to seize, but we have no illusions that it will be easy to do. These are going to be tough negotiations, but we're going to give it our very best shot.

And with that, we'll move to questions.

Q Thanks very much. How real is the danger that the sanctions regime would have unraveled if this agreement had not been reached?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Scott, I'll say one thing and then my colleague may want to add. The purpose of sanctions were not to just have sanctions in place. They were to change the calculus of the Iranian government. We began to see that with the election of a new President who ran on a mandate to achieve sanctions relief through a more moderate foreign policy towards the West. And we had an opportunity, the best opportunity we've had in five years, to test whether we could get an agreement through diplomacy.

We achieved that agreement in this third round of talks in Geneva. It's important to note that it isn't simply the unilateral sanctions that have had a bite on the Iranian economy. What's made a difference is countries around the world cooperating with the sanctions regime reducing their purchases of Iranian oil, for instance. And that depended upon a great amount of political will from those countries. But the reason that those countries cooperated with us is because they wanted to support a diplomatic resolution and because it was pretty clear to the world that Iran had been the recalcitrant party in previous negotiations.

Our point has been that were we to walk away from the table here, were we to move to additional U.S. unilateral sanctions before we had tested diplomacy, that the political will on behalf of our partners would have been tested in severe ways, and essentially, you could have seen an unraveling of the sanctions regime from those countries that felt like we were not negotiating in good faith.

And so the risk was that in refusing to test diplomacy, which was the purpose of the sanctions in the first place, the U.S. would have been alienated not just from our P5-plus-1 partners but from other countries around the world. And that could have put at risk our ability to have the type of coalition we've had during enforced sanctions.

I don't know if you have anything to add to that.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I think that's exactly right. The effectiveness of the sanctions regime that's in place is not dependent solely on the force of our sanctions and the sort of coercive impact of our enforcement -- although that's obviously an important aspect of it -- it's also that we have galvanized the international community to join us in this effort, and so we have a great deal of voluntary cooperation and collaboration with others around the world. And that depends in very great extent on the recognition that we are approaching this in a sensible way and not applying sanctions for sanctions' sake.

And I think that there was obviously a danger -- it's hard to quantify, but obviously a danger if we discarded this opportunity and just moved to layering on additional sanctions unilaterally, that that important international coalition would not hold together.

Q Thank you both very much for doing this. What is your response to the arguments from the Israelis -- and you'll hear from the Prime Minister tomorrow, I'm sure -- that this actually weakens our leverage because the sanctions were working, were getting Iran to be so serious, and now Iran knows and other countries know, and businesses around the world will know that Iran is going to be back in business and that they can start finding ways around the sanctions that have been so successful, that you'll see this -- you'll see a big change in rial and you'll see a lot more flexibility for Iran.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Andrea, to your question, I'll say a couple of things, and I'm sure my colleague will want to add.

First of all, just to step back, we believe that this agreement aims to address a number of concerns that Israel has expressed over the years. First of all, Israel has expressed concern that Iran could use the cover of negotiations to advance their program. We are halting their program in its tracks and rolling back elements of the program while we test whether we can reach an agreement.

The Prime Minister has raised concerns in the past about the growing stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium. This would neutralize that stockpile, eliminating one of the most important paths that Iran could have towards a breakout to a bomb.

We and the Israelis were concerned about the Arak reactor coming online or a variety of reasons, including the fact that it would give them a plutonium track towards a weapon. And we believe that this halts Arak in its tracks for the first time while we have the space to negotiate.

We had a tactical difference on this question of a first step or an end state agreement. We, frankly, again, just believe that you weren't going to get to an end state from a standing start, so we needed to put this in place to halt the progress of the Iranians while we negotiate that final step. And we'll consult with the Israelis. And after every one of these negotiations, we brief our Israeli friends and I can tell you that Israel has been briefed by the United States on the elements of this agreement.

I'll just say one comment on the sanctions before going to my colleague. My quick comment would simply be I don't think that this limited and reversible agreement suddenly makes Iran a good bet for businesses to invest. The sanctions are still in place and the sanctions are still going to be enforced. And even in the categories where there are these limited suspensions for a time-bound period of six months, that's not exactly a fruitful climate for investment.

But I'll turn to my colleague on that.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'd make two points, picking up on the last one there. Iran is not back in business and anyone who makes the mistake of thinking so I think will be met with some serious consequences.

The deal that was struck is very limited in terms of the additional business that Iran can engage in. It's able to sell petrochemicals and able to sell/export automobiles. That's it; full stop. There's no other business activity that is permitted under this first step deal with Iran. And anyone who thinks they can now go in to develop Iran's oil fields, go into shipbuilding, shipping with Iran, any of the other sectors that are subject to sanctions will I think swiftly come to realize that we are quite serious about maintaining -- and robustly maintaining -- the sanctions that are in place.

Secondly, with respect to the impact of this deal on Iran's economy, as I noted before, we do not judge this to be economically significant. The \$6 billion to \$7 billion maximum value of this deal -- which I think probably overstates its actual commercial value -- will be realized over the course of six months. And in comparison to the hole that Iran's in, its foreign exchange needs, which are more than 10 times that amount, its budget deficit, which is in the order of about \$35 billion, this very limited package of relief will not move the needle economically for Iran.

Q Just a question. I want to clarify the right to enrich piece. The Secretary said earlier that there is no right to enrich in the document. But we've heard that some of the Iranian officials are claiming there is if not an explicit right to enrich, then an implicit right to enrich. Can you tell me exactly what the document says or doesn't say? And is it an issue for the next round of negotiations if the P5 is claiming there isn't a right to enrich and the Iranians are claiming there is a right?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes, that's a good question, Mark. The Iranians have asserted this, as you know, for some time. And it is just the fact that as a matter of policy, the United States has not recognized a right to enrich for the Iranian government, nor do we intend to. The document does not say anything about recognizing a right to enrich uranium.

In terms of the end state, what essentially the next six months will determine is whether there can be an agreement that deals with the Iranian program and gives us an assurance that the Iranian program is peaceful; an agreement that puts limits and constraints on the Iranian program and that has strict verification measures so that we have a certainty that Iran cannot use that program to develop a nuclear weapon.

We would have to negotiate over the course of those six months whether that can be achieved with some type of limited enrichment capability for the Iranians. But the point is that nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to. So there is nothing in this agreement that gives Iran something in terms of the end state that they can hold onto unless all of our concerns are met, with Arak, with Fordo, with Natanz, with strict limitations and constraints on the type of program that the Iranians have and with verification measures.

So that's what the next six months are going to be about: Can we define what an end state is that is mutually agreeable to the P5-plus-1 and the Iranian government. That won't involve a recognition of a right to enrich from us because we just simply do not recognize that there is a right to enrich for Iran under the NPT.

So that's what will have to be explored over the next six months of negotiations. We've also -- just to make a couple of points I referenced earlier -- made clear that the U.N. Security Council resolutions must still be addressed and that is something that Iran will have to deal with over the course of the next six months; and similarly, that Iran must come into compliance with its obligations under the NPT and its obligations to the IAEA. So those aspects of Iran's commitments to the international community hold and will have to be addressed.

But we'll see whether we can achieve an end state agreement that allows for Iran to have peaceful nuclear energy, an access to peaceful nuclear energy and clearly some domestic component of a nuclear program that provides for that peaceful nuclear energy with constraints and limitations and verification measures that are acceptable to us so that we have the certainty their program is peaceful.

And so again, that's precisely what the negotiation will be about over the next six months. But it does not enshrine any right for the Iranian government to enrich.

The other thing I'd just reiterate that I said earlier is that this first step agreement is not a permanent state. This has a six-month expiration date on it unless we get a comprehensive resolution, or unless there is a mutually agreed upon decision to continue the negotiation with this first step in place beyond that timeline.

So again what that means is Iran cannot point to anything in this first step agreement as some type of permanent acknowledgement of their current nuclear capability. It is not a new status quo. It is a first step that is giving us the time and space to negotiate that entity.

Q Thanks for doing this call at this late hour. There is an Associated Press story that has just come out in the last several minutes that said there were some high-level talks going on in the months preceding this agreement and obviously the months preceding what took place in Geneva. I was just curious if you can provide some details to the rest of us about that.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sure, Jim. I was just made aware of that story. I'd just make a couple of comments. Number one, when President Rouhani was elected and indicated a new direction, we decided to take that seriously and to test it. And that effort commenced with President Obama writing a letter to President Rouhani, which, of course, we have made public. And that letter I think was delivered in early August.

The second point I'd make is the United States has always been crystal-clear that the P5-plus-1 is the venue for negotiations with Iran towards an agreement on the nuclear issue. At the same time, we've also made clear that we were open to having bilateral discussions with the Iranians to supplement and feed into those P5-plus-1 negotiations. So, again, any discussions we had with the Iranians on a bilateral basis were meant to reinforce and ultimately be a part of the P5-plus-1 negotiations.

And some of this has been quite public. President Obama spoke to President Rouhani. Secretary Kerry has had bilateral meetings with Foreign Minister Zarif, Wendy Sherman has had bilateral meetings on the margins of these P5-plus-1 talks. In addition to that, we've also had a small number of bilateral discussions with the Iranians since President Rouhani's election, again, with the aim of discussing ideas that could then be merged into the P5-plus-1 negotiations.

So over the course of the last several months of very intensive diplomacy in September, October and November of this year, we had some limited bilateral discussions with the Iranians in addition to the P5-plus-1 discussions that, again, were aimed at developing ideas that we could provide in the P5-plus-1 negotiations. And then the text itself, importantly, was negotiated in these Geneva rounds with the P5-plus-1.

I'd also just add that our bilateral discussions with the Iranians insofar as they deal with substance -- we brief our P5-plus-1 partners on it so that they have an understanding of any discussions we're having, just as our P5-plus-1 partners can brief us on their discussions that they may be having with the Iranians. We also keep our Israeli friends informed of our substantive discussions with the Iranians. This is something that we brief them on just as we brief them on the content of the P5-plus-1 talks.

Q I just wanted to be clear on the sanctions relief, I just wanted to hear your explanation for why you don't believe that this requires any congressional authorization. Can you just outline that a little and

get, if I could, maybe your sort of outlook on the Hill, how you think this will be received and what sort of diplomacy the President needs to prevent sort of further sanctions in the coming months?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: A few points on that. First of all, the sanctions that have been passed by Congress continue to be enforced, so it is not as if we need to unwind the legislative architecture of sanctions. Again, this limited relief, as my colleague described, is very limited, reversible, and doesn't dismantle in any way the architecture of sanctions we have in place.

With respect to new sanctions, the introduction of new sanctions would, we believe, derail the agreement, and we believe that people in Congress understand the importance of testing whether we can get to a comprehensive solution over the next six months. And we have been having this discussion with members of Congress for several weeks now. They're fully briefed on what we've been discussing with the Iranians. We've been making calls to the Hill tonight and will continue to do so in the coming days.

I'd just make a couple points about that. First of all, if the Iranians violate the agreement, or if we can't reach a comprehensive resolution, we have said that we will move to additional sanctions. So we are open to working with Congress in the event that this agreement is violated, or that we get to the conclusion of this six months and we don't have a deal and we don't believe that we should continue negotiations. So that will be an ongoing discussion with Congress.

But I'll let members of Congress speak for themselves. What I would say is I think most members of Congress have been clear that they do believe that this issue should be resolved peacefully through diplomacy, and that they have been key partners with us in providing the sanctions regime that brought us to where we are today. And as the President said, we wouldn't be here without these sanctions. They helped bring Iran to the table. But I think members of Congress also understand that a peaceful outcome to this is far preferable to the alternative, and that's why we're going to continue to test this over the course of the next six months.

And we'll have to continue to make our case to Congress, but, again, I think the broad majority of members of Congress would agree that a peaceful resolution to the Iranian nuclear program is in the U.S. interest, and that using the sanctions as leverage in those negotiations rather than doing anything that would derail the negotiations is similarly in the U.S. interest.

We have time for one more question.

Q Hi, gentlemen. Thanks for doing the call. I wanted to just clarify, on Israel, has the President spoken with Netanyahu one-on-one about this tonight, and do you have any assurances from the Israelis that they're not going to do anything within the next six months?

And then I have a technical question. Can you give us any detail on the EU lifting insurance and shipping sanctions on oil spills? We know a little bit about that from the Farsi version of the deal, but it's not in your fact sheet, so if you could help with that that would be appreciated.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'll take the first question, and then my colleague can take the second one.

With respect to Israel, you can be sure that President Obama will speak to Prime Minister Netanyahu, and in fact, we have every expectation that he will do so tomorrow -- or maybe I should say today, since it is already Sunday. We brief the Israelis after every one of these rounds of discussions. And the President has had basically five years of conversations with Prime Minister Netanyahu on this subject.

And let me just say this. We understand that there have been some differences, but we share the same objective here, which is to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. That's in America's interest; that's in Israel's interest; that's in the world's interest. That's what this is about. And we work through these issues in a spirit of great candor and we have dialogue at every level -- from the President to the Secretary to our negotiator, and also in our security establishments, military and intelligence -- a very regularized dialogue with the Israeli government. And we will continue to do so.

And again, ultimately, we understand and appreciate why Israel is particularly skeptical about Iran, given the threats that have been made about Israel from Tehran. We understand why Israel would want to make sure that this is the best deal possible, and make sure that Iran cannot develop a nuclear weapon. One point we'd make is this is not simply about trusting the Iranian government. There are strict verification measures through these intrusive inspections involved in making sure that Iran is meeting its commitments under this agreement.

I would say that what we have now is a six-month period to test whether the new leadership in Iran continues to follow through on their commitment to move Iran in a new path. The Iranian President has said they will not develop a nuclear weapon. The Supreme Leader of Iran has said that there is a fatwa to development of a nuclear weapon. What we will know after six months is whether there can be a solution that is enshrined in an agreement that gives us assurance that their program is peaceful. That would be good for the United States; that would be good for the world; and we believe that would be good for the security of Israel, for our Gulf partners and for the region.

And we'll just conclude with my colleague taking your second question.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yes, and just very briefly, the relief provisions in here, to the extent that there is additional business activity, also cover associated services. So I assume that the - I haven't seen the Farsi version myself -- that it was referring to that, to the associated service.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, everybody, for getting on the call. Something tells me this won't be the last time we'll be talking to you about Iran over the course of the next six months. I just want to say, I know that this won't be news to you that I think this, but I hope that we all at the very least appreciate the negotiators for the United States -- John Kerry, Wendy Sherman, and the whole crew out there in Geneva who have been -- who are up at 6:00 a.m., still working, and have been literally working harder than anybody that I've seen over the course of my time in government -- of course, with the exception of our servicemen and women who are deployed.

But they have done extraordinary work. They've been tireless. And they have the personal -- the President is personally grateful for what they've done, and holds them in tremendous esteem for their efforts on behalf of this agreement for the United States.

Thanks everybody.

END 12:16 A.M. EST, November 24