

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0301

October 30, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Iran-Venezuela Ballistic Missile Threat on Mainland U.S.A.

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

First, we would like to thank you for the recent sanctioning of six Chinese entities and two individuals for having dealt with Iranian shipping company Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and helping it to evade U.S. sanctions. This action emphasizes that the United States does not tolerate collusion with the IRISL and any attempt to skirt sanctions.

As you are aware, the United Nations allowed the international arms embargo against Iran to expire. This inept decision by the United Nations has materialized a new threat that could affect us here in our backyard. Socialist dictator Nicolas Maduro has expressed interest in acquiring short, medium and long-range missiles from Iran. Following the expiration of the international arms embargo, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) posted the following on social media:

“The distance between Caracas and D.C. is 3,500 km. If #Venezuela acquires ballistic missiles from #Iran, they would be able to inflict serious damage on America in case there is a war.”

Iran has the experience in establishing logistic networks and has experience in smuggling weapons. They have done so across Africa and the Middle East for decades. Just recently, they successfully skirted U.S. sanctions yet again. On October 1st, the second of a group of three Iranian tankers entered Venezuelan waters to transport fuel to the country. Each ship contained hundreds of thousands of barrels of Iranian oil. While Maduro may not have the financial capital to purchase ballistic missiles from Iran, it is possible that Iranian leadership decides simply to give them these weapon systems for the strategic advantage alone.

Iran currently possesses a number of missiles: short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) such as the Qiam-1, capable of reaching Puerto Rico, if stationed in Caracas; medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) such as the Sejjil, which cover the entire Caribbean Sea; and the Soumar cruise missile, which can cover the entirety of Florida and reach southern parts of Georgia, Alabama, and U.S. oil rigs in the Gulf. Iran reportedly is also working on Project Koussar, which is allegedly seeking to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) called the Shahab-6,

with a range of 4,000-5,000 km. That would be roughly double the distance of the Soumar cruise missile and would put the entire East Coast of the U.S., as well as large portions of the Midwest and Southwest states in Iran's striking distance. With growing relations between Tehran and Caracas, it would not take much for Iran to smuggle any of their ballistic missile systems into Venezuela by way of Iranian oil tanker.

The presence of Iranian ballistic missiles in America's backyard would be detrimental to U.S. national security and would limit our ability to check Iranian aggression. Iranian tactics seek to shift the battlefield away from Iran and into the backyards of its enemies, and the developing relationship with Venezuela falls in line with this strategic aim. The IRGC and Hezbollah are the tools through which this goal is accomplished. The long-established Hezbollah footprint in Latin America is of great concern. The United States has found success working with its European allies such as the United Kingdom and Germany in countering Hezbollah's influence, as these countries have now designated all of Hezbollah, not just its military arm, as a terrorist organization. Since then, a broader coalition within the European Union (EU) calls for the same action.

Iran's desire to create a situation similar to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 is a direct threat to the American homeland. We ask that the State Department work with our allies in Latin America and abroad to prevent this threat from materializing, with emphasis on Latin American political unions, similar to the EU, to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in its entirety. Such action could deter Venezuela from expanding or even continuing engagement with Iran if it is outcast from regional institutions. Furthermore, we ask that the State Department work with the Department of Defense to devise a plan of action that prevents the successful transit of Iranian ballistic missiles to Venezuela. We look forward to working with you and we thank you for your leadership in combatting the Iranian threat.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Ken Buck
Member of Congress



Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



Scott Perry
Member of Congress



Ted S. Yoho, D.V.M.
Member of Congress



Rick Crawford
Member of Congress

Cc: **The Honorable Robert O'Brien**
The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 307
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary, Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1300