

14 April 2015

Hon. Tom Cotton
United States Senate
B-33 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cotton:

Each passing day seems to bring new and worrying revelations about the “framework agreement” that President Obama claims to have achieved with the Islamic Republic of Iran and five other nations. This “deal” is supposed to determine future restrictions on Iran’s nuclear ambitions. The cumulative effect of these insights is a powerful affirmation of the effort you and forty-six of your Senate colleagues made last month to put the mullahs on notice that any such deal would require congressional assent. We write to commend you for taking this important initiative.

In particular, we want to thank you for the American civics lesson you gave the Iranian leaders with this cautionary note: “...We will consider any agreement regarding your nuclear-weapons program that is not approved by the Congress as nothing more than an executive agreement between President Obama and Ayatollah Khamenei. The next president could revoke such an executive agreement with the stroke of a pen and future Congresses could modify the terms of the agreement at any time.” Your courageous warning bespoke a patriotic commitment to our Constitution and its separation of powers that is deeply appreciated.

Given the chimerical nature of the so-called framework agreement – which is, at the moment, being characterized in wildly different ways by the various parties, raising profound uncertainty about the nature and extent of the commitments Iran is making, their actual value in preventing an Iranian nuclear weapons program, the timing and extent of sanctions relief, etc. – the need for congressional oversight, advice and consent concerning any accord that flows from that agreement can no longer responsibly be denied.

It would be a serious affront to the Constitution and to the American people were an agreement of this potentially enormous strategic consequence not to be submitted for such action by the Congress. Grievous insult would be added to injury should the United Nations Security Council instead be asked to approve it.

Again we thank you for your leadership in ensuring that the constitutionally mandated process for assuring quality-control on international agreements is followed in this case. We urge you and your colleagues to insist on nothing less going forward.

cc: 46 other signatories of the Cotton Letter

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