

**Opening statement
Iran Briefing
Dennis J. Kucinich
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Is the Administration preparing for war in Iran? Is Iran an imminent threat?

The news is filled with this Administration's strong statements and scary characterizations about Iran's ties to terrorists and its nuclear ambitions. In 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said, "there's no question that there have been and are today senior al-Qaeda leaders in Iran, and they are busy" (Guardian, May 29, 2003); Richard Perle, then chairman of the Defense Policy Board, said, "Iran is exactly the case that the president has been talking about since September 11" (CNN Capital Gang May 31, 2003), or as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said in 2004, "Iran has for many years figured on the list of terrorist states. The possession of weapons of mass destruction by a terrorist state and the presence there of a terrorist network presents a threat to the world" (BBC monitoring, August 14, 2004)

The news is also filled with suggestions that the U.S. might already be moving against Iran and has been for many months. As early as 2003, the Administration was reportedly drafting war plans against Iran, according to a Russian newspaper. In 2004, the world press reported new U.S. military arrangements with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, in 2006 Seymour Hersh reported the presence of U.S. troops in Iran, and just a few weeks ago, Time Magazine reported that "prepare to deploy" orders were given to the Eisenhower task force, a group of Navy ships, to go to the seas off Iran, which would result in their deployment by October 21.

As ranking member of the National Security, International Relations and Emerging Threats subcommittee of the Government Reform Committee, I have been trying to conduct oversight to get to the bottom of these questions. We have written to the relevant agencies. We even held a classified briefing. But the Department of Defense and the State Department refused to show up.

I repeat, the Department of Defense and the State Department refused to submit to questions from a committee of Congress about actions and plans against Iran.

The American people have a right to expect that their government will work, and that Congress will conduct oversight, and that the executive branch will submit to Congress' questions. What does it say when agencies refuse to appear to answer Congress' questions?

Their refusal to be accountable is the reason we are here today. We have five of the nation's top experts on these questions related to Iran. They have reviewed the open sources, they have a lifetime of relevant professional experience, and they are here to discuss what the Department of Defense and the rest of this Administration don't want told to the American people: a sober assessment of Iran's nuclear ambitions and what, if

any, threat it poses to Americans, and the real story of the steps this Administration is taking toward another military confrontation in the Middle East.

These are our speakers. They will go in this order:

Dr. David Kay

Senior Fellow, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. Former IAEA/UNSCOM Chief Nuclear Weapons Inspector

Colonel Sam Gardner (Ret.)

US Air Force, National War College

Alfred Cumming

Congressional Research Service: Specialist in Intelligence and National Security Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division

Dr. Trita Parsi

President of the National Iranian American Council

Joseph Cirincione

Senior Vice President for National Security and International Affairs at the Center for American Progress. Former Director of the Nonproliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

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After each makes a presentation, I will offer a few questions to get the conversation among these experts started.
