Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 13, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

We write today to express our concern regarding Iran's deepening partnership with the People's Republic of China (PRC), characterized by recent illicit technology transfers between the authoritarian regimes. With technical assistance from the PRC, Iran continues to maintain the largest missile force in the Middle East, while advancing its dual-use space launch and inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) capabilities.[1] If left unchecked, this partnership will further enable Iran's nuclear and ICBM capabilities, enhancing its ability to hold at risk the United States homeland. To protect U.S. equities, both at home and abroad, and to strengthen our influence and leverage, we must enhance our credible deterrence by prioritizing our homeland missile defense and constructing a third missile defense interceptor site on the East Coast of the United States.

As the PRC and Iran pursue joint development of offensive strategic capabilities, our homeland missile defense architecture is not keeping pace with the myriad, advanced threats we face. Illegal Chinese weapons technology transfers to Iran have rightfully come under increased scrutiny and are cause for extreme concern. Recently, Xingjiang Qiao, a Chinese national who worked for the Chinese-based company Sinotech Dalian, was charged by the U.S. Department of Justice with supplying Iran with isostatic graphite, which is used in the manufacturing of rocket nozzles and reentry vehicle nose tips in ICBMs.[2] This violation of international sanctions is just one example of the threat that cooperation between authoritarian regimes poses.

In addition to partnering with PRC to develop ICBMs, Iran is advancing its space program and has recently revealed plans for a four-stage Space Launch Vehicle (SLV) giving it the capacity to deploy long-range missiles.[3] According to Iranian state media, Iran also successfully test-

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[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *2022 National Defense Strategy,* (Oct. 27, 2022), *available at* https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF

[2] U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York, *Chinese National Charged For Conspiring To Provide Materials For The Production Of Ballistic Missiles To Iran In Violation Of U.S. Sanctions,* (May 16, 2023), *available at* https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/chinese-national-charged-conspiring-provide-materials-production-ballistic-missiles

[3] Defense Intelligence Agency, *2022 Challenges to Security in Space,* (Apr. 12, 2022), *available at* https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military_Power_Publications/Challenges_Security_Space_2022.pdf

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launched a ballistic missile with a potential 2,000-kilometer range.[4] Working with the PRC provides Iran with technical expertise and is enabling the acceleration of their development and procurement of ICBM capabilities.

The deepening PRC role in Iranian weapons development and procurement is further propelling Iranian ICBM capabilities forward, directly threatening the U.S. homeland. This comes at a time when the Government Accountability Office reports the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) has failed to upgrade critical components of our homeland missile defense architecture. The current state of U.S. homeland missile defense is inadequate and leaves the U.S. vulnerable to rogue missile threats.[5] In light of these continually increasing capabilities, further enhanced by ongoing illicit technology transfers among our adversaries, it is imperative that the U.S. take immediate steps to counter the illegal proliferation of this technology and strengthen our existing homeland missile defense architecture by constructing a third missile defense interceptor site at Fort Drum, New York.

Given the recent expansion of PRC assistance to Iranian weapons development and procurement, and the growing threat from Iran's ballistic missile capabilities, we are requesting a response outlining the following information:

1. A list of all known or assessed technology transfers and technical assistance from the PRC to Iran, actively concluded or planned, that further Iran's nuclear weapons program, ICBM capabilities, space launch, and offensive missile programs;
2. The Department's assessment of the impact of these technology transfers on the ability of the Iranian regime to accelerate pursuit of ICBM capabilities; and,
3. The ability of the current U.S. homeland missile defense architecture to counter a near-term Iranian ICBM threat.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, we look forward to your response prior to July 21, 2023.

Sincerely,

Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

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[4] Elwely Elwelly, *Iran says it has successfully test-launched ballistic missile,* Reuters (May 25, 2023), *available at* https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-unveils-2000-km-ballistic-missile-irna-2023-05-25/

[5] Government Accountability Office, *Missile Defense Annual Goals Unmet for Deliveries and Testing* (May 2023) (GAO/23-106011), *available at* https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-106011.pdf

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