Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 19, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are heartened by recent reports indicating that the U.S. is now directly engaged in international negotiations aimed at peacefully resolving concerns over Iran's nuclear program. In connection with those discussions, we believe it would be important and constructive for you to clarify a statement you made earlier this year which suggested that the U.S. might be considering the option of a pre-emptive nuclear attack against Iran.

As you will recall, on April 18, 2006, you were asked "Sir, when you talk about Iran and you talk about how you have diplomatic efforts, you also say all options are on the table. Does that include the possibility of a nuclear strike?" Your response to this question was "All options are on the table."

While we share your concern about Iran's irresponsible violations of its commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and safeguards agreement which Iran signed with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), we do not believe that the U.S. should threaten to use nuclear weapons to resolve this crisis. We would also note that as the U.S. seeks to ensure strict Iranian compliance with its obligations under the NPT, we should keep in mind the fact that in connection with the 1995 NPT review conference, the United States issued a statement reaffirming earlier U.N. Security Council pledges that the U.S. "will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons except in the case of an invasion or any other attack on the United States, its territories, its armed forces or other troops, its allies, or on a State towards which it has a security commitment, carried out or sustained by such a non-nuclear-weapon State in association or alliance with a nuclear-weapon State." This position was reaffirmed on February 22, 2002 by State Department spokesman Richard Boucher when he said "The formulation I have is the formulation we have been using since 1995, and that is that the United States reaffirms that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon state parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, except in the case of an invasion or any other attack on the United States, its territories, its armed forces or other troops, its allies, or on a state toward which it has a security commitment carried out, or sustained by such a non-nuclear weapon state in association or alliance with a nuclear weapon state." These negative security assurances have been a longstanding U.S. policy, as Mr. Boucher emphasized by saying "Everything I said has been said consistently for 20 or 30 years, and that remains the situation."

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Global security will be greatly threatened if Iran develops nuclear weapons. However, a U.S. pre-emptive nuclear strike on Iran would likely have catastrophic consequences that would undermine U.S. security objectives – both in the Middle East and around the world. We therefore urge you to make it clear that the U.S. is not actively considering first use of nuclear weapons against Iran in response to its efforts to obtain uranium enrichment capabilities. We understand that in a crisis, many options – including military options – must be carefully considered. But we believe there is still time for diplomacy, including a continuation of the dialogue that recently began over the proposal set forth by the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany. We urge you to focus your Administration's efforts on seeking a peaceful resolution of this crisis.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

Howard L. Berman

John Conyers, Jr.

Pete Stark

Tammy Baldwin

James P. McGovern

Betty McCollum

Diane E. Watson

Rush D. Holt

Lynn C. Woolsey

Jim McDermott

Lloyd Doggett

Maurice D. Hinchey

Sam Farr

Janice D. Schakowsky

Cc: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld