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June 23, 2009

The Honorable John F. Kerry
218 Russell Building
Second Floor
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1401

Re: United States-United Arab Emirates Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

Dear Senator Kerry and Senator Lugar:

United Against a Nuclear Iran (UANI) is writing to urge Congress to require our government to secure an advanced commitment from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to cooperate in implementing any new trade sanctions that the U.S. and its allies might apply against Iran if planned U.S. nuclear negotiations with Tehran do not succeed. UANI believes that the U.S. government should secure the UAE's commitment to such cooperation as part of the U.S.-UAE nuclear cooperation agreement.

As you know, President Barack Obama has committed to a series of negotiations with the government in Tehran to determine if Iran will constrain its dangerous nuclear weapons material production activities as required by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1696 and 1737. We hope these talks succeed, but if they do not, the Secretary of State has warned that it may be necessary to impose additional trade sanctions against Iran.

Certainly, if the U.S. attempts to impose such sanctions, their effectiveness will depend on the cooperation of friendly and cooperative partners in the region like the UAE. Most of Iran's critical imports either go through or by the port of Dubai. Given regional dynamics, securing the UAE's commitment to assist in implementing such sanctions is not a given. The UAE has continued trade with Iran as a way to improve relations between the two countries. According to press reports, the UAE also failed to participate in the comprehensive program of export sanctions established by the U.S. and the EU.

The U.S. should work with the UAE government to ensure vigorous sanctions on ongoing trade with Iran. Congress is in a position to make this happen. On May 21, 2009, President Barack Obama sent an agreement for U.S. nuclear cooperation with the UAE to Capitol Hill. Congress may amend this agreement by legislation. Otherwise, it will come into force after 90 days of continuous session. Prior to this nuclear agreement's finalization, Congress should seek to secure a clear commitment from the UAE to cooperate in implementing additional new economic sanctions against Iran with or without a new United Nations Security Council resolution.

Recent events have proved the efficacy of this approach. Two years ago, evidence emerged that "at least eleven individuals and companies operating in the United Arab Emirates" were "smuggling electronic components and devices sometimes through Iran to build explosive devices used to ambush American soldiers

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in Iraq and Afghanistan."[1] When the United States presented the UAE with this evidence and proposed to pass more restrictive legislation that would have made the process of acquiring export licenses more difficult for Emirati companies, Abu Dhabi voluntarily enacted a new trade law that allowed Abu Dhabi to "ban or restrict shipments for national security or foreign policy reasons."[2] The Emirati legislation was recognized as part of a U.S.-led "campaign to contain Iran amid tensions over its alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons."

By securing such a commitment now from the UAE, the U.S. will strengthen its negotiating hand with Iran. On the other hand, without a credible threat to impose additional sanctions with the UAE against Iran's continued noncompliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1696, states in the region might conclude that the costs of hedging their security bets by developing nuclear weapons options of their own would be minimal and thereby increase the prospects of nuclear proliferation.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Mark Wallace
President and CEO
United Against Nuclear Iran
mwallace@unitedagainstnucleariran.com

[1] Associated Press, "US Pressures UAE to approve tough new trade limits, cites Iran shipments," August 31, 2007.
[2] Associated Press, "UAE Sets Trade Limits," August 31, 2007.

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cc: The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
The Honorable Russell D. Feingold
The Honorable Barbara Boxer
The Honorable Robert Menendez
The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr.
The Honorable Jim Webb
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
The Honorable Edward E. Kaufman
The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand
The Honorable Bob Corker
The Honorable Johnny Isakson
The Honorable James E. Risch
The Honorable Jim DeMint
The Honorable John Barrasso
The Honorable Roger F. Wicker