

War with Iran is the Only Alternative to An Iran P5+1 Nuclear Deal, US Congressman

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Washington, DC – Congress must “come to grips” with the reality that failing to seal an Iran nuclear deal would mean war, according to the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

As Secretary of State John Kerry announced that negotiations with Iran would continue past today’s deadline, Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY) put the prospect of diplomatic failure into stark context at a hearing in the House of Representatives.

“The alternative to a deal would surely mean some kind of military strikes on Iran’s nuclear plant,” said Engel, who has given the Obama administration room to negotiate but has also been skeptical of the negotiations and a strong supporter of Israel.



Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY) questions Secretary of State John Kerry during a hearing about the tentative deal for Iran to halt their nuclear weapons program and end sanctions against Iran on December 10, 2013. John Shinkle/POLITICO

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“We have to look at the choices that we have, and the way I see it right now, we have a choice to accept the deal that the administration negotiates, or we don’t,” Engel observed. “And if we don’t, then we need to look at the alternatives.”

His comments suggested that, despite some misgivings about the negotiations, some of the more hawkish Members of Congress acknowledge the imperative of reaching a deal as a matter of war and peace.

“It’s not just accepting the deal or nothing,” Engel said at the hearing. “There are things we’re going to have to come to grips with, and I believe one of them is bombing the nuclear reactor.”

Some in Congress have bristled at the notion that opposing a deal is the equivalent of pushing for war, but critics of the talks have largely avoided discussing what alternatives would look like if not military action. The public debate has thus regularly focused on areas

of perceived weakness in the envisioned agreement, raising concerns that Congress may avoid debating the far greater costs of the alternatives.

“If we are able to sustain the sanctions regime and have a bombing of their plant that sets them back two years or three years, is that really a viable alternative?” Engel asked panelists at the hearing.

The willingness of the committee’s ranking Democrat to discuss the negotiations in such stark terms contrasted with the overall tone of the hearing which, like past hearings in the House and Senate on the Iran talks, featured witnesses that were almost exclusively opposed to a deal.

Three of the panelists served under the Bush Administration when the decision was made to invade Iraq and one–Stephen Rademaker–implored lawmakers to recognize that “any deal is a bad deal.”

Congress will now have 60 days to review a deal if an agreement is secured, and to decide whether to approve it or reject it. A rejection would almost certainly nullify the deal-freeing Iran from nuclear constraints under the agreement and likely unraveling international enforcement of the U.S.-led sanctions regime.

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