



Background Briefing on P5+1 Talks

Special Briefing
Senior Administration Official
Vienna, Austria
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MODERATOR: Good morning. Welcome to the backgrounder today. Thank you for hustling over here. For those of you who I haven't met, if there are any of you still, I'm [name and title withheld]. I'll be calling the questions today. In a moment I'll turn it over to [Senior Administration Official]. From now on, everything in this backgrounder is on background, Senior Administration Officials, please no names, no titles. And I'd really appreciate people paying attention to that.

[Senior Administration Official] will give a few brief opening remarks and then we'll open it up for questions. And with that, we'll turn it over to our Senior Administration Official.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good morning, everyone. You have just heard Lady Ashton and Foreign Minister Zarif say a few words at the end of this first round of comprehensive negotiations that are meant to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon and that the international community has confidence that Iran has only a peaceful nuclear program.

I believe we have had constructive and useful discussions over the past few days, and we all do feel we have made some progress. Although we cannot predict everything ahead and we all know there will be many twists and turns, we do now have a path forward for how these negotiation will proceed.

In our sessions here in Vienna, we discussed issues of both process and substance. As Lady Ashton and Foreign Minister Zarif have said, we will meet back here in Vienna starting on March 17th to continue these discussions at the political director level. In between now and then, experts from the United States, the European Union, China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom, and Iran will work very closely together to make progress on key substantive issues.

We had constructive conversations about all of the issues that will have to be addressed as part of the comprehensive agreement. Those discussions have created the framework and agenda for the negotiations going forward. We are trying to do this in as open and transparent a manner as possible, but for any negotiation to succeed it is critical to leave space for everyone's points of view to be properly heard and taken into account. So you won't see a formal, written-down framework or agenda, but we all know what it is and everything is referred to in some way in the Joint Plan of Action.

And as we've always said, all of the issues of concern to the international community regarding Iran's nuclear program are on the table, and all of our concerns must be met in order to get a comprehensive agreement. As the JPOA says, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

These conversations also gave us additional insight into Iran's perspective, and they, of course, heard our perspective as well. We have begun to see some areas of agreement as well as areas in which we will have to work through very difficult issues. It won't surprise any of you to know that I'm not going to outline those specific areas here because we're not going to negotiate this agreement in public. But suffice to say we know the work that lies ahead and we are ready to do it.

As I said the other night, this will be a complicated, difficult, and lengthy process. We will take the time required to do it right, but we aim to get it done within the six-month context. And we will continue to work in a deliberate and concentrated manner to see if we can get that job done, because we want to ensure that the first step is not the only step and is not the last step.

You know when we first came together in Geneva in mid-October before the P5+1 talks with the European Union and with the new Iranian negotiating team, I said I hoped we could translate the positive tone we had seen during our meetings at the UN General Assembly, what really represented a new diplomatic opening, into specific and concrete ideas about how to move the process forward. We had only heard words at that point, which were encouraging but clearly not enough. Now we have seen some actions. So while we have much, much more work to do, it is worth remembering we have come some distance in a relatively short period of time, and to carry that notion of progress forward with us as we embark on this next, much more difficult task.

So it's time for all of us to go to work. With that, I'm happy to take your questions.

MODERATOR: Thank you. When I call on you, if you could – I know we know most of you, but please identify yourself and your outlet, that would be great. Thank you. Go ahead, Steve, kick us off.

QUESTION: I'm Steve Erlanger from the *New York Times*. Understanding what you said about specifics, but could you talk more about the tone and tenor of the discussions, particularly as they moved from the Zarif-Ashton level to the Helga Schmid-Araqchi level? Were there – was there speechifying? Did you happen to hear anything about any ideology? Was it really very workmanlike and decent? Just could you talk some more about --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Sure.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It was very workmanlike. We are long past speeches of ideology. That really does not occur. It was very conversational, it was back and forth. It was not one long presentation followed by another long presentation. It was engaged and it was a dialogue. It was substantive. It covered all of the issues that need to be put on the table to establish the way forward in a comprehensive agreement. And I would say that those words are descriptive of everyone at the table.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Go ahead, Scott.

QUESTION: Hi, Scott Peterson for the *Christian Science Monitor*. What surprised you the most or that you were least expecting that actually took place at the table, either on Iranian reactions or demands, or also in your own – just the way that the dynamic worked? What was the thing that surprised you most over the last couple of days?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I try to and our team tries to enter these negotiations in a very focused, clear-minded – workmanlike is a good word – workmanlike way, and to be prepared, have done our homework. That is true of all of the P5+1 plus the European Union that we do an enormous amount of preparation. We try to come not with specific expectations other than to take another step forward in reaching our objective to ensure that the international community's confidence is increased that Iran does not have military dimensions to its program, is not seeking and will not obtain a nuclear weapon.

So I don't think surprise or non-surprise is really the element here. What I will say is that I think that all of us were glad that it was a workmanlike atmosphere, that there were not polemics, that there was seriousness of purpose by everybody at the table, and that we got into quite detailed substantive discussions on very difficult issues. So I don't think surprise is quite the right word; but in the area in which we were at least satisfied, if not more than satisfied, it was the seriousness, the workmanlike approach, the depth and granularity of discussion.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Lou, in the back.

QUESTION: Thanks. Louis Charbonneau of Reuters. The Iranians have been saying in some of their public comments that ballistic missile technology is an issue that they made clear was not up for discussion, suggesting that somehow the United States and the other members of the P5+1 caved in. Is this the case or is this kind of – something that they're trying to make for their home audience? And also, if you could explain – Ms. Ashton said that the timetable agreed was for four months and you're still speaking about six months. I mean, is there an attempt to accelerate the process?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Let me do the last part first. Six months I meant from the beginning of the JPOA. But indeed, what we did is set out specific dates that we will meet for the next four months, and we are, in fact, trying to concentrate our energy. The reason we didn't set out the last month of the remaining five months of the six months is because we don't know quite yet the intensity with which that last month – what will be required. And my guess is it will require quite a bit because in any negotiation, the end of – if you're coming to a close, it's usually pretty intense. Those of you who were there in Geneva got to spend the entire night with us, so you know how these things go. We brought that one to a close at 5 in the morning. So we'll try to give you that treat once again if we can. (Laughter.) It was a treat for me in particular. So – and for Secretary Kerry.

But on the first issue, I'm not going to speak to any particular item. What I'm going to say is what you will hear me say repeatedly, which is every issue of concern to us has been discussed, will be discussed, is on the table, is referred to in some way in the Joint Plan of Action. The Joint Plan of Action lays out elements for a comprehensive agreement. It talks about all concerns needing to be addressed. It talks about the UN Security Council resolutions needing to be addressed. It talks about making sure that we know that, in fact, this is an entirely peaceful program.

So I think you will probably hear through the course of this from one party or another a specific statement, and I think you should take it for what it is: a point of view, a perspective that's being put on the table. But as I've said, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, and all perspectives are being heard.

MODERATOR: Yes, Laura.

QUESTION: It's Laura Rozen, Al-Monitor. One is: Could we get the dates so that some of us could plan on missing family vacations and stuff? And the other is: We've heard –

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I try to miss every one of those if I can. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: We've heard some expressions from the Iranian side of – it's difficult for them, some of the statements that U.S. officials have made, to (inaudible) back home, and alternatively, we see Death to America on holidays in Iran still, and posters of Obama (inaudible) expressing frustration from the Iranians. So how have you all discussed trying to lower the rhetoric, given that you both have to deal with the domestic political audience and critics?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: In terms of the date, I would refer you – dates, I would refer you to the European Union, which coordinates these talks. So I'm sure that I'd send you to Michael Mann in that regard or to Helga Schmid for dates. Secondly – and I hope they share them with you because I agree, we all need to try to plan as best we can. I will say dates are always subject to change, depending upon what the negotiation requires. So even if the EU shares the dates, I would take it as a guide, not as a given, in terms of your own planning.

You're quite right; everybody in this negotiation, all of the countries in this negotiation, have domestic audiences, have partners, have points of view, have perspectives, will say things that the other side won't like. That's going to happen. What we have agreed to try to do is to be thoughtful about the impact those statements will have on the negotiation, and to the extent we can – and we can't always because things need to be said sometimes – we will try to be thoughtful.

But I will say that I'm sure there will be things I will say, but members of the Administration testify to the Congress, give public television interviews, the President of the United States speaks on a regular basis, the Secretary of State speaks on a regular basis. And there are issues of ongoing concern, and they will remain.

MODERATOR: Great, thank you. We'll go over here. You, yes.

QUESTION: Yes. Claudia Rosett with NRO and Forbes (inaudible). (Inaudible) reports that (inaudible) persistent reports that Iranians have been present at North Korean nuclear tests. Could you tell us if you have taken this into account in the issues? And if North Korea conducts a nuclear test while you are going through these negotiations, are you prepared to assure us that Iran has no connection to it? Or if it does, what are you going to do about that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The United States is always concerned about reports of shared technology and proliferation of technology and of nuclear weapons technology. We follow all of those reports. We look into all of those reports. I'm not going to talk about the specifics of that particular matter here in this setting. We obviously are quite concerned about North Korea's nuclear program. Secretary Kerry, I'm sure you've all noted, was recently in Beijing. It will come as no surprise that this was a very critical agenda item, because in the North Korea context the Chinese have a special responsibility in the Six-Party Talks and in their relationship with North Korea. So this is an ongoing concern all on its own, and we will continue to pursue that on its own terms as well as look, as we always do, to any potential connections regarding proliferation.

MODERATOR: Barak Ravid

QUESTION: Barak Ravid. Prime Minister Netanyahu said the last few days a few times that any comprehensive deal between P5+1 and Iran must include zero enrichment, zero centrifuges, zero this, zero that. Do you think that this position is constructive in any way? (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I believe that --

QUESTION: It's yes or no. (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I believe that presidents and prime ministers of every country in the world have to speak to what they believe are the security requirements for their country. And I have respect for the statements made by duly elected, democratically elected presidents and prime ministers in the statements they make about what they need for the security of their country.

That doesn't mean where it's an international concern the United States will always agree, but it is important to consult, to listen to our allies and partners around the world. And as you will see in a Media Note that will come out shortly, if it hasn't already, that our parts of a group of our delegation will be leaving here and traveling to Israel and then on to Saudi Arabia for both bilateral and GCC consultations. This is part of the consultations that we do with partners and allies around the world. We will also be making phone calls to a variety of other partners around the world, which we do on a regular basis before and after each of these negotiations. And we'll also be making calls to members of Congress starting today to brief them, and we'll, of course, do appropriate briefings to members when our team is back in Washington.

MODERATOR: Michael Adler, go ahead.

QUESTION: The question is -- it almost reflects what was in that question -- as you negotiate the different items you're dealing with, how flexible are you on what might be considered red lines that everybody has in mind about centrifuges and different things? And in a final package, you'd be willing to give more than they expected in one area and less in another area in order to get a package which might not be acceptable to everyone but which could be sold as a package?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, Michael, I'm not going to negotiate --

QUESTION: Nobody said --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not going to negotiate this in public. What I'll say as a matter of principle is it's a negotiation, but of course, it has an objective. And the objective is to ensure that Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon and that the international community has confidence that they have an entirely peaceful nuclear program. So that is the standard for any agreement. That is the objective that must be met by an agreement. And experts will tell you there are perhaps more than one route to that end.

We will welcome all of the consultation we will get, the ones we will seek and the ones that will come to us whether we seek them or not, and many people will suggest one redline or another. But the objective is what matters here at the end of the day. Have we ensured, as the President of the United States has said and as he has committed to doing to ensure that Iran will not obtain a nuclear weapon, and that the international community has confidence that Iran's program is entirely peaceful. That is what we will measure with a comprehensive agreement.

MODERATOR: Yes. Behind Michael. This gentleman here.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) from Israeli Broadcasting. (Inaudible) Israel now. Generally, (inaudible) here (inaudible) answer until now the Israeli worries.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You'll have to ask Israeli Government officials. I don't want to speak for them.

MODERATOR: Right here. Yes.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) from (inaudible). There are a lot of mistrust between Iran and the West -- of some western countries, and Iran and some of its neighbors. Since let's say the (inaudible) agreement, do you have a feeling that some of trust has been built around maybe -- between P5+1 nations and Iran?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You make an important point. President Obama in his own remarks has said we have more than 30 years of mistrust between our countries. That is not repaired in a day, a week, a month, or even a few months. And that is what we have had since the UN General Assembly and this new administration in Tehran. We have a very long way to go.

So we are negotiating this agreement on the basis of verification, of concrete actions, of transparency. I think we have a long way to go to build what you're referring to as trust between nations. What I think is useful is that actions are taken, commitments are made and are kept. That's probably true of all of us.

And again, what we are focused here is on a very specific agenda for these negotiations. And it's the only agenda for these negotiations, and that is to ensure that Iran will not obtain a nuclear weapon and that the international community has assurance and confidence that Iran's program is entirely peaceful. And we will do that in concrete actions that can be verified.

MODERATOR: Yes, go ahead.

QUESTION: (Inaudible), BBC Arabic. Mr. Zarif and Mrs. Ashton, when they spoke, they refrained from using the phrase – that they have agreed – from saying that they have agreed on a clear agenda. Can you confirm to us that there is a clear and mutually agreed agenda, and whether anything that either the American or the Iranian side wanted to include but was rejected?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What they said is we have set a timetable of meetings initially over the next four months with a framework to continue our deliberations, and that is what I can say to you this morning. We have a framework for continuing our deliberations. We know all of the areas that need to be addressed. From our perspective, they are all covered in one way or another in the Joint Plan of Action. And now we're going to go to work.

MODERATOR: Thanks. Ali.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Or continue our work. We've already started the work. I shouldn't say, "go to work" – we've already started the work in some detail.

MODERATOR: Ali Arouzi.

QUESTION: Have you heard this morning whether Catherine Ashton may visit Iran in early March? If progress, by your standards, was made in these talks, could you visit yourself or another senior U.S. official visiting Iran in the future?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think that what we're focused on now is these negotiations and making progress in them.

QUESTION: And if progress was made, could you see that as a possibility?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I suppose all things are possible in life. We'll take this by a step at a time.

MODERATOR: Yes.

QUESTION: Jon Tirone with Bloomberg News. So defining enrichment to a scale and scope, Arak, ballistic missiles – those are three easy technical groups I imagine being formed. Can you give us an idea of how many groups, some level of specificity of what those discussions will be? For example, will there be additional resources and people that have to be brought into the process because of the number of issues to be discussed?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There is no doubt that we will call on a wide range of experts to address all of the issues that must be addressed to achieve a comprehensive agreement. We are building out our own U.S. team in that regard, and we have reached out throughout our government to resources that we did not use in the JPOA for detailed discussions. There's a lot of technical detail here because of the wide range of issues. My colleagues who are sitting with me at this table are fantastic and have reached into our government, and I think every government will be reaching into their governments, even to outside experts, to get ideas and to be as creative as possible so that we can meet the concerns that we have as the United States of America and the international community has about the nature of Iran's program.

QUESTION: First part of the question?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The first part of the question, I'm not going to go area-by-area. What I can say is that everything of concern to us is on the table and will be discussed, has been discussed, will continue to be discussed, and will be addressed by the end of this comprehensive agreement.

MODERATOR: Yes, go ahead. This gentleman right here.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Shimbun news agency. A question for next time negotiation: Do you think the negotiation will be tougher than this time, but – based on this time, because you've made a timetable? So what's the task for next time, next negotiation in Vienna? What's your expectation?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: My expectation is this entire process is going to be difficult because the issues are difficult. I've said that --

QUESTION: (Inaudible.) (Inaudible) more difficult than --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It is what it is. It's not more or less. It is what it is. It has been difficult from the first step; it will be difficult to the last step. And it will have ups and downs. There will be good days, and there will be days where I'm sure if you all are looking at the thermometer or you're looking at the chances it will succeed, there will be days, I'm sure, we'll think we'll never get here. But we had those days when we were negotiating the Joint Plan of Action.

There were moments when we thought, "We're never going to get to the end of this," and then moments when we felt, "Well, actually, we can see getting to an agreement." And at the end of the day, there was the technical expertise, the hard work, and the political will and courage to come to an agreement on a Joint Plan of Action. It will take all of that and more – and more – to come to a comprehensive agreement.

MODERATOR: Yes. This gentleman right back here.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) press agency. Just to follow-up: Could you say what we expect for next time, for the next round?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not going to say specifically. What I will tell you is that we have agreed on how we're going to proceed, what topics we're going to address. We have made those decisions and choices and we must because we need to prepare for these things and get ready and do the hard work in each of our governments as well as amongst and between the P5+1 and the European Union, and then Iran has its own deliberations to do, to get ready for a meeting. They, too, have an interagency process. And then we will all get down to work – continue our work.

MODERATOR: I think we can do a few more. I'm going to go right here to this gentleman, and then I'm going to go all the way to the back after.

QUESTION: (inaudible) While the talks have been ongoing, various European firms and concerns have rushed to get back in business with Iran. There has been reports that the U.S. warned Austrian Government specifically not to go too early on this. Are you worried that this rush to get back to business with Iran could hurt the talks?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: First of all, since you are from the Austrian press, I do want to thank Austria for being a terrific host. We have had – you have to have a good environment for talks. It helps. Good facilities, good food.

MODERATOR: Good wine.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good wine when you finally get to dinner at 10 or 11 o'clock at night, so – which has been the case for the last two nights. So it is – I want to thank Austria and Vienna in particular for the really good job they're doing, and as you know, the plan is for the talks to continue here in Vienna.

In terms of business, the JPOA puts on the table limited targeted sanctions relief; and within that limited targeted sanctions relief, business is possible. There are also ways that companies can do legal trade with Iran. There are areas that are not sanctioned. But the fundamental sanctions that the United States and the European Union has in place around oil and banking and financial sanctions does remain in place. And so we want companies to be mindful and thoughtful about what they're doing.

If the message to Iran and to the Iranian people is that when Iran reaches a comprehensive agreement, there is the potential for and would be the understanding that sanctions would be removed, and therefore Iran would see a more normal business environment so it's important to negotiate a comprehensive agreement, that's a useful message. Because our aim – sanctions are not an end in themselves. They are a means to an end. And we do not have an end in itself to keep sanctions on. We would like to see the sanctions lifted, but that can only happen in total through a comprehensive agreement.

MODERATOR: Yes. I promised you all the way in the back with the glasses.

QUESTION: Thank you. My name is Andre Tolson with the Russian news agency (inaudible). How do you expect (inaudible) cooperation among the P5+1 members (inaudible) the level of unity (inaudible)?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The level of unity remains what it always has been, which is extraordinary and very unified. It is not to say we don't have some national differences; of course we do. But we agree on how we're going to approach the negotiations. We agree on the substance of how we're going to approach the negotiations. Sometimes the differences are even useful in the negotiations themselves. And – but we are very transparent with each other and we are very unified in our purpose, because the purpose is so profound for each of our countries and for the international community.

And to repeat myself yet again, it is to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon and that the international community has confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's program. Because we all are focused on the same objective, we stay very unified.

MODERATOR: Great, thanks. Yes, is that Laurence ?

QUESTION: Yes.

MODERATOR: Shout, Laurence, so we can hear you.

QUESTION: (Inaudible), Lawrence Norman. Is the plan to have a monthly meeting every month for the next four months? And is (inaudible) the expert talks before each of those meetings? And in terms of the issues, you said you have the topics laid out. Is there going to be kind of, okay, we're going to focus on this issue, and then this issue and then this one, or are you going to try and all do them at the same time together?

And one slightly broader question: The Iranians are still saying missiles, Arak, Fordow are redlines for us. Do you think that's just rhetoric?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So again, I would send you to the European Union for the pace and the timetable of these negotiations. We will have regular meetings of the political directors. We will have – I'm sure our experts will be living a lot of their time in Europe. They don't mind, I think. It's not bad usually. But these are highly technical talks, as you all know. And not that I don't know a lot about this and all of the rest of the folks like me don't know a lot about this now – we do, but we are not experts, we are not nuclear physicists and scientists, and there's – nor are we market sanctions experts.

So there's a lot of technical work that needs to go on. So there will be a lot of expert conversation among the P5+1 and the European Union and then with Iran, and then there will be regular meetings at the Ashton, Zarif, Araqchi and Schmid, and political director levels throughout this process.

And as I said in answer to Laura's question, that you should see any timetable the European Union gives you as a guide, not a given, because we have to get started, and we may dig into the next level of detail and we may find that we need to do this in a different fashion than we have in mind. And so I'm not going to answer that part of your question, which is, "Are we doing it all together, are we doing it piece by piece?" We have a way forward we all have agreed to. We will proceed that way until we find out it works or it doesn't, and then we will make adjustments as needed to get the job done.

MODERATOR: We can do – oh, sorry.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As I said before, we will all say things during this process, and what matters is what we do in the end, and what we agree to at the negotiating table to reach the objective that I've stated several times now.

MODERATOR: Yes, right here in the front.

QUESTION: China's – I'm (inaudible) from China Central TV. China's vice foreign minister has suggested to continue the talks with more mutual respect and equal footing. How do you think of China's suggestion and China's effort in the talks?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We always appreciate our Chinese colleagues' encouragement for all of us to be determined, to be thoughtful, to have consideration for each other's perspectives, and for working hard to reach the objectives. Our Chinese colleagues – and we have some new Chinese colleagues in this negotiation – always bring expertise and value to our discussions.

MODERATOR: Indira, your hand shot up very quickly.

QUESTION: Thanks, Indira Lakshmanan from Bloomberg News. A couple quick questions. In the JPOA, you were saying that everything is written down, that although the framework is not written down, everyone knows what's in it, everything's mentioned in the JPOA. So two things about that: How do you deal with the critiques that definitely will be coming from some of your critics in Washington about this isn't written down, it's not transparent, you don't know what's in it? And secondly, although PMD I think is not specifically mentioned in the JPOA, did the past questions – does that – is that an implicit reference to PMD?

And the second question is: On the sanctions, have you seen any evidence of any deals happening yet where companies are taking advantage of the limited specific sanctions relief? Do you know of any deals? Or is Iran not actually getting any benefit at all yet? Will they maybe not get the \$7 billion potential benefits if it all has to be done within six months?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So what I said was that everything we believe needs to be discussed is referred to in one way or another in the JPOA. And I have said in the past that the statement in the JPOA about past and present issues is IAEA-speak for possible military dimensions. That's something I've said in the past. So I think one has to read the JPOA very carefully; but indeed, it says early – I think in the first paragraph – that all concerns to be addressed or resolved – I forget the exact issue, so – the exact wording. So I think we believe that the JPOA, in one way or another, covers all of the issues, creates space for all of the issues that need to be addressed from our perspective.

As for your second part of the question, I know that there have been lots of conversations that have been going on regarding arrangements under the limited and targeted sanctions that people are seeking to take advantage of them in appropriate ways. Part of that \$7 billion, as you know, is repatriated funds. All of that is getting worked through. It may be too early to evaluate how meaningful that will be for the Iranian people, but all of the pieces have been put in place, all of the commitments have been kept to indeed do what all sides have committed to doing in the JPOA, at least to date. So we will see.

MODERATOR: Okay. We're going to do just, I think, two more quick ones. Right here and then in the back.

QUESTION: Thank you. (Inaudible) Broadcasting News Agency. The other night, I was talking to Minister Zarif. He said the (inaudible) missile program (inaudible) military side are (inaudible). I'm not going to ask whether you talked about these issues in the negotiations or not, but I would like to know whether you consider these issues as redlines or not, (inaudible) redlines or not?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What I'm going to say today – and you're going to get tired of hearing me say it – (laughter) – is that the measurement of this comprehensive agreement is whether we believe that President Obama's commitment to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon, and that the international community's concerns about the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's program are met. That is what we are seeking to achieve. That is the measure of this comprehensive agreement.

MODERATOR: And a last question from the back.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Yes.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Public Broadcaster. If you say the road to a comprehensive solution is, let's say, a hundred miles long, even the starting line – (laughter) – how far did we get the last few days? One mile, five miles?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: (Laughter.) I think I can't answer that question, only because I think that I know we've used that in the past to talk about before Minister Zarif led these negotiations – the previous negotiating team – we talked about the gap between how many kilometers we needed to travel. I think that's not appropriate in this circumstance because we are at the beginning of a very complex and difficult process. There may be days we move ahead by miles or kilometers, and days we take a few steps back. And what will be really the only thing that's meaningful is if we get to the end of this.

This is going to be both a marathon and a sprint all at the same time, because we are trying to do something quite complex in a relatively short period of time. And the intensity of it is really more like a marathon. So a long distance to cover in a sprint period of time.

MODERATOR: Thank you all. For those of you – just to remind you of the ground rules, this was all on background as a senior U.S. Administration official. Really appreciate all those good questions and being here today. I am sure we will see you all back here on March 17th, and you always know how to get in touch with me with any problems. Thanks, guys.