

REPS. TAUSCHER, HARMAN ROYCE AND CONNOLLY INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TYING U.S. MILITARY AID TO PAKISTAN TO ACCESS TO ROGUE SCIENTIST AND NUCLEAR PROLIFERATOR A.Q. KHAN

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“A.Q. Kahn is one of the most dangerous men in the world because he has done more to increase the threat of nuclear terror than anyone in history. Now that a Pakistani court has all but freed him from house arrest, it is just common sense that our government, as well as the Pakistani government, does everything in its power to fully assess the damage he has caused to the international arms control regime,” Rep. Ellen Tauscher said on Thursday.

Rep. Jane Harman issued the following statement:

“One of the most important challenges confronting the intelligence community is learning the nature of and damage done by the worldwide network in nuclear centrifuge technology, bomb components and training run for almost two decades by A. Q. Khan - the revered "father" of his country's nuclear program. Considered a pariah abroad but a hero at home, that task got a lot tougher when Pakistan's High Court ordered Khan released from house arrest last month.

At the recent Wehrkunde Security Conference in Munich, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi astonished delegates, telling us that his government had not decided whether to challenge the court decision but that Pakistan would continue to monitor Khan.

For those who stay awake at night worrying about Iran's increasing mastery of centrifuge technology and the ability of terror groups to access nuclear components, Pakistan's action is distressing.

When Khan "confessed" in 2004 to his illegal nuclear dealings, he was promptly placed under "house arrest" and pardoned by then President Pervez Musharraf. The U.S. government was denied access to him, and was never able to question him about what he did and what else he knew.

Today, we introduce bi-partisan legislation to condition future military aid to Pakistan on two things: that the Pakistani Government make A.Q. Khan available for questioning and that it monitor Khan's activities.

This much we do know. As a university student in Europe in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Khan earned degrees in metallurgical engineering from institutions in Holland and Belgium. In 1972, he began working for the Dutch partner of a uranium enrichment consortium and almost immediately raised eyebrows for repeated visits to a facility he was not cleared to see and for inquiries made about technical data unrelated to his own assignments.

Dutch intelligence quietly began to monitor him. In 1974, following India's first nuclear test, Khan offered his expertise to Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Later that year, Khan's company assigned him to work on Dutch translations of advanced, German-designed centrifuges - data to which he had unsupervised access for 16 days.

By 1975, the damage appears to have been done. Pakistan began to purchase components for its domestic uranium enrichment program from European suppliers, and Khan was transferred away from enrichment work due to concern about his activities.

In December, he abruptly returned to Pakistan with blueprints for centrifuges and other components and detailed lists of suppliers.

Convicted in absentia by the Dutch government for nuclear espionage, beginning in the mid-1980s, Khan is widely believed to have provided nuclear weapons technology to Iran, North Korea, Libya and possibly Syria and Iraq. His network involved front companies and operatives in Dubai, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland and Turkey. Though much of the network was taken down following his confession, there is no conclusive evidence that it was destroyed.

Khan is again a loose nuke scientist with proven ability to sell the worst weapons to the worst people. Hopefully, appropriate Pakistani officials worry as we do that their civilians could become nuclear targets - as could NATO soldiers in neighboring Afghanistan or civilians in any number of Western countries.

Our bill provides a path for the Zardari government to do the right thing – to allow the US to evaluate the full extent of A. Q. Khan's proliferation activities in order to halt any ongoing or future harm.”

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