Mr. President, I rise in

support of the Iran Missile Proliferation

Sanctions Act of 1997.

Last week, our nation’s intelligence

apparatus was surprised by the Indian

government’s decision to test a hydrogen

bomb. Pakistan may follow suit

with a retaliatory test. The fact that

last week’s test caught our intelligence

community by surprise raises serious

questions about our ability to monitor

such developments. However, while the

prospect of a nuclear arms race on the

Asian subcontinent could threaten our

long-term security interests, the

United States enjoys productive relations

with the two regional adversaries.

Iran, however, is neither a democracy

nor a friend. While the new President,

Mohammed Khatemi, is seen by some

as a ‘‘moderate,’’ his government continues

a twenty year tradition of bitter

hostility towards the United States.

Iran remains opposed to the peace

process, its role in the bombing of the

Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996

is still not known, and it is still vigorously

pursuing efforts to acquire weapons

of mass destruction, including a

nuclear capability. We must not be

caught off guard with Iran as we have

been with India and Pakistan.

When this measure was introduced

last fall, I had hoped that events would

prove it unnecessary. I furthermore remained

optimistic that the meetings of

the Vice President with then Russian

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin

would have convinced Russia of the seriousness

of the issue of Iran’s efforts

to develop weapons of mass destruction.

I had hoped the Administration

would have done a better job of convincing

the Russians of the seriousness

of this matter. I had hoped that the

Russian government would have realized

that whatever financial benefits

they get from such help to Iran are far

outweighed by the loss of investment

from the United States. Even more importantly,

I had hoped that Russia

would realize that such assistance to

Iran does not contribute to political

stability in such a turbulent part of

the world. Unfortunately, none of these

developments have come to pass.

I was disturbed to learn that Iranian

nuclear officials just visited Moscow to

view a demonstration of gas centrifuge

technology—which if successfully mastered

will provide Iran the easiest type

of material to use in a nuclear weapon.

If such a sale occurs it would be a gross

violation of a promise made by President

Yeltsin to the President in May

1995 when the Russians agreed not to

sell centrifuges to Iran. This follows

the sale of a radioactive gas called tritium

which can be used to increase the

size of nuclear warheads and that a second

sale is being discussed.

In addition to this development, I

was disturbed to learn how close Iran

came to obtaining some 22 tons of missile-

grade stainless steel from Russia

as reported in the April 25th edition of

the New York Times. While I do not believe

Russia supports the further development

of weapons of mass destruction,

I am concerned about the Yeltsin

government’s ability to stem the proliferation

of dangerous weapons technology

and equipment. When this shipment

of steel can be halted by customs

officers in Azerbaijan but not in Russia,

we are entitled to ask serious questions

about Russia’s ability to cooperate

in limiting the global spread of

weapons components.

Mr. President, I understand that Iran

has begun a program to build a missile

called the Shahab 3 which has an 800

mile range. This range is double the capacity

of a SCUD missile and is long

enough to reach Israel and Saudi Arabia.

This type of missile would give

Iran more power with which to threaten

the West’s strategic interests in the

Middle East only seven years after we

fought a war with Iraq—another state

that may still be trying to acquire

weapons of mass destruction. We cannot

allow Iran, just as President Bush

did not allow Iraq, to assert control

over the majority of the world’s oil

supply.

Mr. President, we should not view

this bill as an anti-Russian statement.

This bill does not detract from our support

for Russian democracy or Moscow’s

efforts to build a strong free market

economy. However, it does reflect

our concern over the actions of

many firms in Russia that have an interest

in trading with either rogue

states or nations that are inclined to

develop the ability to deploy weapons

of mass destruction. Under this legislation,

Russian firms will have to choose

with whom they want to do business—

the United States or an Iranian regime

that has yet to show the moderation

promised by the election of President

Khatemi. Since persuasion and shared

intelligence with Russia may not be

sufficient to stop Iran from acquiring

dangerous weaponry, this bill has become

regrettable but necessary. I urge

my colleagues to support it today before

this menacing military threat

from Iran grows even larger tomorrow.

Thank you and I yield the floor.