U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry asked Congress Tuesday to give nuclear talks with Iran a chance to succeed by refraining from threatening new sanctions against the Middle Eastern country for the duration of the six months of negotiations.

“I don’t want to give the Iranians a public excuse to flout the agreement,” Kerry said in testimony to the House Foreign Affairs committee on the negotiations to assure that Teheran does not acquire a nuclear weapon.

The United States has an obligation to give the negotiations an “opportunity to succeed” and could threaten the unity of the group of leading nations negotiating with Iran if it goes off on its own tangent, taking unilateral steps outside the scope of the negotiations, Kerry said.

In late November Iran agreed to submit its nuclear program to negotiations with the P5+1 group – including Germany and the five members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States. The negotiations are scheduled to last six months.

Reports from Washington last week said that members of the U.S. Senate had been preparing legislation to strengthen sanctions against Iran if the six months of talks failed to achieve the goal of prohibiting Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.
Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif said in an interview with Time Magazine that the whole deal “is dead” if the U.S. Congress takes action at this point to threaten additional sanctions if the talks should end in failure.

"We do not like to negotiate under duress," Zarif said. "I know the domestic complications and various issues inside the United States, but for me that is no justification."

The P5+1 group agreed to a slight reduction in the sanctions against Iran for the period of the negotiations. The sanctions were imposed on Iran for its failure to abide by a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions since 2006 requiring Iran to halt the advance of its program to enrich uranium.