

Sarkozy: "It is unacceptable for Iran at any point to have a nuclear weapon", China to Iran Heed

Contributed by Compiled CRNews
Thursday, 08 November 2007

Bush and Sarkozy agreed on Wednesday that it is unacceptable for Iran to have nuclear weapons, and China on Thursday warned Iran to heed international warnings.

Bush, Sarkozy Oppose Nuclear-Armed Iran

By DEB RIECHMANN
The Associated Press
Wednesday, November 7, 2007; 8:15 PM

MOUNT VERNON, Va. -- President Bush and French President Nicolas Sarkozy stood shoulder-to-shoulder against a nuclear-armed Iran on Wednesday, demonstrating the cozier relationship between the two countries under France's new conservative leader.

Bush said agreement on Iran was a hallmark of their talks here at the Virginia home of George Washington. He said they expressed "the desire to work jointly to convince the Iranian regime to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions for the sake of peace."

"It is unacceptable for Iran at any point to have a nuclear weapon," said Sarkozy. He said, "I believe even in the need to toughen" United Nations sanctions now leveled against Tehran for continuing to enrich uranium.

Although some suspect Bush of leading a march toward war to stop Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, the U.S. president said the diplomatic course is his preferred choice.

"The idea of Iran having a nuclear weapon is dangerous, and therefore now is the time for us to work together to diplomatically solve this problem," Bush said.

Sarkozy emphasized that Iran should be allowed to have civilian nuclear power, which Tehran argues is the sole aim of its nuclear program. "Iran is entitled to the energy of the future which is nuclear energy," he said.

The second day of the Bush-Sarkozy meetings was unique.

Bush has welcomed foreign leaders to several locales to which he has personal ties _ his ranch in Texas, the White House and the presidential retreat at Camp David, Md. But hosting meetings at a neutral site _ especially one with such significance to the American story _ became additional evidence that the on-again, off-again U.S.-French relationship is reaching new heights with Sarkozy's ascension to office in Paris.

Even before Wednesday, Bush had bestowed a rare invitation on the energetic, pro-American French leader, bringing him during the summer to his parents' home on the Maine coast while Sarkozy and his family vacationed at a lake nearby.

Bush greeted Sarkozy on Mount Vernon's front lawn overlooking a sweeping view of the Potomac River and fall foliage. The French leader commented quietly to the president, who remarked, "It is beautiful." The two went inside the home for a tour of its rooms, renovated to appear as they did when the first U.S. president died there in 1799, and for their meeting in the large dining room that Washington added to the house to entertain the hundreds of guests who came to visit each year.

"It's safe to say that you've impressed a lot of people here on your journey," Bush said to his guest. "I have a partner in peace, somebody who has clear vision, basic values who is willing to take tough positions to achieve peace."

Appearing together with the main house behind them, both played down conflicts between the two countries, including on Iraq.

Sarkozy made only a passing reference to a big difference for him, on climate change. The French leader wants to make his country a vanguard of the movement against global warming, while Bush advocates mostly voluntary and technology-

based solutions to the problem.

And Bush said he was comfortable with France's effort to break a political deadlock over elections in Lebanon by engaging in direct talks with Syria. While the Bush administration has shunned Syria, a French diplomat recently traveled to Damascus to discuss the elections.

Lebanon's anti-Syrian parliament majority has accused Syria of blocking the presidential elections through its allies in Lebanon, a charge that Damascus denies.

Sarkozy came to Washington seeking to smooth over the sharp differences that arose between Paris and Washington over the U.S.-led war in Iraq. In an indication that he has shifted the dynamic after just six months in office, he was greeted earlier Wednesday by rousing standing ovations on Capitol Hill. In 1996, many U.S. lawmakers boycotted a similar appearance by his predecessor, Jacques Chirac, to protest France's nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Speaking through a translator to lawmakers gathered in the chamber of the House of Representatives for a Joint Meeting of Congress, Sarkozy highlighted France's long friendship with the United States and gratitude for American help in World War II.

Sarkozy also told lawmakers that such improved relations should lead to much closer cooperation on a host of international problems including Iran's nuclear program, Middle East peace and the stability of Lebanon.

He left to claps and cheers, pausing again to embrace lawmakers and even to autograph books passed to him by members of Congress.

Sarkozy also received an award Wednesday from the American Jewish Committee as a tireless promoter of democratic values. In a speech there, he denounced anti-Semitism and racism as "beasts" and said France would fight for Israel's security.

At the same time, he said "we have waited too long" for an agreement that establishes a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Sarkozy's whirlwind visit to Washington began with a black-tie dinner at the White House Tuesday night. On this visit to the United States, unlike the summer vacation, he came alone. He and his ex-wife, Cecilia, announced their divorce on Oct. 18, a first for a French head of state.

Associated Press Writer Desmond Butler contributed to this report.

Iran's Nuclear Program - TIMELINE
{youtube}a34pwgCMN5k{/youtube}

Iran's Nuclear Facility
{youtube}QOjqqr681j8{/youtube}

China Tells Iran to Heed International Pressure
By REUTERS
Published: November 8, 2007
Filed at 3:16 a.m. ET

Skip to next paragraph BEIJING (Reuters) - China on Thursday urged Iran to heed rising international worry about its nuclear ambitions, saying Beijing would seek to work with Europe and the United Nations to defuse the crisis but holding its tongue on any new sanctions.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Wednesday that his country's nuclear program was irreversible, showing continued defiance in the face of possible new U.N. sanctions.

He claimed that Iran now had 3,000 centrifuges to enrich uranium in its Natanz nuclear plant. Enriched uranium can fuel power plants but also, if refined further, act as material for bombs.

Iran says its intentions are peaceful, but Western powers say the Islamic state wants the ability to make nuclear weapons and they have warned Tehran to obey a U.N. call to halt enrichment.

As a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, China has the power to pass or veto any fresh sanctions on Tehran, but -- without outright excluding them -- Beijing has repeatedly said that negotiations can still solve the standoff.

Repeating that call for dialogue, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao showed growing impatience with Tehran, bluntly urging it to take a more conciliatory stance.

"We demand that Iran positively respond and pay attention to international concerns and calls and adopt a flexible attitude to solve the problem peacefully through dialogue and communication," Liu told a regular news conference when asked about Ahmadinejad's comments and possible sanctions.

Liu did not directly address the sanctions issue, merely saying that China was "willing to cooperate and communicate with the United Nations and the European Union to move in the right direction."

Iran's standoff with the West has left China in a bind as Beijing seeks to balance ties with both sides.

Iran is China's third biggest supplier of imported crude oil, behind Angola and Saudi Arabia, and China also has major investments in Iran. (Reporting by Ben Blanchard, writing by Chris Buckley)