

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, December 31, 2011 9:24 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Response to Ashton

See below. Iranians signaling they will seek renewed talks. Russians pushing for flexibility on our part and the EU's part.

----- Original Message -----

From: Sherman, Wendy R
Sent: Saturday, December 31, 2011 08:47 AM
To: Burns, William J; Sullivan, Jacob J; 'Denis_R._McDonough' [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: Response to Ashton

Fyi- see my note to EU colleagues. Have pasted here press reports:
 TEHRAN, Iran—Iran's ambassador to Germany says his country will propose a new round of talks with the six world powers, following the latest sanctions imposed by the West over Tehran's controversial nuclear program.

Ambassador Ali Reza Sheikh Attar says Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, is to send a letter soon to EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton to arrange a new round of negotiations.

Attar didn't say when the letter would be sent. His comments were reported by the semi-official Mehr news agency on Saturday.

The last round of negotiations between Iran and the six powers -- the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany -- in January in Istanbul, Turkey, ended in failure.

The West fears Iran's nuclear program is geared toward making atomic weapons, a charge Tehran denies.

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Union is open to meaningful talks with Tehran provided there are no preconditions on the Iranian side, an EU foreign policy spokesman said on Saturday. Earlier, Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency quoted a senior official as saying that Iran's nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili will write to the EU's foreign affairs chief to express Tehran's readiness for fresh nuclear talks with major powers. EU foreign policy spokesman, Michael Mann, said in an email to Reuters that Catherine Ashton wrote to Jalili in November and had not yet had a response. "We continue to pursue our twin-track approach and are open for meaningful discussions on confidence-building measures, without preconditions from the Iranian side," he said.

----- Original Message -----

From: Sherman, Wendy R
Sent: Saturday, December 31, 2011 08:09 AM
To: 'helga-maria.schmid' [REDACTED]; 'geoffrey.adams' [REDACTED];
 [REDACTED]; 'jacques.audibert' [REDACTED]; '2-D' [REDACTED]
Cc: Einhorn, Robert J; Grantham, Chris W
Subject: Response to Ashton

Colleagues,

I hope you are all getting ready to celebrate the New Year. I don't want to impose on your holidays, but I did want to send you a quick note as we're seeing the same press reporting you all are about Iran's apparent intent to finally respond to Lady Ashton's most recent letter. I also wanted to let you know that I was demarched yesterday afternoon by the Russian ambassador in DC, who was very interested in discouraging me from worrying about the "fine print" of what "serious" and "without preconditions" means. I, of course, referred back to the four corners of the Ashton letter we all agreed to in the Fall. I'd be curious if you all are hearing a similar message privately from our Russian colleagues (timed to match yesterday and today's Iranian press, I wonder?).

Perhaps it would be useful to have a conference call as the EU3/US group this coming week to compare notes? I'll be traveling to the Gulf for some consultations all week on many issues including the topics discussed among the likeminded countries in Rome, though we're not making this connection public in any way.

Happy new year to everyone. Talk to you all soon.

Warm regards,
Wendy