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## Britain Suggests New Incentives For Iran to End Nuclear Activities

**Russia, China Must Back  
'More Serious Measures'  
If Tehran Rejects Proposal**

By **CARLA ANNE ROBBINS**  
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WASHINGTON – With Russia opposed to any punishment for Iran, Britain has privately suggested that Tehran be offered a new package of incentives to abandon its nuclear ambitions, this time with the "explicit backing" of the U.S., China and Russia.

British Foreign Office political director John Sawers raised the idea of a "revised offer" to Tehran in a letter late last week to his American, French and German counterparts. The letter warned, "We are not going to bring the Russians and Chinese to accept significant sanctions [on Tehran] over the coming months, certainly not without further efforts to bring the Iranians around."

The letter said that before any new incentives were offered to Iran, the Russians and Chinese would have to agree to support "more serious measures" against Tehran should it reject the proposal and continue to enrich uranium, usable for nuclear fuel or potentially a nuclear weapon.

U.S. officials, however, warned yesterday that any discussion of incentives would be read by Tehran as a sign of weakness -- as well as by Moscow and Beijing -- making it even less likely that Iran's leaders would back down.

"The U.S. is not going down the road of being party to any incentive package to Iran or any effort to lessen pressure on Iran," Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns, one of the letter's recipients, said in an interview. Mr. Burns said the U.S. is "focusing only" on winning United Nations Security Council approval of a toughly worded statement, followed, if necessary, by a toughly worded resolution, demanding that Iran cease enrichment and improve its cooperation with nuclear inspectors.

Mr. Sawers's letter and Washington's reaction to it are the first hint of a disagreement between the U.S. and its closest ally over how to manage the Iran issue. It also reflects mounting frustration in London and Washington as they struggle to convince the Russians and Chinese of the need for even strong words against Tehran, let alone possible sanctions.

Diplomats who reviewed the letter said it didn't specify what incentives the U.S. and the others might endorse. But in past negotiations with Tehran, the Europeans have discussed possible security guarantees, access to civilian nuclear technology, expanded

trade and other cooperation in exchange for Iran ceasing uranium enrichment and opening its nuclear program to full international monitoring.

Mr. Sawers, Mr. Burns and top officials from France, Russia, China and Germany met yesterday in New York to discuss the Iran problem and how to move forward.

The British proposal in part mirrors the deal reached between the U.S. and the so-called European Union-3 -- Britain, France, Germany -- early last year. The U.S. agreed to support Europe's efforts to wean Iran of its nuclear ambitions in exchange for the Europeans' pledge to bring Iran before the Security Council if negotiations failed. The Europeans have kept their part of the bargain. But the Russians and Chinese so far have stymied Security Council action.

Mr. Sawers's letter is artfully worded. But its call for "explicit backing" from the U.S. would suggest that Washington would also be offering incentives to Iran. The Bush administration has so far resisted suggestions that it negotiate directly with Iran or offer rewards for giving up what Washington considers an illicit nuclear-weapons program.

Meanwhile, some U.S. officials have already begun talking in private about rallying a smaller "coalition of the willing" to impose sanctions on Tehran should the Security Council fail to act. But given Iran's oil wealth, U.S. officials say they aren't sure they could even persuade the full European Union to go along.

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