

Clinton trip over, Obama's message to North Korea: Nothing has changed

WASHINGTON: A day after former US President Bill Clinton's flight into North Korea to win the freedom of two American journalists, the Obama administration moved to send a stern message to the North Korean Government — nothing has changed.

While Obama celebrated the emotional reunion of the journalists, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, with their families, he said Clinton's "humanitarian mission" did not ease the demands of the US and many allies that North Korea alter its behaviour if it wants to escape its isolation.

Even as the administration took pains through its statements to assure allies abroad and voters at home that it would not be lured naively into yet another round of fruitless talks with North Korea, officials were busily calculating whether the psychology in the North had changed in a way that might create opportunities for resolving the long confrontation over its nuclear ambitions.

They were also evaluating preliminary impressions brought back by Clinton and the other Americans on the trip about North Korea's reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il, and any diplomatic signals Kim might have been trying to convey.

Administration officials said the White House had no plans to change its strategy for negotiating with North Korea.

"We have said to the North Koreans that there's a path to better relations," Obama said in an



Former U.S. Vice President and co-founder of Current TV Al Gore (L) addresses freed U.S. journalists Laura Ling and Edna Lee and their families after the two women arrived from North Korea in Burbank, California August 5, 2009.

interview with MSNBC. "We just want to make sure the Government of North Korea is operating within the basic rules of the international community that they know is expected of them."

Officials said the administration's restatement of its policy did not mean that it was blind to the opportunities that could flow out of the mission's happy outcome.

"How this impacts the psychology of the North Koreans, no one can tell," said a senior administration official.

The release of the journalists could break an impasse between the US and North Korea because, officials and outside experts said, there was virtually no prospect of reviving nuclear negotiations as long as the women appeared to be

headed to a North Korean prison camp.

At the same time, Kim is likely to expect some kind of payback for the pardons, political analysts said. How the US responds to Kim's expectations may determine whether Clinton's visit leads to a genuine opening between the countries.

"They're going to expect us to

take our foot off the pedal," said Victor Cha, who negotiated with North Korea in the Bush administration.

In a sign of the administration's sensitivity, a senior official said the US had briefed officials at the highest levels of the Chinese and Russian governments last weekend about the nature of Clinton's mission, to reassure them that the White House did not intend the visit to lead to bilateral talks with North Korea.

A US official noted that Clinton, in his talks with Kim, broached the issue of Japanese and South Koreans abducted by North Korea — politically emotive matters for those countries, in their dealings with the North.

American officials are also eagerly interviewing David Straub, a former director of the State Department's Korea desk, who accompanied Clinton. Straub speaks Korean and took part in back-channel communications with North Koreans when he was in the Government.

As the US deliberates over North Korea, there are reports that the North is suspected of spreading its technology. The Sydney Morning Herald in Australia reported last week that Myanmar was building a nuclear reactor and plutonium extraction plant, with help from North Korea. The acting State Department spokesman, Robert A Wood, said on Tuesday, "We're obviously looking into these types of reports."

As expected, military junta convicts Sui Kyi

This again proves failure of gentle UN diplomacy & underlines need for strong approach

WSN Bureau
RANGOON

As expected by the world fraternity, the autocratic rulers of Burma, today sentenced democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi 18 months under house arrest after holding her guilty for house break while in detention.

She was put on trial on 18th May for breaking the conditions of her house arrest after an American man swam to her home and refused to leave. Aung San Suu Kyi has already spent more than 13 of the past 19 years in detention.

The dictatorship is determined to silence all pro-democracy voices in the country in the run up to proposed elections next year, from which she would effectively be kept away and like in the past the elections too are likely to be rigged in favour of the entrenched military junta.

Aung San Suu Kyi's trial has provoked a global outcry. World leaders,



including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, US President Barack Obama and the UN Secretary General Ban-ki-Moon have all condemned the actions of the Burmese regime.

Various human rights groups, including the burmacampaign.org have called for a global arms embargo against Burma in protest of the latest judgement against the demure but strong willed democracy leader. "It is time the generals faced consequences for their actions, a global arms embargo should be imposed immediately" said Ann Roberts of the Burma Campaign UK.

The regime is directly defying the United Nations Security Council. 20 years of gentle UN diplomacy, including a visit earlier this month by the UN Secretary General himself, have failed to achieve any breakthrough.

LTTE demands inquiry into KP's arrest

COLOMBO: The LTTE has asked the international community to intervene and investigate how their new leader Selvarasa Pathmanathan was detained in Malaysia and flown to Sri Lanka for questioning and ensure his safety and security.

"If the Government of Malaysia (from where Pathmanathan was reportedly arrested) does not have any information on the matter, we demand an inquiry into the whole episode," a statement from the now defunct LTTE said.

"If Pathmanathan has been brought to Colombo, as claimed by the Government of Sri Lanka, we call upon the international com-



munity to facilitate access to legal representation," it said.

Selvarasa Pathmanathan, better known as KP, who controlled a vast network that supplied arms to LTTE for nearly three decades, was arrested in a South East Asian nation on Wednesday and brought

to Colombo the following day.

The statement said in the case of Pathmanathan's "abduction the rule of law has once again been violated by international actors with respect to Tamils."

"The proper procedure would have been to secure the extradition of Pathmanathan if he had broken any law, rather than taking action outside the law," the statement said.

KP's arrest and his quick deportation to Colombo stunned sections of the Lankan Tamil diaspora which were hoping to keep the militarily defeated Tamil Eelam movement alive through a "transnational administration" that he was putting together.

Sonia Sotomayor, first Hispanic SC judge, sworn in

WASHINGTON: When Sonia Sotomayor was sworn in Saturday to the US supreme court, she was able to claim two firsts: first Hispanic justice and first high court member to have her oath-taking made available to TV cameras.

Sotomayor, who won a groundbreaking Senate confirmation vote on Thursday over intense conservative opposition, was sworn in twice by Chief Justice John Roberts: One oath as prescribed by the constitution in a private ceremony at the high court, open only to members of Sotomayor's family, and a second oath, taken by judges, with the new justice's family and friends, and

reporters present.

Sotomayor is the first Democratic nominee in 15 years and the nation's 111th justice — and just the third woman in the supreme court's history.

"With this historic vote, the Senate has affirmed that Justice Sotomayor has the intellect, the temperament, the history, the integrity and the independence of mind to ably serve on our nation's highest court," Obama said following the 68-31 confirmation vote.

Opposing her nomination, Republicans decried Obama's call for "empathy" in justice and argued that she'd bring personal bias to the court. They criticized her remark that a "wise Latina" could be a better judge than a white male.

