

Colin Powell Acknowledges that Iran does not Possess Nuclear Weapons

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Powell Says New Sanctions on Iran Won't Stop Nuclear Program

Bloomberg. Former U.S. Secretary of State [Colin Powell](#) said new sanctions on Iran to persuade it to stop enriching uranium won't work because the Islamic republic is "determined to have a nuclear program."

"I don't see a set of sanctions coming along that would be so detrimental to the Iranians that they are going to stop that program," Powell said in an interview with Bloomberg special contributor [Judy Woodruff](#). "So ultimately, the solution has to be a negotiated one."

The U.S. is working with Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany to persuade Iran to give up enriching uranium, a process that can lead to an atomic bomb. While Iran says it is pursuing enrichment for non-military uses such as energy and medical research, its government hasn't taken up offers aimed at meeting that goal in other ways.

"The Iranians are determined to have a nuclear program," Powell said in the interview, which will be broadcast on Bloomberg Television's "Conversations with Judy Woodruff" this weekend. "Notice I did not say a nuclear weapon. But they are determined to have a nuclear program, notwithstanding the last six or seven years of efforts on our part to keep them from having a nuclear program."

The U.S. and its European allies are pushing for a fourth round of United Nations sanctions against Iran to force it to return to negotiations over its uranium-enrichment work.

Speaks With Obama

A [Republican](#) who endorsed Democrat [Barack Obama](#) in the 2008 election, Powell said the president speaks to him "on a fairly regular basis," usually by himself, and allows him to be candid. He said Obama has "pretty much kept in place" the terrorism policies of President [George W. Bush](#), under whom Powell served from 2001 to 2005.

Powell declined to take a position on legislation to overhaul the U.S. health-care system, which he said has become a "political distraction" for Obama.

"I would just like to see it dealt with," Powell said. "And if it is passed, it may not be the total solution. But at least it shows we can get something passed so we can improve in the future, add to it, take away from it in the future so that we, ultimately, get all of our citizens covered."

Regarding China, Powell said there would be a backlash from the Asian nation if the Obama administration declares that it is manipulating its currency, the yuan.

Relations between the U.S. and China have become strained over the past few months because of Obama's meeting with the [Dalai Lama](#) and American arms sales to Taiwan, Powell said.

China's Currency

"There would be a very negative response from China," he said. "They don't like being instructed as to how they should value their currency."

U.S. lawmakers this week introduced legislation to make it easier for the Obama administration to declare currency misalignments and take corrective action. The Treasury Department is set to decide next month whether to accuse China of manipulating the yuan.

The relationship between the U.S. and China is strong enough to find a way forward on the issues, and there is a shared interest in maintaining ties between the two countries, said Powell.

"The Chinese are feeling a little bit under pressure right now from the United States, and they are pushing back," the former secretary of State said. "And they are pushing back harder than they usually do."

Israeli 'Slap'

Israel's announcement that it would build 1,600 new apartments in east Jerusalem while U.S. Vice President [Joseph Biden](#) was visiting last week was a "bit of a slap in the face," yet the U.S. needs to be "careful not to overreact," said Powell, a retired Army general who previously served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"Maybe out of this we can start moving forward," Powell said. "Maybe the Israelis will be a little bit more careful about announcing settlement activity."

The recent elections in Iraq have shown that it might be harder to put together a coalition government in the country than had been anticipated, said Powell, who deemed Bush's decision to go to war there the "right call." The latest tally of votes shows Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shiite Muslim- dominated bloc with a slight lead in the parliamentary election.

Powell said he was disappointed during the 2008 U.S. elections that some candidates he thought would bring a "broader spectrum" to the Republican party felt the need to move to the far right of previous positions they held in order to win primaries. The party may lose races if it continues to appeal to those voters, he said.

Powell said he isn't comfortable with some of the "extreme positions" taken by Republican media figures and commentators, such as [Rush Limbaugh](#).

"The middle is in doubt right now," Powell said. "President Obama has lost some of it. Republicans can pick up some of it. But Republicans have got to understand, I believe, that if they want to be a party that serves all of America and reaches out to all of America, it has to also listen to, or respond to, the aspirations of all of Americans and not just the far right base."

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