

Douglas Paal, former director of the American Institute in Taiwan, said that Beijing has linked its behavior in respect to Iran and North Korea to the US' behavior toward Taiwan.

"China would like to put pressure on the United States to reduce arms sales and adjust its relationship with Taiwan in exchange for cooperation," he said.

In an interview released by the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace — where Paal is now vice president of studies — Paal said that Chinese cooperation on international sanctions on Iran is not impossible, but China has economic interests and uses Iran as a ploy to manipulate diplomacy.

"The United States is trying to convey to China that this is a core interest, that it's a very dangerous part of the world and that if this isn't handled right we could end up interrupting everyone's supply of oil out of the Persian Gulf," Paal said. "So far that hasn't persuaded the Chinese."

ARMS SALE

Asked about China's reaction to the US decision to sell US\$6.4 billion in arms to Taiwan, Paal said there had been a lot of heated rhetoric "reflecting the strength of opinion held by ordinary people in China."

"After a period we will get back to a better relationship, but we are probably going to slide down a little further in our relationship because we have an upcoming meeting between the president and the Dalai Lama. China won't like that and it will further feed the emotional rhetoric coming out of China. As I say this though, I do see the Chinese officials trying to hold a steady hand and not allow this to spill out of control," he said.

But Paal said that with emotions running high "things can spill out of control — unintended events can take us there."

"It's encouraging that officials both here and in China are trying to anticipate that and keep this from spilling over into a bigger impact on our broader US-China relationship," he said.

DALAI LAMA

After delaying a meeting before his trip to China in November, US President Barack Obama is set to meet the Dalai Lama later this month despite strong objections from China.

Paal said the Dalai Lama's visits are part of the fabric of the US relationship with China even though China rejects the fact.

"China will probably react by declining to send their president to an upcoming Nuclear Security Summit in Washington. They will send a lower level representative as a signal of their

PRC using Iran to push US: Paal

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unhappiness with the United States, as they would put it, interfering in their core interests in Tibet and Taiwan,” he said.

Asked what Washington and Beijing should do to preserve solid ties, Paal said: “Even though 2010 started with quite a few disputes between the US and China and rising emotions in both places, the two countries constitute an indispensable pair of nations.”

“It is not a pair of nations that can get together and govern the world as a G2, but there’s almost no transnational problem that doesn’t require the US and China to work together. We have a vast array of issues going down the road to 2012 — the departure of China’s current president, Hu Jintao [胡锦涛] from office, the effort by Obama to get himself re-elected and the elections in Taiwan. The United States and China will need to keep working together, get through emotions and deal with reality,” he said.

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