

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sherman, Wendy R <ShermanWR@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 6, 2012 10:53 AM
To: H
Cc: Burns, William J; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: URGENT Iran talks venue

Madam Secretary,

Below is a summary of my latest call with the Chinese and then follow up with Helga. I asked Chris Grantham on my staff to do summary and follow up as I had to go into a meeting and a dinner. Please read the summary and let me know if you are comfortable with this state of play and suggested way forward. Jake is. Bill is in Syracuse and has not been able to respond. If the P5+1 conference call happens before I hear back, I will gauge sense of group and try to stay to our redline of Istanbul first. I am in Dhaka on way to airport, due to fly on first leg in about 90 minutes. Thank you.

Wendy

BEGIN SUMMARY

U/S Sherman spoke with her Chinese counterpart Ma Zhaoxu this morning, who said he spoke with Bagheri yesterday. Ma reported that Bagheri said it could be 1st round Baghdad, 2nd round Istanbul. Ma also said, "we heard another channel in the Iranian side conceded the first round of talks in Istanbul and the second in Baghdad." Overall, Ma said, it was time to solve the venue issue and move on to substance.

We conveyed this to Helga Schmid, who added that she had just spoken with Ryabkov, who had been contacted by Bagheri. Bagheri said nothing to Ryabkov about a Baghdad/Istanbul 1/2 combo. Bagheri only spoke to Ryabkov about Baghdad, saying that the US and UK were fine with first round talks there.

We told Helga there appears to be a deal to be made here, as discussed previously: push for round 1 in Istanbul, and either agree now to a second round in Baghdad, or if others weren't comfortable, leave it open and hint that we'd be open to considering Baghdad on the shortlist for a second round. (Helga also mentioned that they continue to prep logistics with Geneva as a backup round one, and have internally batted around the idea of Brazil, India, Mauritius, etc. for a second round; there may be a three city option out there too).

Helga has requested a conference call with E3+1 political directors in advance of her call tomorrow with Bagheri. We're trying to make that call happen in about 45 minutes (10:30am DC time).