



## Yang seeks to escalate relations

By: Zhang Yuwei – April 5, 2013

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Yang Jiechi, a member of China's State Council, said on Thursday in a phone conversation with US Secretary of State John Kerry that Beijing and Washington should enhance dialogue and mutual trust, and work toward establishing a new kind of big-power relationship.

Yang, who until last month served as the Chinese foreign minister, said it is important that the world's two biggest economic powers maintain high-level visits and other contact. The countries' relationship is at a new stage with a good start, he said.

Kerry said the United States values highly its relationship with China and hopes to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the country.

The two officials also exchanged views on issues including tensions on the Korean Peninsula and climate change.

The American diplomat is scheduled to visit Beijing on April 13 as part of his first Asia trip since taking office in February. He will also visit Japan and the Republic of Korea.

"This is actually a very timely visit, given the fact that he (Kerry) will have an opportunity in Seoul, in Tokyo and in Beijing to talk about our shared concern about the direction the DPRK is going in," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters on Thursday, referring to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"It'll be a central focus of the secretary's diplomacy when he's in Beijing to see what more we can do to get the attention of the leadership in the DPRK and get them to change course," Nuland said.

Continuing threats from Pyongyang have pushed the US and China to form "good unity" in working toward a way of defusing anxieties regarding DPRK development of nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile programs.

On Thursday, the country moved an intermediate-range missile to its east coast, on the Sea of Japan, ahead of what is expected to be a test-firing or drill, the South Korean defense minister said. A day earlier, Pyongyang had warned the US that it was ready to wage an attack using "smaller, lighter and diversified nuclear" weapons.

Experts, including those in the US defense establishment, say the DPRK is several years away from being able to reach the United States with a missile and isn't believed to have developed the ability to mount a nuclear bomb on a missile. This week, US officials have said it didn't appear the DPRK had imminent plans to take military action.

Also on Thursday, the DPRK blocked the entry of ROK workers to an industrial park inside its territory for a second day, in a sign of continued pressure for the ROK to end military drills with US forces.

The Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous US officials, reported that President Barack Obama's administration this week had begun backing away from a show of military strength intended to deter further provocations from the DPRK.

"The concern was that we were heightening the prospect of misperceptions on the part of the North Koreans, and that that could lead to miscalculations," a senior administration official told the newspaper.

China and other members of the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved new sanctions against the DPRK on March 7, mainly in the form of financial controls on Pyongyang's leadership and elites.

"China expressed its own concern about the trend by joining with the rest of the Security Council in now two rounds of sanctions over the last four months with respect to the DPRK," said Nuland, adding that the Korean Peninsula has been "the subject of intense conversations" recently between Kerry and Chinese diplomats.

Cui Tiankai, China's new ambassador to the US, who arrived in Washington on Tuesday to begin his post, said a diplomatic solution is "the only feasible and viable option on the table" to solve the DPRK issue.

"There is no other alternative," said Cui, who most recently served as China's deputy foreign minister. "Between China and the United States, between China and other partners of the six-party talks, we have to work together for a peaceful solution to the issue."

The Six-Party talks are a long-stalled forum aimed at reducing regional tensions. Besides the DPRK and ROK, the discussions included China, the US, Japan and Russia.

The ambassador said China has urged all parties to remain calm and refrain from any actions that may escalate tensions. In Moscow, Russian foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich told reporters that Pyongyang's recent threats amounted to a "defiant disregard" for the UN Security Council resolutions and were "categorically unacceptable".

"This extremely complicates, if not practically rules out, the prospects for resuming Six-Party talks on resolving the Korean Peninsula nuclear problem," he said. Tuesday evening, US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel had called Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Chang Wanquan vowing to advance military ties between their countries.

Chang said both the US and China agreed that developing military ties is in their best interests, adding that Beijing is willing to work with Washington to address military-to-military relations within a cooperative framework.

Ted Galen Carpenter, a defense and foreign-policy researcher at the libertarian Cato Institute in Washington, called the DPRK's latest moves "threatening rhetoric" but a "hollow threat". "It's still in the early stages of building even a small arsenal of first-generation, relatively basic nuclear weapons," he said. "Furthermore, it has no long-range ballistic missiles or bombers with which to attack the US homeland."