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Substantial U.N. sanctions on Iran unlikely despite U.S. insistence

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by Xinhua Writer Ran Wei

WASHINGTON, Oct. 12 (Xinhua) -- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton vowed Wednesday to hold Iran accountable for its alleged involvement in a "terror plot" to assassinate the Saudi envoy to Washington, suggesting the United States would advocate further sanctions against Iran.

Speaking at a Washington-based think tank, Clinton said the alleged plot was "a dangerous escalation of the Iranian government's long-standing use of political violence and sponsorship of terrorism."

She pledged to work closely with international partners to "increase Iran's isolation and the pressure on its government," urging other nations to join the United States in condemning the plot.

According to some media reports, Clinton's words strongly suggested that the United States will seek more sanctions against Iran through the U.N., as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice was briefing members of the U.N. Security Council on the foiled plot.

However, experts said it is unlikely that Washington can convince the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution with substantial new sanctions against the Islamic state.

"I think the U.S. would be very happy to see support for new sanctions within the U.N. Security Council, but I don't think there is a lot of optimism within Washington that is likely to manifest itself," Suzanne Maloney, Iran expert with the Brookings Institute, told Xinhua.

Other experts shared his view. Ted Carpenter, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, told Xinhua: "At this point, Iran is as isolated as the international community is willing to accept."

"What kind of additional sanctions could be imposed that would be any more effective than the sanctions that were already being imposed?" Carpenter questioned.

Clinton's tough-worded remarks came after two men were charged by the U.S. Justice Department on Tuesday for their alleged participation in a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States.

The two suspects are Manssor Arbabsiar, a 56-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen holding both Iranian and U.S. passports, and Iranian Gholam Shakuri.

Maloney believed that the Obama administration, at this stage, is focusing on efforts to "galvanizing more support" from countries in the Middle East and other regions to form a "coalition of the willing" sanction regime against Iran.

In June last year, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1929 to impose the fourth round of sanctions on Iran since 2006 because of Tehran's failure of fulfilling its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Following the resolution, U.S. President Barack Obama signed a bill in a unilateral move, imposing what was described as the "toughest" sanctions ever on Iran. The European Union, Australia and South Korea followed suit with more strict punitive measures.

"I think that kind of route is likely to be where Washington places most of its focus," said Maloney, referring to what had happened last year.

Even some kind of resolution will be passed at the U.N. Security Council this time, Carpenter believed that it will come with "fairly modest additional sanctions that the rest of the international community would sign on to."

"I don't see other countries just giving the U.S. everything it wants in response to these allegations," he said. "A modest change, yes. A big change in international stance toward Iran, no."