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RANGOON — A top US official visiting Burma warned Monday that its military regime should abide by UN sanctions that prohibit buying arms from North Korea, and also said the junta's election plans lack legitimacy.

Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asia, read a statement to the press as he prepared to leave Burma after holding nearly two hours of closed-door talks with detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party was disbanded last week as a result of its refusal to register for the polls, slated for sometime this year.



He did not reveal details of their talks, but praised her nonviolent struggle for democracy.

"She has demonstrated compassion and tolerance for her captors in the face of repeated indignities," he said. "It is simply tragic that Burma's generals have rebuffed her countless appeals to work together to find a peaceable solution for a more prosperous future." Burma is another name for Myanmar.

Campbell earlier held talks with several Cabinet ministers.

The US envoy issued what appeared to be Washington's strongest warning to date concerning Burma's arms purchases from North Korea, which some analysts suspect includes nuclear technology.

A UN Security Council resolution bans all North Korean arms exports, authorizes member states to inspect North Korean sea, air and land cargo and requires them to seize and destroy any goods transported in violation of the sanctions.

Campbell said that Burmese leadership had agreed to abide by the UN resolution, but that "recent developments" called into question its commitment. He said he sought the junta's agreement to "a transparent process to assure the international community that Burma is abiding by its international commitments."

"Without such a process, the United States maintains the right to take independent action within the relevant frameworks established by the international community," said Campbell.

He did not explain what the new developments were or what action the US might take, though it has in the past threatened to stop and search ships carrying suspicious cargo from Pyongyang.

Campbell said that in talks with senior officials, the US side had also outlined a proposal "for a credible dialogue" for all concerned parties to agree on how to conduct upcoming polls, the first since 1990. But the junta had instead moved forward unilaterally without consulting opposition and independent voices.

"As a direct result, what we have seen to date leads us to believe that these elections will lack international legitimacy," he said. "We urge the regime to take immediate steps to open the process in the time remaining before the elections." The exact date for the polls has not yet been set.

Campbell's visit, his second in six months, came just days after the dissolution of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, or NLD, which won the 1990 election but was never allowed to take power.

The party considers newly enacted election laws unfair and undemocratic—as Suu Kyi and other political prisoners would be barred from taking part in the vote—and so declined to re-register as required, which meant it was automatically disbanded last week.

Suu Kyi was driven from her home in a three-car police motorcade to the nearby government guesthouse for the talks with Campbell. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate has been detained, mostly under house arrest, for 14 of the past 20 years. Her freedom has been a long-standing demand of the United States and much of the world community, including the United Nations.

Campbell also voiced concern about the increasing tensions between the government and ethnic minorities that have long been striving for greater autonomy, but face sometime severe repression.

"Burma cannot move forward while the government itself persists in launching attacks against its own people to force compliance with a proposal its ethnic groups cannot accept," he said. "The very stability the regime seeks will continue to be elusive until a peaceable solution can be found through dialogue."

Campbell arrived Sunday and met with senior junta officials in the remote administrative capital of Naypyidaw before flying Monday to Rangoon, the biggest city. Among the officials he met were Foreign Minister Nyan Win, Information Minister Kyaw San and Science and Technology Minister U Thaung—Burma's former envoy in Washington—who is the point person for the US-Burma engagement.

Relations between Burma and the US have been strained since its military crushed pro-democracy protests in 1988, killing hundreds, possibly thousands, of demonstrators. Since then, Washington has been Burma's strongest critic, applying political and economic sanctions against the junta for its poor human rights record and failure to hand over power to a

democratically elected government.

Campbell, however, said he would continue a dialogue with all sides in Burma as part of a new Washington policy of engagement rather than isolation of the ruling generals.

Last year President Barack Obama reversed the Bush administration's isolation of Burma in favor of dialogue with the junta.