

The junta remains intransigent as Suu Kyi and Campbell talk under the midday sun.

It was a scorching 43 degrees Celsius when detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell braced the heat and walked out of the state guest house to continue their discussion on Burma.

The US embassy in Rangoon released a series of photos of Suu Kyi, Kurt Campbell and Larry Dinger, head of the US mission in Rangoon, walking and holding umbrellas with Inya Lake in the background.



The US delegation and Suu Kyi did not want Burmese officials to listen to their conversation.

One exiled Burmese activist quipped: "These pictures indicate that the meeting wasn't exactly 'closed door'. Unless the fish in Inya Lake wore ear pieces and the coconut palms concealed listening devices, one could at least have a word in private."

Meetings between UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari and Suu Kyi in the past were arranged by the military regime at the guest house where officials could listen and monitor the conversation.

Previously, Suu Kyi was allowed to meet visiting diplomats including US Congressman Bill Richardson at her lakeside house.

Political pundits say the meeting at the state guest house indicated that the engagement with the US has taken a step backward.

Kurt Campbell and his team were able to meet Suu Kyi at the Inya Lake Hotel in November last year after US embassy officials had cleared the room and the entire floor.

Suu Kyi and American officials reportedly sat at low tables to be safe from listening devices, and perhaps they whispered.

During this visit, Campbell did not meet any high ranking officials except some ministers.

Prime Minister Thein Sein who received him in November was in the Irrawaddy delta together with junta no. 2, Gen Maung Aye on Monday.

However, Campbell managed to meet the Minister for Information, Kyaw Hsan, and U Thaung, minister for science and technology, in Naypyidaw.

A senior journalist in Rangoon explained why only some ministers agreed to meet with Campbell: "The regime leaders did not want to commit themselves to anything, which is why only low-level ministers were available."

Besides concern for Suu Kyi and the election, Campbell also focused on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation in Burma.

During his meeting with Science and Technology Minister U Thaung, Campbell reminded the regime of its commitment to fully comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1874 in its dealing with North Korea, according to a source in Rangoon.

Passed in 2009, the UN resolution banned North Korea from all imports and exports of heavy weapons and authorizes member states to inspect and destroy any goods suspected of being connected to North Korea's nuclear program.

It has been reported that the regime has bought conventional military hardware such as ammunition and missiles from North Korea, and Washington suspects there has been a transfer of nuclear technology after Russia's Federal Atomic Energy Agency distanced itself from a 2007 agreement to supply a 10 megawatt light-water reactor.

The Irrawaddy reported in March that nuclear facilities in Northern Mandalay Division are thought to be near completion, meanwhile.

Military relations between Naypyidaw and Pyongyang have been attracting international attention in recent years. In August 2009, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Burmese defectors had revealed the existence of a secret nuclear program combining Burma's proven uranium reserves and North Korean nuclear technology.

In addition to nuclear know-how and equipment Pyongyang may have provided, the rogue state has sent truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers, surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles and technology for underground warfare since the early 2000s, according to Andrew Selth, an Australian-based expert on Burmese military issues.

The Burmese junta has sent at least three high-ranking clandestine military missions to North Korea recently, and elaborate birthday party celebrations for Kim Jong Il sponsored by the junta in Rangoon were attended by senior army leaders.

"I think Campbell's greater priority concerns the Burma-North Korea relationship," said Thakhin Chan Tun, a veteran politician and Burma's former ambassador to China and North Korea

during the 1960's and 70's, speaking to The Irrawaddy on Tuesday.

According to a statement released from the US Embassy in Rangoon on May 10 [[click here for the full statement](#)

], Campbell has asked the regime leadership to put into place a transparent process to assure the international community that Burma is abiding by its international commitments.

Without such a process, Campbell said the United States maintains the right "to take independent action within the relevant frameworks established by the international community." But he did not elaborate what kind of independent action might be taken.

The Burmese opposition, meanwhile, has asked Washington to increase banking sanctions and targeted sanctions against regime leaders and cronies.

Chan Tun said: "The regime wouldn't care [about US concerns]. The generals accepted Mr. Campbell's visit to our country just as a political maneuver in this election year. But I suspect it won't concede anything at all."

Analysts in Rangoon speculate that Campbell's visit to Burma might have been facilitated by China.

Soon after his visit, Campbell flew to Beijing for meetings with "senior Chinese officials," according to an *Agence France Presse* report, quoting a US State Department official in Washington.

The report said Campbell will brief Chinese officials on his trip to Burma and could be in Beijing for a briefing on the visit to China by North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il in early May.

In his Rangoon statement, Campbell said the US government outlined a proposal to the Burmese officials "for a credible dialogue" for all concerned parties to agree on how to conduct

the upcoming poll, but he said the regime had instead moved forward unilaterally without consulting opposition and independent voices.

Suu Kyi shared Campbell's disappointment that the Burmese military government was not more forthcoming and was not willing to expand political space, but she would continue to support the US and the international community's efforts to engage with the regime, according to press briefing by Assistant Secretary, Philip J. Crowley, in Washington on May 10.

The US mission to Burma might not have reaped any tangible results, but while some Burmese people are now in doubt over the wisdom of Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy, (NLD), boycotting the polls, Campbell's praise of Suu Kyi "for her compassion and tolerance for her captors," his calls for the release of political prisoners ahead of the polls and the United States' continued support for the NLD might have given a moral boost to those who have rejected the regime's election plans.