

The US president extends the national emergency against Burma, arguing that the policies of the military junta continue to pose a threat to American national security interests and foreign policy.

WASHINGTON — US President Barack Obama on Friday extended the national emergency against Burma for one more year, arguing that the policies of the military junta continue to pose a threat to America's national security interests and its foreign policy.

In an executive order signed on Friday and sent to the US Congress, Obama said the “actions and policies of the Burmese military junta are hostile to US interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy” of the country.



“For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma and maintain in force the sanctions against Burma to respond to this threat,” Obama said in his message to the Congress, a copy of which was provided by the White House.

On May 20, 1997, then President Bill Clinton imposed a national emergency against Burma in response to the ruling regime's large-scale repression of the democratic opposition after September 30, 1996, thereby invoking the prohibition on new investment in Burma by the US.

Clinton also declared a national emergency to deal with the threat posed to the national security and foreign policy of the US by the actions and policies of the Burmese junta.

“Because the actions and policies of the Government of Burma continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 20, 1997 ... must continue in effect beyond May 20, 2010,” Obama said.

On Friday the White House sent the notice to the Federal Register for publication, stating that the Burma emergency is to continue in effect beyond May 20, 2010.

The decision to extend the national emergency against Burma comes within a week of a visit to Burma by Assistant Secretary of State for South East Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell.

Campbell met the top military leadership, as well as pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, but failed to convince Burma's rulers to listen favorably to the sentiments of the international community, which wants to see the establishment of a true democracy in the country and the release of pro-democracy leaders, including Suu Kyi.

Campbell expressed his disappointment following his meetings with the military leaders and said the US would not accept the sham election being held later this year.

Meanwhile, in Washington, lawmakers have introduced two identical pieces of legislation in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to extend the economic sanctions against Burma for another year.

Several Senators have also written a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urging her to review her new policy of engagement with Burma.

An internal congressional report this month told lawmakers that the forthcoming election would

indicate what way this Southeast Asian nation is going.