

U.S., Russia Bridge Differences on Iran

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VIENNA — The United States and its Western allies have persuaded Russia and China to support a resolution critical of Iran's nuclear defiance in hope of showing Israel that diplomacy is an alternative to military force in pressuring Tehran, diplomats said Wednesday.

The resolution, which demands that Iran stop activities that could be used to make nuclear arms, cannot be enforced by the 35-nation board of the International Atomic Energy Agency, even if approved by vote or consensus as expected Thursday. But with Israel increasingly floating force as an alternative to failed international efforts to curtail suspected Iranian nuclear activities, the document is significant in seeking to show world-power resolve in pursuing a diplomatic solution to the standoff.

Israel views a nuclear-armed Iran as a mortal threat.

With fears growing over the possibility of an Israeli military attack and other diplomatic efforts on Iran deadlocked, diplomats said that a resolution supported by the six powers seeking to engage Tehran on its nuclear program had become a priority discussed at the highest level.

The text was agreed on only after consultations involving U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her counterparts in Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany, said the diplomats, who demanded anonymity because the negotiating process was confidential.

While the four Western powers had no differences, it was unclear until Wednesday whether Russia and China — which Iran has relied on to blunt harsh UN and other sanctions — would agree to join in backing the resolution. The diplomats said that they were persuaded largely with the argument that a signal of big-power unity had to be sent to Israel.

A Russian diplomat refused on Wednesday to discuss how the accord about the resolution came about.

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