

U.S.-Japan relations tied to North Korea

by UPI

TOKYO -- The U.S. ambassador to Japan warned the Bush administration that diplomatic efforts regarding North Korea's nuclear program may harm relations with Japan. In a private cable to U.S. President George Bush, J. Thomas Schieffer said Japanese officials expressed concern over removing North Korea from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism prior to addressing Japanese issues with North Korea. Japan said North Korea first must provide information regarding the abduction of Japanese civilians during the 1970s and 1980s, The Washington Post said. Complaining that the U.S. Embassy in Japan was left out of the negotiations, Schieffer's cable was an effort to clarify the abduction issue, noting that Japanese demands shouldn't drive U.S. foreign policy. Schieffer said U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, who is a key player in the nuclear negotiations with North Korea, ensured him that North Korea needed to make good faith gestures regarding the abduction issue prior to other developments. The nuclear deal involves a graduated dismantling and accounting mechanism for North Korea's nuclear program in exchange for economic assistance.

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