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Indonesia Backs Iran's Claims of Peaceful Nuclear Program

Indonesia's president says his country backs Iran's claims it is seeking nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes.

After meeting with the Iranian president, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said he believes diplomatic talks could solve the growing international crisis over Tehran's nuclear program.

Mr. Yudhoyono says he believes that Iran's nuclear programs are for peaceful purposes only. The United States and several other countries fear Tehran is trying to build nuclear weapons. He made the comments Wednesday after talks with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is in Jakarta on a state visit.

"Indonesia expressed the concerns of all of us on ongoing tensions regionally and globally on the nuclear issue of Iran, with hope that the open conflict can be avoided and we could find a peaceful and just solution," he said.

Mr. Yudhoyono says Indonesia is willing to mediate between Tehran and other countries to resolve the issue.

Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world, has good relations with the United States and most other Western nations.

Mr. Ahmadinejad reiterated his position that Iran has the right to pursue nuclear technology for peaceful means and would defend the right to do so.

Speaking through an interpreter, he accused the United States and other Western powers of trying to corner the market on nuclear technology to earn big profits and to make weapons of mass destruction.

"And they themselves everyday test new brands of weapons of mass destruction so they are not opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons," he said.

The United States is leading efforts to bring United Nations Security Council sanctions against Tehran if it refuses to halt its nuclear program.

The Iranian president sent an 18-page letter to U.S. president Bush on Monday criticizing the U.S. government for the war in Iraq, among other things, and suggesting U.S. policies are inconsistent with Mr. Bush's Christian faith.

The Bush administration dismissed the letter.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said in Jakarta Wednesday he was not disappointed by the lack of reaction to his letter, but felt it was the right decision to send it.

Mr. Ahmadinejad is in Indonesia on a state visit before flying to the resort island of Bali on Friday for a summit of the leaders of eight developing nations.

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