

Possible sale to Iran a concern

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bill Clinton headed for Moscow Monday for a summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin after making good on a vow to ban U.S. trade with Iran. But Republican leaders want him to do even more to try to stop Iran's nuclear program.

Republican leaders are threatening "catastrophic consequences" for U.S. aid to Russia if Yeltsin goes through with a plan to sell nuclear technology and material to Iran.

The Russian sale tops the agenda at Clinton's fourth summit with Yeltsin.

In an effort to try to bring more international pressure to bear on Iran, the White House today issued an executive order imposing economic sanctions on Iran.

"The United States cannot remain idle in the face of this heightened threat posed by Iran," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

The new sanctions, going beyond ones that have been in place since 1987, prohibit any trade by American individuals or businesses of goods or services "of Iranian origin." They also prohibit any export of U.S. "goods, technology or services" to Iran.

The trade ban — so far no U.S. ally has followed suit — was an attempt by Clinton to head off even stronger action by Congress. Republican congressional leaders are pressing for penalties against Russia to keep it from selling nuclear technology to Iran, a call reiterated by GOP leaders on the eve of Clinton's trip.

The summit is marked by disputes over the nuclear deal, Chechnya and NATO — differences Clinton is trying hard to overcome.

"When we have similar goals, we'll cooperate. When we dis-

agree... we must manage those differences openly, constructively and resolutely," Clinton said Sunday in an address that set the scene for his four-day trip.

In an otherwise conciliatory address, Clinton denounced "the tragic war" in Chechnya and Moscow's plans to sell nuclear technology and material to Iran, a nation he called the "principal sponsor of global terrorism."

But the president said neither issue should divide Washington and Moscow.

"The interests of our people are clearly best supported by supporting the transition in Russia toward a more free and open society," Clinton said.

Adding urgency to the rift over Iran, GOP congressional leaders said Clinton can't come back empty-handed after personally urging Yeltsin in Moscow to drop the nuclear sale.

"If he can't get it done, then we've got a real problem," Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., told CBS' *Face the Nation*. "I think it's going to cool relations with Yeltsin."

Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., suggested that U.S. aid to Russia could be cut if Moscow goes through with the sale.

"I think it would have catastrophic consequences in Congress," Gingrich said on NBC's *Meet the Press*.

Hours later, Clinton told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that the United States invests in Russia to nurture the seeds of peace, democracy and prosperity. "We can make all the difference in the world, but we cannot do it for free," he said.

He said "back-door isolationists on the left and the right" want to cut foreign aid pro-

grams, a trend he said is especially unwise in Russia's case.

"We did not win the Cold War to walk away and blow the peace on foolish, penny-wise, pound-foolish budgeting," the president said.

But the Republican threat to cut foreign aid for Russia, might actually help Clinton in Moscow. Yeltsin is now hearing the U.S. plea in harsher terms than Clinton himself could have used.

Clinton will begin his trip to Moscow and the Ukraine at ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Allies' victory over Nazi Germany. On Wednesday, he plans to meet with Yeltsin at the Kremlin.

Besides the nuclear sale and Chechnya, the United States and Russia differ on NATO expansion eastward. Yeltsin sees it as a threat; Clinton did not address that subject Sunday.

The White House said Clinton plans to strike a delicate balance in talks with Yeltsin: Stand firm on his differences with the Russian president but don't harm the overall relationship. Clinton argues that close ties with Moscow lessen the nuclear threat, open markets to U.S. goods and nurture a partner in the war on terrorism.

"We have to engage, and not withdraw," he said.

But the president pledged to press Yeltsin hard on the nuclear deal, arguing that Iran's oil surplus and other evidence about Iran's nuclear program show that the country has no need for civilian-use nuclear technology. Officials expect Clinton to share with Yeltsin classified information about Iran's nuclear program.

"If this sale does go forward, Russian national security can only be weakened in the long run," Clinton said.

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Medicare growth may be slowed

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans promised to "preserve America as the land of opportunity" Monday as the Senate Budget Committee began debating a GOP plan for eliminating federal deficits by the year 2002.

Panel chairman Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said his proposal — to be unveiled Tuesday — would call for big savings by slowing the growth of Medicare, the health-insurance program for the elderly. He said he would call for allowing it to grow by 7.1 percent annually instead of its current 10 percent — reductions that Senate sources have said would save about \$250 bil-

lion from the amount that would otherwise be spent over the next seven years.

But in a bow to the political warfare that Medicare cuts have ignited, Domenici said his budget would call for a bipartisan congressional commission to spell out the specific changes in the program. The commission would produce its recommendations by July 10 so lawmakers could consider them as they make a final decision on the budget, Domenici said.

Domenici's budget, expected to be approved by his panel later this week, will also rely heavily on cuts in Medicaid and other

benefit programs such as agriculture; freeze defense spending at about its current \$270 billion-a-year level; and cut or eliminate more than 100 other programs. As such, it will resemble a GOP plan the House Budget Committee plans to work on this week.

Domenici's budget also will not contain tax cuts, sought by many other Republicans, including most in the House. Domenici, who prefers to concentrate on balancing the budget, would defer tax reductions until Congress passes a plan certified as eliminating the deficit. The House has already approved \$189 billion in tax breaks.

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