



Dalai Lama part of solution for China: Obama aide

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WASHINGTON (AFP) — China should see the Dalai Lama as "part of the solution" on Tibet instead of trying to isolate him, US President Barack Obama's top Asia adviser said.

Jeff Bader, senior director for Asia on the White House's National Security Council, told the Committee of 100, a Chinese-American group, that it should use its influence in Beijing to encourage a different view of the Dalai Lama.

"I hope that you will use that credibility and those relationships to help persuade Chinese officials that the Dalai Lama is not part of their problem but rather part of the solution to the situation in Tibet," Bader said.

Beijing brands the Dalai Lama a separatist and has stepped up pressure on world leaders, including Obama, not to meet with him. The Buddhist leader fled to India 50 years ago as China crushed an abortive uprising in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama, an advocate of non-violence, says he is only seeking greater rights for Tibetans under Chinese rule. The Nobel Peace laureate is currently touring the United States, but he does not plan to visit Washington.

Bader acknowledged that human rights have become an irritant in US-China relations -- "unsurprisingly, because China's human rights record, as we know, is poor."

But he said Obama believed the most effective way to persuade China was to lead by example, citing the president's decision to shut down the widely condemned "war on terror" detention camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"President Obama does not believe in lecturing. He believes in leading by example, not finger-pointing," Bader said.

Obama has called for a broader relationship with China that includes cooperation on pressing global issues such as climate change and the economic crisis. The US leader is due to visit China later this year.

"President Obama, with his unique gifts in communication and popularity, will be looking for ways to reach out to Chinese audiences and connect," Bader said.

Before his appointment, Bader served at the Brookings Institution think-tank where he led a project encouraging Chinese academics to make contact with the Dalai Lama. He said he was pleasantly surprised at the response.

"It suggested to me that there is an openness to discussion among non-official Chinese on this subject and I hope that one of these days officials will catch up," Bader said.

But Ken Lieberthal, who held Bader's position at the end of Bill Clinton's presidency, said there was a "total disconnect" between the way the US public and the Chinese government viewed the Dalai Lama.

"So long as the Chinese refuse to understand that to most of the world this is a revered religious figure -- someone who has extraordinary ethics and is deserving of great respect ... I don't see a good future here," Lieberthal told the same forum.

"Once he passes from the scene, if there has been no progress, I think the next generation of Tibetans have the possibility to be China's worst nightmare," he said.

The Dalai Lama, 73, has frequently said he wants to retire but has kept a frenetic travel schedule. His current visit to the United States has included serving food to the homeless in San Francisco and opening an ethics center named after him at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He is expected to return to the United States in October, when he hopes to meet with Obama.

Asked this week in Boston whether he expected to return to Tibet, the Dalai Lama said with a smile: "Oh yes, every Tibetan feels like that."

"If the leadership in Beijing thinks in a more wider way ... within a few days can solve," he said in English.