

diplomatic process. China is now obstructing them at the U.N. Security Council and the Russians are tucking themselves behind them.

"The Germans are wobbling ... There are a number of people in the administration who do not want their legacy to be leaving behind an Iran that is nuclear armed, so they are looking at what are the alternatives? They are looking at other options," the diplomat said.

Vice President Cheney and his aides are said to be enjoying a bit of "schadenfreude" at the expense of Burns. A source described Cheney's office as effectively gloating to Burns and Rice, "We told you so. (The Iranians) are not containable diplomatically."

The next shoe to drop will be when Rice and President Bush make a final decision about whether to designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and/or its lethal subset, the Quds Force, as a terrorist entity or entities. FOX News reported in June that such a move is under consideration.

Sources say news leaks about the prospective designation greatly worried European governments and private sector firms, which could theoretically face prosecution in American courts if such measures became law and these entities continued to do business with IRGC and its multiple financial subsidiaries.

If the Bush administration moves forward with such a designation, sources said, it would be an indication that Rice agrees that Burns' approach has failed. Designation of such a large Iranian military institution as a terrorist entity would also be seen, sources said, as laying the groundwork for a public justification of American military action.

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