**Ahmadinejad Seeks Visa to Attend UN Nuclear Meeting**

By Bill Varner

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April 28 (Bloomberg) -- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has applied for a U.S. visa to attend a nuclear conference at the United Nations that begins next week, the U.S. ambassador said.

U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice told reporters at the UN about the Iranian request to come to the review conference in New York for the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is scheduled to begin on May 3 and last until May 28.

U.S. officials indicated they wouldn’t bar Ahmadinejad from attending. “We have certain responsibilities as the host of the UN,” State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said. “Any foreign official who’s coming to the UN for business is normally granted a visa.”

Ahmadinejad was last in the U.S. for the UN General Assembly in September, when he denied any Iranian intent to develop nuclear weapons, criticized U.S.-led military action in Iraq and Afghanistan and drew attention to what he saw as U.S. complicity in the international financial crisis.

Bak Sahraei, spokesman for Iran’s mission to the UN, said he couldn’t confirm Rice’s statement or say anything about Ahmadinejad’s travel plans.

No Meeting Planned

Crowley said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has no plans to have bilateral meetings with Iran during the two-day conference.

In a letter this month to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ahmadinejad asked that the UN investigate the conduct of U.S. and other allied troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, saying they have failed to combat terrorism. The UN hasn’t replied.

A visit would coincide with negotiations on a fourth round of UN sanctions on Iran intended to halt its uranium enrichment, which the U.S. and its European allies say could lead to production of nuclear weapons. Rice said those talks were “very intensive.”

In 2008, the UN imposed a third round of sanctions, adding to restrictions imposed in 2006 and 2007. The sanctions resolution imposed travel bans on five Iranian officials and froze the assets of 13 Iranian companies.

It also banned the sale to Iran of items that could have military applications and urged governments to withdraw financial backing from firms that trade with the country, inspect all cargo entering and exiting Iran, and monitor the activities of two of its banks.

The UN threatened further sanctions if Iran failed to comply with international requirements.

--With assistance from Nicole Gaouette in Washington. Editors: Edward DeMarco, Bob Drummond.