

Obama's Korea Trade Deal Objection Is Political, Minister Says

By Heejin Koo
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Illinois Senator Barack Obama's objection to a trade agreement with South Korea is "politically motivated," the Asian nation's trade minister said.

"Trade becomes an unpopular topic once it is tied up in a political agenda," Kim Jong Hoon said on KBS-1 Radio.

Obama, the leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, said in a May 22 letter to President George W. Bush that pushing for the agreement is "misguided." Obama has criticized such accords in his campaign, saying he would renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico.

The U.S.-South Korea trade accord, the biggest for the U.S. since Nafta in 1994, was signed last June. The Bush administration still hasn't submitted the proposal to Congress. Lawmakers such as Senate Finance Committee Max Baucus, a Montana Democrat, say they won't consider it until South Korea drops all its restrictions on U.S. beef, which the Asian nation has said it will do.

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