

## US Dalai Lama award angers China

**China has stepped up a row with the US over its decision to award the Dalai Lama one of its highest honours, by summoning the US ambassador to protest.**

The US has "gravely undermined" ties with Beijing by giving him the Congressional Gold Medal, China said.

The exiled Tibetan spiritual leader has lived in India since a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959.

Beijing has long argued that he is seeking to destroy China's sovereignty by pushing for independence for Tibet.

### 'Blatant interference'

On Wednesday the Dalai Lama met US President George Bush in Washington to receive his award - the highest civilian honour Congress can give.

President Bush called on China to open talks with the Buddhist figurehead, calling him a "universal symbol of peace and tolerance".

The timing was particularly sensitive as China is currently holding its five-yearly Communist Party Congress, where it announces its agenda for the future and chooses new senior leaders.

"The move of the United States is a blatant interference in China's internal affairs," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao.

Mr Liu said the ministry had summoned ambassador Clark T Randt to express "strong protest to the US government" over the issue.

He urged the US to take concrete steps to protect Sino-US relations.

US politicians regularly accuse Beijing of turning a blind eye to rights abuses in Burma and Sudan in its pursuit of energy and business deals.

Recently, world leaders have grown more vocal in their concern for human rights in Tibet.

In September, German Chancellor Angela Merkel met the Dalai Lama, incurring Beijing's wrath.

The Tibetan leader has also met Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Australian Prime Minister John Howard this year, and is due to meet Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper later this month.

China was outraged when Canada granted the Dalai Lama honorary citizenship last year.



The Dalai Lama received the Congressional Gold Medal

#### CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

Top US civilian award  
Originally awarded to soldiers for achievement in battle, but became civilian award with introduction of Medal of Honor  
First awarded in 1776 to General George Washington  
Two-third majority required to approve each candidate  
Each medal uniquely designed and created by the US Mint  
Over 100 medals awarded  
Previous winners include Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela Tony Blair, Winston Churchill and Pope John Paul II