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CUBA

## Kerry: U.S. trying to free American

› The secretary of state said he could not reveal details of the effort to have the imprisoned Alan Gross sent home.

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The Obama administration is “currently engaged” in behind-the-scenes discussions to win the release of U.S. government subcontractor Alan Gross, jailed in Cuba for the past four years, according to Secretary of State John Kerry.

Kerry, who engaged in another secret effort to free Gross in 2010, made the remarks Tuesday at a news conference in NATO headquarters in Belgium, after he was asked about U.S. citizens detained in Cuba, Iran, and North Korea.

“In the case of Mr. Gross, we’ve had any number of initiatives and outreaches over the last several years and engagement with a number of different individuals who have traveled to Cuba, met with people individually there and elsewhere,” Kerry said.

“And we are currently engaged in some discussions regarding that, which I’m not at liberty to go into in any kind of detail,” he added, declining further comment on a case that has become the key roadblock to improved U.S.-Cuba relations.

“With respect to the number of American citizens who are being held in different places ...we have been engaged behind the scenes — which is often the way these issues are best managed — in every single case in order to try to secure the safety of those people , and in order ultimately to be able to secure their release,” he said.

“The bottomline is that we have raised these issues not just in Korea — North Korea, not just in Cuba, but also with respect to a number of Americans who are held in Iran,” he concluded. “And I have personally raised those names and those individuals with my counterpart as well as in other ways. And we are hopeful that in each case, at some point we will be able to win their freedom and have them rejoined with their families.”

The State Department did not immediately reply to an el Nuevo Herald request for an explanation of the secretary’s remarks.

Kerry did not identify the other party or parties in the “discussions” to free Gross, 64, a Maryland development specialist serving a 15-year prison sentence in Havana for giving sophisticated communications equipment to Cuban Jews.



GROSS