N. Korea hoping for deal with new U.S. president: L.A. Times

Analysts in China expect little progress at six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear arms program as Pyongyang is hoping a Democratic candidate will win the U.S. presidential election in November, the Los Angeles Times reported Wednesday.

North Korea is rooting Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina or anyone other than George W. Bush to be the next U.S. president, the daily said in a dispatch from Beijing.

"North Korea is waiting for its own regime change in D.C.," the paper quoted Pang Zhongying, professor of international relations at China's Nankai University, as saying.

The second round of six-party talks began Wednesday in Beijing, bringing together China, Japan, North and South Korea, Russia and the United States for the first time since last August.

The daily said North Korea wants to get the most generous possible trade terms, aid and security guarantees in return for shutting down its weapons program.

Pyongyang is betting that by stalling the talks, it can achieve a better deal with a new U.S. administration, and it also does not want to grace Bush with a diplomatic victory that might help reelect him, it said.

"I expect North Korea to make certain compromises in the six-party talks to keep them going," Li Dunqiu, a North Korean expert with the Chinese Academy of Social Science was quoted as saying. "But don't expect any real progress before the U.S. elections."

The paper, however, said Bush will be in a stronger position to make demands on North Korea after November, assuming he's reelected and the U.S. has restored Iraqi sovereignty.

At that point, a U.S. threat of unilateral action against Pyongyang also would become more credible, it said.