Russia Friday rejected a U.S. challenge to a possible oil-for-goods deal between Moscow and Iran, saying it followed rules established by the United Nations and not those set by Washington, the Reuters news agency said.

The sparring over the potential deal between Tehran and Moscow came as a revised report on Iran’s February oil exports showed that they were at 1.65 billion barrels per day, substantially above the 1 billion barrel per day limit authorized under sanctions against Teheran.

U.S. States Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said that all the same Washington believed that over the six month period from January through June, the average total exports would be within the 1 billion per day limit, Reuters reported.

The export limits were set as part of a special waiver granted to Iran while it carries out negotiations on its nuclear program with the P5+1 group, the five permanent members of the United Nations security council (China, France, the United Kingdom, Russia and the United States) and Germany. The negotiations are aimed at winning assurances from Iran of the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.
U.S. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew on Thursday met with Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov on the sidelines of the World Bank meeting in Washington. He told the minister that an oil-for-goods deal between Iran and Russia could violate U.S. sanctions.

Siluanov responded on Friday, saying that Russia acts on the “basis of the decisions made by the United Nations” and added that “we operate within those decisions,” the report said.

“There is a nuance. Our American partners have their own legislation which differs somewhat from the provisions set by the United Nations and they follow their own rules,” the reported quoted Siluanov as saying. Siluanov would not say whether a deal had been sealed with Iran.

The February oil exports by Iran were the highest in 20 months, according to an International Energy Agency report.

"The question is whether they are going to continue to test the sanctions," said Antoine Halff, head of the IEA’s oil industry and markets division. He added that the imports are running ahead of 2013 figures for the third consecutive month.

The U.S. state department spokeswoman said that questions including high seasonal demand have made the figures look high in the recent months but they expect deliveries to fall in the rest of the semester and average out at 1 billion barrels per day.