

US threatens China over North Korean sanctions

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The Trump administration has prepared a UN Security Council draft resolution that contains tough new economic penalties on North Korea following Pyongyang's purported intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test on July 4. At the same time, the US is drawing up its own unilateral sanctions against North Korea, as well as secondary sanctions against countries allegedly in breach of the US measures.

The chief targets are Beijing and Moscow, which have already indicated they do not favour crippling sanctions on North Korea and could veto the US resolution. The draft was circulated to China and other UN Security Council permanent members this week. Senior UN diplomats told Reuters that the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, aims to put the resolution to the vote within weeks—circumventing the months of negotiations that preceded other sanctions on North Korea.

Citing a diplomatic source, the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* reported that Beijing and Moscow would not support the US draft. “The proposed restrictions imply the introduction of an embargo on energy supplies to Pyongyang and a ban on employing North Korean nationals abroad,” the source stated.

Details of the US resolution have not been released but Haley indicated to the UN Security Council last week that it would include a ban on oil exports to North Korea and on North Koreans working overseas.

Russia's deputy ambassador to the UN, Vladimir Safronkov, bluntly declared last week that “attempts to economically strangle North Korea are equally unacceptable, as millions of people are in great humanitarian need.” Both Moscow and Beijing are hostile to any attempt by the US to precipitate an economic and political crisis on their doorstep that Washington could exploit to orchestrate a regime-

change in Pyongyang.

US ambassador Haley indicated that the draft resolution is an ultimatum and not up for negotiation or substantial amendment. Speaking last Sunday on CBS's “Face the Nation,” she said the US did not expect the resolution to be “watered down” and expected to know within days whether China and Russia would support it.

Haley declared that the US was going “to push hard against China” and the UN resolution was going to be “a really big test.” Beijing had the ability to pressure Pyongyang, she said, “and we need to see some more action going accordingly.”

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on Tuesday that the US Justice Department had already initiated a federal court case that was partly unsealed last week, targeting “offshore US dollar accounts” associated with a network of five companies linked to the Chinese citizen Chi Yupeng. The alleged network included one of the largest Chinese importers of North Korean goods, Dandong Zhicheng Metallic Material Co.

The Justice Department claimed, on the basis of dubious information from North Korean defectors, that Chi Yupeng had hidden transactions that helped to finance North Korea's military programs. The case could provide the basis for US penalties against the five companies, similar to those imposed on another Chinese corporation, Dandong Hongxiang Industrial Development Co., last year.

Late last month, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced US sanctions on China's Bank of Dandong, Dalian Global Unity Shipping and two Chinese business executives for their supposed business dealings with North Korea. These penalties come on top of other provocative US steps against China, including a major arms sale to Taiwan, and so-

called freedom of navigation operations challenging Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang hit out on Tuesday against “certain people, talking about the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, [who] have been exaggerating and giving prominence to the so-called ‘China responsibility theory’.” Geng insisted China had made significant efforts to push Pyongyang to denuclearise and called on all parties to meet each other halfway.

While Geng did not name any country, his remarks were clearly directed against the United States. Reflecting the increasingly bitter relations between Beijing and Washington, the spokesman declared: “Asking others to do work, but doing nothing themselves is not okay. Being stabbed in the back is really not okay.”

Beijing has repeatedly proposed negotiations on the basis that North Korea freezes its nuclear and missile tests in return for the US and South Korea halting their large-scale joint military exercises. Washington has dismissed the plan out of hand. An online article in the official *People’s Daily* this week accused the US and Japan of using the “China responsibility theory” to hide their own failure on the Korean Peninsula. It declared that both countries had “refused to fulfill their duties to negotiate” to reach a peaceful solution.

US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert fired back. While acknowledging that China had tightened sanctions on North Korea, she declared: “We expect and we want you to do a whole lot more.”

Behind the push for tough sanctions is the US threat to carry out military strikes on North Korea that would trigger a devastating war on the Korean Peninsula and more broadly. US ambassador Haley told the UN Security Council the US was prepared to “use the full range of our capabilities,” including “our considerable military forces” to deal with North Korea. While declaring that the military option was not preferable, she emphasised: “We will use them if we must.”

In the latest show of military force, the US Missile Defence Agency announced a successful test of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system. An interceptor based in Alaska shot down an intermediate-range target launched over the Pacific Ocean north of Hawaii.

The US is in the process of completing a THAAD

battery deployment in South Korea, supposedly aimed against North Korea. Beijing has repeatedly criticised the installation, pointing out that the associated powerful X-band radar can be used to undermine China’s nuclear deterrent against a potential US attack.



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