

# US imposes new sanctions on China over Uyghurs

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The Biden administration last Friday adopted further sanctions against China for alleged human rights abuses against the minority Uyghur population in Xinjiang in the west of the country. The punitive measures are part of the escalating US confrontation with China, in which a propaganda campaign of lies and distortions is accompanying a relentless military build-up against Beijing.

The US Commerce Department added 34 companies to its Entities List, which effectively prohibits American citizens or corporations transacting business with those sanctioned. Of those, 14 were Chinese companies that allegedly enabled Beijing's "campaign of repression, mass detention, and high-technology surveillance" in Xinjiang.

Another five Chinese companies were added to the list for supporting China's military modernisation programs related to lasers and battle management systems. In addition, eight entities were cited for facilitating the export of US items to Iran and another six for helping to procure US-origin items "likely in furtherance of Russian military programs."

The sweeping character of Washington's unilateral measures is underscored by the Commerce Department's statement, which declared that the entities were added to the list "for their involvement in, or risk of becoming involved in, activities contrary to the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States."

In other words, the sanctions have been added to further the interests of US imperialism. This includes cynically exploiting bogus "human rights" campaigns to target countries, in preparation for launching criminal wars of aggression. The phrase "or risk of becoming involved" makes clear the US imposes its punitive measures on the most tenuous grounds.

Once again, without providing a shred of evidence, the US accused China of committing "genocide" and "crimes against humanity" in its treatment of the Uyghurs. While the Beijing regime undoubtedly uses police-state measures in Xinjiang against alleged threats of terrorism and separatism, US claims of "genocide" are a gross lie. Moreover, its allegations of "human rights" abuses are based on the highly questionable evidence of right-wing academics and pro-Uyghur exile organisations.

The US routinely turns a blind eye to the human rights abuses of its allies and strategic partners, such as Saudi Arabia, when it suits its interests. When the Bush administration sought Chinese support for its illegal and brutal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, it endorsed Beijing's own "war on terrorism" in Xinjiang. Now as it prepares for a showdown with China, the US under Biden, as under Trump, is ramping up its attacks on the Chinese regime with an abrupt about-face on the issue of the Uyghurs.

Last Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with seven Uyghur exiles in what was nothing more than a media stunt. According to a State Department spokesman, the secretary wanted to hear their stories of detention in China, "to hear first-hand their impression of the ongoing atrocities in Xinjiang and the internment of a million Uyghurs."

In reality, while Uyghurs are clearly being held in what Beijing calls "re-education" and "training" centres, there is no first-hand evidence of the scale of Uyghur detentions. The figure of one million, concocted from dubious second-hand information, is simply repeated endlessly in the US and international media as if it were an established fact.

The latest round of US sanctions against China is a further sign that the Biden administration intends to

intensify its propaganda war. It provocatively imposed the previous round of sanctions on Chinese officials in March, just days before Blinken was due to hold his first face-to-face meeting with top Chinese diplomats in Alaska. His blunt denunciations of China before his Chinese counterparts in Alaska were calculated to create a diplomatic row before the TV cameras and ensure that no meaningful dialogue took place.

More than Trump, Biden has sought to enlist US allies and partners in the accelerating war drive against China and ensure that they parrot the propaganda emanating from Washington, including on the alleged abuse of Uyghurs. In the wake of the summit in Alaska, the US, in league with the European Union, Britain and Canada, imposed a coordinated series of sanctions on China, specifically over the Uyghurs—measures that were also endorsed but not implemented by Australia and New Zealand.

Last month, an Australian parliamentary committee recommended the adoption of a global ban on the import of goods made with forced labour. The committee inquiry followed the introduction of a bill by independent senator Rex Patrick calling for a ban on goods from Xinjiang over China's alleged use of the forced labour of Uyghurs, in particular in the manufacture of cotton in Xinjiang. The committee's report endorsed the legislation and called for further measures against China in collaboration with the US, Britain and Canada.

In Britain, the parliament's foreign relations committee brought down a report last week calling for measures to stop the abuse of Uyghurs, including through a ban on the import of Chinese cotton and solar panels from Xinjiang. It also called on the government to announce that no British officials would attend the Winter Olympics in Beijing, establish special fast-track systems for Uyghur asylum seekers, and ban imports from Chinese technology firms involved in providing surveillance equipment installed in Xinjiang.

The British parliamentary report accused China of using its Belt and Road Initiative, which provides loans for infrastructure projects across Eurasia, to put pressure on many Islamic countries not to speak out against atrocities in Xinjiang. It is part of an emerging US-led campaign to bully and strong-arm countries to fall into line with anti-Chinese propaganda. That Muslim countries have not, in the main, joined in US

denunciations of alleged Chinese abuse of the Muslim Uyghurs is clearly regarded as a setback in Washington, and one that must be rectified.

The *Washington Post*, which has been prominent in propagating the lie of Uyghur genocide, last week took Pakistan's prime minister, Imran Khan, to task for lining up with China's policy toward the Uyghurs. "We have a very strong relationship with China... What they say about the programs in Xinjiang, we accept it," Khan said in remarks to mark 100 years since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. He added that it was hypocritical that other human rights issues were not afforded the same attention.

On Sunday, in response to the latest US bans, the Chinese Commerce Ministry branded Washington's move an "unreasonable suppression of Chinese enterprises and a serious breach of international economic and trade rules." Without specifying, it warned that China would "take necessary measures to firmly safeguard Chinese companies' legitimate rights and interests."

Along with the lie that COVID-19 emanated from a virology laboratory in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the US intends to exploit its bogus "human rights" campaign over the Uyghurs as a central element of its anti-China propaganda. Its focus on Xinjiang is not accidental. The region is strategically sensitive for China as it is adjacent to Central Asia and crucial for its Belt and Road Initiative. Washington calculates that turmoil in Xinjiang would weaken China and advance US interests in energy-rich Central Asia.



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