

France Questions Legality of New US Bans on Iran, Russia, North Korea

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France has raised doubts about the legitimacy of new US sanctions against Iran and Russia, saying they do not conform to international law due to their extraterritorial reach.

The French foreign ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that French and European laws would need to be adjusted in response to the new sanctions, which await US President Donald Trump's approval.

The ministry also called for discussions at European Union level because of the potential impact that the bans were going to have on European citizens and firms.

On Tuesday, the US House of Representatives voted to impose new sanctions against Iran, Russia and North Korea. The lower chamber of the US Congress voted 419 to 3 to pass the sanctions package.

The bill includes sanctions against Iran and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) for allegedly supporting terrorism, which Tehran vehemently denies, and North Korea, for its missile tests.

The legislation also aims to punish Moscow for its alleged meddling in the 2016 US presidential election and the reunification of Crimea with the Russian Federation.

The EU had earlier warned Washington against the new bans, out of fear that they would adversely affect its new energy deals with Russia.

In a clear message to Trump, EU President Jean-Claude Juncker said the bloc would act "within days" if the Trump administration failed to reassure its European allies about the potential impacts of the bans on their interests.

"America first cannot mean that Europe's interests come last," he added.

The EU fears that the new punitive measures might hit European companies involved in the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, which will be used to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany.

Germany has also opposed the latest measures, calling them an "unacceptable" move that is likely "to serve the interests of US industry policies."

Iran warns of reciprocal measures

Earlier in the day, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani condemned the new Congress bill and said the Iranian parliament would adopt reciprocal measures.

“And we will take any step deemed necessary in line with the interests of our country, and we will continue our path without paying attention to their (Americans’) sanctions and policies,” he asserted.

Meanwhile, Abbas Araqchi, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said the “hostile” move amounted to a breach of the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the six world powers—the US, the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany.

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