

UN Sanctions Designed to Impose Suffering on the North Korean People

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Having repeatedly shunned North Korean proposals for negotiations over the last several years, the Obama Administration succeeded last week in securing harsh UN sanctions that can only further strain relations.

Ostensibly aimed at limiting North Korea's ability to further its nuclear weapons program, the content of UN Security Council Resolution 2270 appears to be aimed more at inducing severe economic dislocation or even collapse.

There are numerous articles in the resolution intended to inflict economic harm on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK – the official name for North Korea), and only the more prominent are mentioned here. Article 29 prohibits North Korea from exporting coal, iron, and iron-ore unless it can be proven that the revenue from their sale is "exclusively for livelihood purposes." As foreign exchange raised by exports ends up in the coffers of mining firms, no direct relationship can be traced to its ultimate use. In other words, this article amounts to a total ban on the export of these assets.

The resolution also imposes a blanket ban on the export of gold, titanium ore, vanadium ore, and rare earth minerals. These trade restrictions eliminate the majority of North Korea's export market.

UN member states cannot sell aviation fuel to the DPRK, except what is needed for North Korean planes to return home from abroad. Over time, though, as supplies dry up, the effect will be to permanently ground all North Korean air traffic.

Article 32 imposes a freeze on all financial assets held abroad by North Korean entities or individuals that a UN member state deems as being engaged in trade prohibited by UN resolutions.

Nations are required to inspect all cargo either originating from or destined to the DPRK, in search of banned items. Shipping delays resulting from the inspection process will inevitably impose financial losses. Furthermore, the DPRK's trading partners may decide to disengage from the relationship when it becomes apparent that contractual delivery dates cannot be met due to inspection delays. The intent of all of these measures is to strangle North Korea's ability to engage in normal trade.

Thirty-one North Korean vessels are listed as being subject to asset freeze, and already one of them, the *Jin Teng*, was seized after it docked in Subic Bay, despite the fact that inspection of the cargo turned up no banned items. The North Korean crew is being

deported and the DPRK is not being compensated for the loss of its 6,830-ton cargo ship.

Potentially the most far-reaching articles are those that deal with financial institutions. Nations are directed to block the DPRK from operating a bank or financial institution on their territory, and existing establishments are to be forcibly closed. Nor are UN member states permitted to open financial institutions in North Korea or to engage in any financial transactions with North Korea.

If no financial institution may conduct business with any North Korean financial entity, then this will have the inevitable effect of eliminating virtually all normal foreign trade.

The United States, acting through means of the UN Security Council resolution, is waging economic warfare on the DPRK and imposing collective punishment on the entire North Korean population. That U.S. hostility is politically motivated is underlined by the good relations it maintains with other nations operating outside of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Israel, India and Pakistan all have far more advanced nuclear weapons programs, yet only the DPRK is singled out for sanctions. Similarly, many nations launch satellites into orbit, but only North Korea is punished for doing so.

There is no 'principle' at stake, other than that no country the United States may wish to crush at some point through one means or another can develop the means to ward off a military attack. With the launch of the largest-ever joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises on March 7, rehearsing the invasion of North Korea, all avenues for diplomacy have been closed off, and tensions can only worsen.

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