Beat: News

UN tightens sanctions as N. Korea threatens nuclear attack

-, 08.03.2013, 01:35 Time

USPA News - North Korea on Thursday threatened the United States with a preemptive nuclear strike in response to military exercises, just hours before the United Nations (UN) Security Council voted in favor of tough new sanctions to punish the reclusive country for its latest nuclear test. Resolution 2094, the council`s fifth resolution since 2006, strengthens and significantly expands the scope of UN sanctions which were already in place.

The sanctions aim to significantly impede North Korea`s ability to further develop nuclear and ballistic missile programs, as well as its proliferation activities. The 15-member Council unanimously adopted the tightened sanctions, which target the country`s trade and banking, as well as travel by targeted officials. In addition, the Council demanded that the country retract its announcement of withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and reaffirmed its demand for North Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. An existing ban on North Korean trade in items related to its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and officials involved in them includes a number of items in the resolution`s annexes, ranging from "pyrotechnically actuated valves" to luxury goods such as jewelry with pearls and race cars. The resolution approved on Thursday also extends the UN Security Council`s travel ban and asset freeze to additional individuals and companies, including those involved in the trade of arms-related material and to the Second Academy of Natural Sciences in North Korea`s capital of Pyongyang. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on North Korea and all other Member States to fully comply with the resolution, reaffirming his commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through dialogue. He also expressed concern due to the increased tension in the region, which remains technically in a state of war. The decision to adopt the new sanctions came just hours after North Korea`s foreign ministry threatened to launch a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States in response to massive military exercises in the region this month. This comes just days after North Korea said it will declare the Korean War Armistice Agreement nullified from March 11. "Now that the U.S. is set to light a fuse for a nuclear war, the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK will exercise the right to a preemptive nuclear attack to destroy the strongholds of the aggressors and to defend the supreme interests of the country," a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement, referring to the country by its official name, the Democratic People`s Republic of Korea. The Korean Armistice Agreement, signed in July 1953, put into force a cease-fire in an effort to end the Korean War. In Thursday`s statement, the spokesman said that it will no longer be restrained by the agreement from March 11, warning that its military will be able to take action for "self-defense against any target at any moment." U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland noted that threats from North Korea are not surprising but that it would take them seriously. "Let me just take this opportunity to say that the United States is fully capable of defending against a DPRK ballistic missile attack," she said. "Furthermore, we are continuing to upgrade our ballistic missile defense capabilities. We remain firmly committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and Japan and the maintenance of regional peace and security." Sanctions were first imposed on North Korea by the UN Security Council following nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, including a ban on the import of nuclear and missile technology. The sanctions were further tightened in January 2013 after the country launched a long-range Unha-3 rocket which North Korea claimed to be a weather satellite, but other countries described it as a long-range missile test in disguise.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-604/un-tightens-sanctions-as-n-korea-threatens-nuclear-attack.html

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