

U.S. Blacklists Four Russian Companies for Shipping Oil to N. Korea



North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un marches along with an ICBM launcher, 2022 (KCNA)

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On Monday, the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued sanctions against four Russian companies for shipping fuel into North Korea, violating U.S. prohibitions on trading with Pyongyang. The new listings are part of a package designed to penalize North Korea for "escalating provocation and hostile military posturing that exacerbate global tensions," including the provision of North Korean troops for Russian military operations against Ukraine.

Treasury listed Vostok Trading LLC, DV Ink LLC, and Novosibirskoblgaz LLC for allegedly shipping thousands of tons of oil and gas to North Korea. The shipments began in 2022 and continued through at least April 2024, according to the department.

Vostok and DV Ink are based in Ussuriysk, in the Primorsky region bordering China and North Korea. Novosibirskoblgaz is farther away from the Korean border, in the city of Novosibirsk, and is owned by Sibregiongaz (also named in Monday's sanctions list).

The sanctions are intended in part to retaliate for a series of North Korean missile test launches into the Sea of Japan. The North's ballistic missile is viewed with unease in Washington, Tokyo and Seoul.

On November 5, North Korean forces launched at least seven short-range ballistic missiles off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. The week before, they launched an intercontinental ballistic missile, their first ICBM test launch in a year. Japanese defense officials said that radar tracking showed that it was the highest altitude, longest-duration ICBM flight yet for the North - 4,000 miles high and 1.5 hours long - indicating that it could have enough range to reach the United States if

launched on a different trajectory. In this case, it splashed down without harm about 200 nautical miles to the west of Hokkaido.

“The Kim regime’s continued provocative actions — including its most recent ICBM test and its deepening military support to Russia — undermine the stability of the region and sustain Putin’s continued aggression in Ukraine,” said Acting Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Bradley T. Smith. “The United States remains committed to disrupting the illicit procurement and facilitation networks that enable these destabilizing activities.”