

NORTH KOREA FLOUTS UN SANCTIONS, EARNS \$200M

UNITED NATIONS—North Korea is flouting UN sanctions on oil and gas, engaging in prohibited ballistic missile cooperation with Syria and Myanmar, and illegally exporting commodities that brought in nearly \$200 million in just nine months last year, according to UN experts.

'Deceptive practices'

The experts said Pyongyang is still able to access the global financial system through "deceptive practices combined with critical deficiencies in the implementation of financial sanctions."

And it continues to engage in "widespread conventional arms deals and cyber operations to steal military secrets," the panel said.

The experts report to the UN Security Council, obtained Fri-

day by The Associated Press, said North Korean diplomats "continue to play a key role in the country's prohibited programs."

Tougher sanctions

The council has imposed increasingly tougher sanctions against North Korea in response to its nuclear and ballistic missile tests. The latest resolution in December—in response to the launch of a ballistic missile that Pyongyang says is capable of reaching anywhere on the US mainland—sharply lowered limits on North Korea's refined oil imports and authorized the inspection and seizure of ships suspected of smuggling banned items including coal and oil to and from the country.

US Ambassador Nikki Haley said sanctions now ban well over

90 percent of North Korea's exports reported in 2016.

But the panel of experts said the expansion of UN sanctions hasn't been matched by the "political will," international coordination, and allocation of resources to implement them.

"This year could represent a critical window of opportunity before a potential miscalculation with disastrous implications for international peace and security," the experts said.

Illegal transfers of oil

According to the report, the panel investigated North Korea's ongoing ballistic missile cooperation with Syria and Myanmar.

It also investigated illegal ship-to-ship transfers of oil "comprising a multimillion-dollar business that is driving an international network of brokers

and ship charterers as well as unwitting global commodity trading companies and oil suppliers."

North Korea also continued its illegal coal exports by combining deceptive navigation patterns, transshipment through third countries and fraudulent documentation "to obscure the origin of the coal."

The report said North Korea exported coal to China, Malaysia, South Korea, Russia and Vietnam in 2017 in violation of sanctions.

It said "a network of foreign traders responsible for violations of the coal ban operates through numerous front companies" registered in Australia, British Virgin Islands, China, Hong Kong, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Seychelles and the United Kingdom. —AP

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