

Russia accused of aiding North Korea with 100 MILLION gallon oil transfers at sea

RUSSIA has denied breaking UN sanctions against North Korea by transferring fuel to the regime's tankers at sea. A statement from the foreign ministry said Russia had "fully and strictly observed the sanctions regime" introduced in a bid to curb Kim Jong-un's missile testing programme and nuclear ambitions.

Moscow spoke out after two separate, unidentified western European security sources alleged ship-to-ship transfers took place in October and November and represented a breach of sanctions.

The statement did not address whether the ships had transferred the fuel.

But it said resolutions by the UN security council imposed limits on North Korea's refined oil imports rather than banning them altogether.

The security sources said the Russian-flagged tanker Vityaz was one vessel that had transferred fuel to North Korean vessels.

Modern oil tankers can carry almost 100 MILLION gallons - just a handful of such transfers would be enough to keep North Korea unafraid of UK sanctions for years.



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Kim Jong-un has vowed to press ahead with his nuclear programme despite UN sanctions



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The Hong-Kong registered tanker Lighthouse Winmore is under investigation
Yaroslav Guk, deputy director of Vladivostok-based tanker owner Alisa Ltd,

denied the vessel had had contact with North Korean vessels. He said: "Absolutely no, this is very dangerous. It would be complete madness."

Ship-to-ship trade with North Korean ships was banned by the UN Security Council in September in response to Pyongyang's sixth nuclear test earlier the same month.

The measure was meant to close a loophole used by Pyongyang to avoid trade restrictions imposed by the international community.



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Tough UN sanctions are aimed at curbing Kim Jong-un's nuclear ambitions

But recent activity would suggest the ban is being flouted. A Panama-flagged ship suspected of selling oil to North Korea in international waters has been seized by South Korea.

The 5,100-ton KOTI tanker was detained by authorities in the port of Pyeongtaek-Dangjin in South Korea's Gyeonggi Province.

Security and customs officials decided last week not to let the ship leave the port after suspecting it of engaging in ship-to-ship oil trade with North Korea in violation of UN sanctions.

Earlier on Friday, Seoul announced it was investigating the Hong Kong-flagged

Lighthouse Winmore tanker for allegedly transferring up to 600 tons of petroleum to a North Korean vessel in October. The ship was seized on November 24 at the port of Yeosu.

The report triggered an international scandal as US President Donald Trump accused China of being “caught red-handed” supplying oil to North Korea.

North Korea relies on imported fuel to keep its struggling economy functioning.

It also requires oil for its intercontinental ballistic missile and nuclear programme that the US says threatens the peace in there region.

But Kim has vowed to continue enhancing North Korea’s nuclear capabilities, with state media declaring the Communist state an “invincible” and “responsible” nuclear power.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said: “Do not expect any change in its policy.

“Its entity as an invincible power can neither be undermined nor be stamped out.

“The US persistently moves against the North Korea in political, economic, military, diplomatic and all other fields till the end of this year could not stop even a moment the advance of the North Korea confident in the victory of its cause.”

The UN security council has unanimously approved several rounds of sanctions against North Korea over its missile tests and nuclear program, including a tough resolution earlier this month.

Source: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/898465/north-korea-kim-jong-un-un-security-council-trade-sanctions>

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