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`N. Korea earns \$2b from Iran trade`

In order to implement effective sanctions against North Korea, China must block airline operations between North Korea and Iran, as Pyongyang has been earning more than \$2 billion per year from trade with Tehran, a U.S. expert said.

Larry Nicksche, a senior researcher at the U.S. Congressional Research Service, said on Tuesday that as part of effective sanctions against North Korea, Beijing must stop airline operation between Pyongyang and Tehran.

The airline operation between the two countries was the key issue in sanctions against the North, Nicksche said in a debate session on China`s role in resolving North Korean issues at the Cato Institute in Washington on Tuesday.

Nicksche said that North Korea`s scientists, technicians, missiles, missile parts and technical documents were being transported to Iran via air, and the U.S. government was aware of this.

As Iran, Syria and Myanmar have become North Korea`s three major customers, with Iran being the largest, China should stop providing fuel for aircrafts operating between the two countries, he said.

All of the food supply from China to North Korea goes to the military, according to Nicksche, who noted that stopping the food supply would deal a significant blow to the North.

Ted Calen Carpenter, Cato`s vice president of defense and foreign policy studies, reportedly said at the debate session that China was hesitating to use its leverage against North Korea.

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Carpenter called for Washington`s strategic shift to induce active cooperation from Beijing.

Now was the time for collective negotiations and the United States must suggest serious talks with the North, he said.

Carpenter said that Washington should suggest everything Pyongyang wants, including establishing diplomatic ties, exchange of ambassadors and replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty.

In return, Washington should demand a complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment of the North Korean nuclear program and such a proposal for collective negotiations would clearly show that China`s ongoing negotiations with the North were ineffective, he said.

Doug Bandow, senior fellow at Cato, said that it was important for Washington to quell Beijing`s concerns in case of Pyonyang`s collapse to help China exercise its influence on North Korea.

The United States, South Korea and Japan must show their will to cooperate in case of a refugee crisis should North Korea collapse and must guarantee it to China, Bandow said.

Discussions must start now on what will happen if North Korea tumbles, who will do what and who will sustain order, he said.

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