

UK blocks Hong Kong extradition, weapons

By Kitty Donaldson
Bloomberg

The U.K. suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong and placed it under an arms embargo in moves likely to significantly exacerbate a diplomatic spat with China after it imposed a new security law on the former British colony.

The moves are "a necessary and proportionate response," U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the House of Commons on Monday. The suspension will stay "unless or until there are clear, robust safeguards which are able to prevent extraditions from the U.K. being misused under the new national security legislation," he said.

Though halting the extradition pact and suspending arms sales is largely symbolic, it marks the latest condemnation by Boris Johnson's government of Chinese conduct in Hong Kong, and will trigger anger



RAAB: Dominic Raab, U.K. foreign secretary, arrives at 10 Downing Street in London on April 27.

Simon Dawson/Bloomberg

in Beijing. It comes less than a week after the U.K. banned China's Huawei Technologies from next-generation wireless networks on security grounds and follows London's invitation to as many as 3 million

Hong Kongers to apply for British citizenship.

"This embargo means there will be no export of weapons from the U.K. to Hong Kong of potentially lethal weapons and ammunition," Raab said. "It will also mean a ban on any equipment, not already banned, that might be used for internal repression such as shackles, intercept equipment, firearms and smoke grenades."

'Brutal' meddling

Speaking to reporters in Beijing on Monday before Raab's statement, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin accused the U.K. of "brutal" meddling in China's internal affairs and urged the British government to halt its "wrong words and actions."

The diplomatic row with China has come at an inopportune time for Johnson, who is trying to reset the U.K.'s ties with the rest of the world after divorce from the European Union this year. His government wants to secure free-trade deals with coun-

tries around the world as it seeks to deliver the benefits it promised from Brexit.

But the prime minister is facing extreme pressure on his China policy both from lawmakers in his own Conservative Party and from overseas, especially President Donald Trump.

It was the Trump administration's sanctions on Huawei that finally led to the U.K. banning the company from its 5G networks. That followed repeated warnings from Washington, which is embroiled in a long-running trade stand-off with Beijing, that it would halt intelligence-sharing if London didn't fall into line.

The pressure from the U.S. is unrelenting. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo visits London this week to meet Raab and U.K. lawmakers to discuss a range of topics, including "the fact that China now concerns everyone," Conservative lawmaker Bob Seely said in an interview.

United States sanctions more Chinese companies

By Jeanne Whalen
The Washington Post

The U.S. on Monday announced sanctions against a new group of Chinese companies for involvement in human-rights violations in China's Xinjiang region, accusing them of supporting a "campaign of repression" against Uighurs and other minority groups.

The Commerce Department added 11 companies to an already existing trade blacklist over the alleged Xinjiang violations, bringing to nearly 50 the total number of Chinese entities on the list. The sanctions restrict the companies' access to U.S. technology and other goods.

"Beijing actively promotes the reprehensible practice of forced labor and abusive DNA collection and analysis schemes to repress its citizens," Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross said in a statement. "This action will ensure that our goods and technologies are not used in the Chinese Communist Party's despicable offensive against defenseless Muslim minority populations."

In a brief statement, Commerce said nine of the companies were involved in forced labor activities involving Uighurs and other Muslim minority groups. The statement did not elaborate, and Commerce officials didn't respond to a request for further details.

Several of the companies were

named in a report this year as running factories that used Xinjiang laborers compelled to work under a forced-labor program led by the government. The Chinese companies, including Changji Esquel Textile, Hefei Meiling and Nanjing Synergy Textiles, are suppliers to a large number of Western companies, according to the report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a think tank founded and partly funded by the Australian government, with additional funding from Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and other companies. None of the Chinese companies could be reached immediately to comment.

Earlier this year, U.S. Customs and

Border Protection seized a shipment of hair-weave products from another of the newly sanctioned companies, Hetian Haolin Hair Accessories, saying it had information indicating that the goods were made with the use of forced labor. The Associated Press mentioned that seizure in a subsequent investigation. The company couldn't immediately be reached to comment.

The Commerce Department also sanctioned two companies, Xinjiang Silk Road BGI and Beijing Liuhe BGI, for helping conduct "genetic analysis used to further the repression" of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities. The agency's statement did not give further details.

NKorea's Kim fires officials for extortion linked to hospital project

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea's leader has sacked officials building a hospital after they pressed the public for contributions, media reported on Monday, the second rebuke linked to the high-profile project in a country where such problems are rarely publicized.

Leader Kim Jong Un ordered the Pyongyang General Hospital to be built by the 75th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party in October, calling it a "top priority" in improving public health

But during his latest visit to the site, Kim fired a group of project managers, called the construction coordination commission, for failing to allocate a proper budget and supplying equipment and materials from ordinary citizens.

"He severely rebuked them for burdening the people by encouraging all kinds of 'assistance,'" the KCNA state news agency reported, calling the incident a "serious digression" from party policy.

KCNA released photographs of a serious-looking Kim speaking at the site with officials wearing masks.

It was his second rebuke for the managers this month. He earlier criticized them for causing delays with "inattention" and violating



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