

China must do 'whatever it takes' to bring rogue to heel, says Turnbull



US Vice-President Mike Pence.

Primrose Riordan, Rachel Baxendale, The Australian, 12:00AM April 19, 2017

Malcolm Turnbull has urged Chinese leaders to do “whatever it takes” to stop North Korea’s nuclear threats, and help avoid the rogue nation “raining down devastation on its neighbours”.

As the Department of Foreign Affairs sought public consultation on how to expand Australia’s sanctions against North Korea, the Prime Minister said it was time for China to take control of the deteriorating situation.

DFAT is examining bans aimed at North Korea’s airline, Air Koryo, and the country’s mining sector, as well as measures to block North Korean aligned ships docking in Australia.

Ahead of Mike Pence’s visit to Sydney this weekend, Mr Turnbull praised the US Vice--President, saying his statement that the US’s “strategic patience has come to an end” would focus all involved on a resolution.

Mr Turnbull said the “eyes of the world are now on Beijing” to pull North Korea back “at least (to) the position where it is not threatening to rain down devastation on its neighbours”. “China should do whatever it takes — and it has many avenues and it has enormous leverage over North Korea,” Mr Turnbull said.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said US military action could include options to take out the state's nuclear facilities, and the Trump administration was taking the threat seriously. Ms Bishop said it was unlikely Australia would be involved in any such action.

Despite China's move to limit North Korean coal exports, data released last week showed that China's trade with the regime grew 37 per cent in the first quarter of this year compared with the same period in 2016. Ms Bishop said there was much China could still do to avoid military confrontation and suggested the country should target North Korean elites.

"There is a long way to go before China exercises the financial muscle that it really has. The coal export (ban) was in accordance with a UN security council resolution," she told Sky News. Ms Bishop confirmed Australia had sanctioned more organisations and people for their ties to North Korea. "Australia is supporting the sanctions regime; we listed a few more entities and individuals on our financial sanctions regime," she said.

A DFAT call for public consultation on North Korean sanctions closed on March 17.

Comment was sought on amending Australia's sanctions to ban more people or organisations from funding, servicing or assisting North Korea's airline, Air Koryo, or any companies associated with mining in the east Asian state. The sanctions also allow Ms Bishop to more easily stop any ships linked to North Korea from docking at Australian ports.

North Korea's deputy UN ambassador Kim In-ryong accused the US overnight of turning the Korean peninsula into "the world's biggest hotspot" and creating "a dangerous situation in which a thermonuclear war may break out at any moment". He told a news conference that "if the US dares opt for a military action", North Korea "is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the US".

Labor's foreign affairs spokeswoman Penny Wong told The Australian North Korea's behaviour was "the greatest current threat to peace and stability in our region".