

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

September 22, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Yellen:

We remain deeply concerned about the Kim Jong Un regime's oppression of the North Korean people and continued development of nuclear weapons. As you know, Congress passed sanctions, by overwhelming bipartisan majorities, in 2016, 2017, and 2019 to give the administration necessary tools to combat North Korea's activities. Unfortunately, North Korea continues to innovate and pursue new methods to evade United States and United Nations sanctions. The Kim regime is comfortable with the status quo, which allows Pyongyang to continue its prohibited nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. We urge you and the administration to fully enforce Congressional and multilateral sanctions to increase the pressure on the Kim regime and completely remove any incentive for the Kim regime's single-minded pursuit to develop weapons of mass destruction.

On May 16, 2022, your departments and the Federal Bureau of Investigation released a fact sheet and advisory explaining that thousands of North Korean information technology (IT) workers have been forced to seek employment internationally in order to generate new revenue streams for the regime.¹ As has been noted in many previous reports by the U.S. Department of State, the regime confiscates as much as 90 percent of the salary earned by overseas North Korean laborers. While we commend your administration for issuing this guidance, more must be done. According to a recent study² by Mandiant Inc., North Korean IT workers based in China and Russia continue to use websites like Upwork, LinkedIn, Indeed, Github, and others to obtain employment in American technology and finance companies.

We are troubled by news reports that Russia and North Korea are strengthening their relationship, which will aid Vladimir Putin's unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. North Korea and Russia have recently agreed to dispatch North Korean laborers to areas in Ukraine seized by Russia. We also learned that Russia is attempting to purchase millions of artillery shells and rockets from North Korea.³ On September 7, 2022, a State Department Spokesperson stated that the administration expects that "Russia could try to purchase additional

¹ https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/20220516_dprk_it_worker_fact_sheet.pdf;
https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/20220516_dprk_it_worker_advisory.pdf

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-01/north-koreans-suspected-of-using-fake-resumes-to-steal-crypto>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/05/us/politics/russia-north-korea-artillery.html>

North Korean military equipment going forward.” He also noted, “Russian military continues to suffer from severe supply shortages in Ukraine, which is in large part a consequence of our export controls and sanctions.” While North Korean state media has refuted that it has provided weapons to Russia, it defended its right to do so in the future. The enhanced Russia-North Korea relationship is troublesome and could undermine the sanctions against both countries.

As you are well aware, mandatory sanctions require the President to designate any person who: (1) knowingly, directly or indirectly, engages in, facilitates, or is responsible for the employment of North Korean workers; and (2) knowingly, directly or indirectly, imports, exports, or reexports to, into, or from North Korea any arms or related materiel. We urge you to impose sanctions on any company, individual, or financial institution that is involved in hiring North Korean forced laborers – including IT workers and workers in the Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine – and is involved in the transfer of military items from North Korea to Russia. We also request an update on the administration’s enforcement of these mandatory sanctions. We urge you to review the practices of websites, including LinkedIn and Indeed, which continue to host fraudulent user profiles of North Korean IT workers, to determine if there are sufficient safeguards in place to prevent American companies from employing North Korean forced laborers through these websites.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Bill Hagerty
U.S. Senator