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People's Korea demands return of ship illegally seized by U.S.

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'The United States is indeed a gangster country that does not care at all about international laws'



The North Korean vessel Wise Honest. Photo: Department of Justice/Handout via REUTERS

The U.S. has seized the second largest bulk carrier cargo ship owned by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Having failed at the bargaining table in a February summit held in Hanoi, the Trump administration is now veering once again toward hostility and pressure as opposed to negotiations.

The announcement of the ship's seizure seems to have been held back until it was useful as a way of applying more pressure in their efforts to disarm the socialist country. The ship, named Wise Honest, was seized by Indonesia in April 2018. The

U.S. presented a warrant to take possession in July 2018. None of this was public until May 2019.

The announcement followed a test-firing of two short-range missiles by the DPRK's military. Even though the tests were long planned and routine, they still were a signal that the DPRK is not about to surrender its military preparedness nor its national dignity.

To date, Trump has held two summits with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un. The first summit was in June 2018, when Trump traveled to Singapore, where he promised a new peaceful relationship, announced an end to the U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises that have long been a blatant military threat to the DPRK and expressed a vague wish to see the presence of U.S. troops in South Korea end someday.

At the second summit, Trump underestimated the resolve of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and demanded that the North "denuclearize" before any sanctions would be lifted. The summit was called off and Trump flew back to Washington early with no agreement.

Seizure unlawful, outrageous

The seizure of the ship is a blow to the DPRK. The 581-foot vessel is not easily replaced. [The Foreign Ministry of the DPRK denounced](#) the seizure as "an unlawful and outrageous act" and "an outright denial of the underlying spirit of the June 12 DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement."

[In a letter sent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on May 18](#), the DPRK demanded that the United Nations take "urgent measures" to help return a cargo ship taken by the United States, calling the seizure a "heinous" act.

"This act of dispossession has clearly indicated that the United States is indeed a gangster country that does not care at all about international laws," the North

Korean ambassador to the UN said in a letter sent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres dated Friday, according to North Korea's KCNA news agency.

The DPRK has never known a moment's peace. Since the revolutionary guerilla army, led by its founder and first president, Kim Il Sung, defeated the U.S. military and secured the northern half of the peninsula in the 1950-1953 war, North Korea has been under grave military threat by the Pentagon. During the years when the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China both gave political support and trade, the DPRK recovered from what had been one of the most devastating wars ever carried out by U.S. imperialism.

The war took the lives of 5 to 6 million people and destroyed their infrastructure. By the mid-1970s, North Korea's industrial progress outpaced that of South Korea, and living standards improved under socialist planning. But the U.S. military threat, which has always included a nuclear threat, forced the DPRK to institute a "military-first" policy. It meant that strong defense had to be prioritized over other needs.

Coupled with the U.S. sanctions, the military-first policy has meant sacrifice on the part of the North Korean people. But it was a willing sacrifice. The development of a nuclear defense program now means more resources for other important national needs because it costs less in resources than conventional military spending and yet reduces the risk of a first-strike by the U.S. military.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the DPRK had difficult times. In addition to losing a giant trading partner, there were natural disasters that devastated North Korea's agriculture. The loss of oil imports from the USSR cut their supply of fuel for industry, fertilizer and home heating.

Clinton threatened attack

Unable to purchase oil on the world market, scientists and engineers redoubled

efforts to build nuclear reactors for energy. But they were not at that point pursuing nuclear weapons, and in fact had signed on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985. Nonetheless, by 1994, just five years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Bill Clinton administration gathered military leadership in the war room to prepare an attack, based on the false accusations of the DPRK pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

At the last minute, an agreement was reached separately by former President Jimmy Carter, who was representative of a section of the U.S. ruling class that preferred an agreement that would disarm the DPRK without a costly war. The agreement called for the abandonment of the existing nuclear energy reactors that were under construction and their replacement with two light-water reactors whose nuclear waste is not nuclear-weapons grade.

The DPRK agreed to forgo pursuit of nuclear weapons in exchange for the new reactors as well as deliveries of heating fuel, deliveries of rice and the gradual easing of sanctions. But imperialist strategists never had any intention of fulfilling their end of the agreement. They thought that, in the absence of the USSR, the DPRK would collapse. From their point of view, the agreement was only to prevent the DPRK from obtaining nuclear weapons capability until regime change came about in whatever way it would. The reactors were never built and the heating oil deliveries were always sent late — after the people had suffered through harsh winters.

The people of socialist North Korea understand the character of U.S. imperialism and have witnessed what happened to Libya and Iraq. They will not trade their security for false promises by a dangerous imperialist empire. Yet, even with their consciousness, unity and confidence in their military, they still need international support and our never-ending solidarity.

U.S. Hands Off North Korea!

