

Vietnam regrets U.S. decision to sanction firm, says trade with Iran strictly civilian

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Foreign Ministry spokesperson Le Thi Thu Hang. (Photo: Nguyen Hong)

Hanoi, December 17 (RHC)-- Vietnam's Foreign Ministry has voiced regrets about a US decision to sanction a Vietnamese company for working with the Islamic Republic, saying trade relations between Vietnam and Iran are "strictly civilian."

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the US Treasury announced that it has targeted Vietnam Gas and Chemicals Transportation Corporation for its role in the transport of petroleum products from Iran. "The United States will act against persons who support illicit actors engaged in the movement of Iranian petroleum and petrochemical sales," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin claimed in the statement.

Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Thi Thu Hang told a daily press briefing on Thursday that trade relations between Vietnam and Iran are “strictly civilian” and involve goods that would serve the essential needs of people. They are not contrary to the resolutions of the UN, she stressed.

According to Hang, Vietnam fully observes UN resolutions and handles any violations accordingly. She added that her country hoped Washington would remove the sanctions on the company.

In its Wednesday statement, the U.S. Treasury also announced sanctions on four Chinese and UAE-based companies over supporting the sale of Iranian petrochemicals.

In its final weeks in power, the U.S. administration of Donald Trump has ramped up pressure on Iran to make it more difficult for President-elect Joe Biden’s administration to restore the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and possibly lift the Iran sanctions.

Trump has implemented a so-called maximum pressure policy against Tehran after he withdrew the US from the nuclear deal with the aim of pressuring Tehran into negotiating a “better deal”. The Trump administration has also applied unilateral coercive measures, also known as secondary sanctions, against companies that work with Iran.

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