

China swaps sanctions with US in dispute over Uighur Muslims

CE Noticias Financieras English

July 13, 2020 Monday

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Length: 342 words

Body

By Yew Lun Tian

PEKON, Jul 13 (Reuters) - China on Monday announced "reciprocal sanctions" against the United States after Washington penalized senior Chinese officials for treating the Uighur Muslim minority in western Xinjiang.

China's decision comes at a sensitive time in the relationship between the world's two largest economic powers over disagreements over issues such as the coronavirus pandemic, trade, Huawei and the new national security law imposed on Hong Kong.

The sanctions were directed to Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, U.S. Representative Chris Smith, Special Mission Ambassador for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback and the Executive Committee of the United States Congress on China.

Both Rubio and Cruz have proposed laws to punish China's actions in Xinjiang. Smith has also openly criticized China on issues ranging from the situation in Xinjiang to Hong Kong to coronavirus.

All three are members of President Donald Trump's GoP.

"US actions seriously interfere in China's internal affairs, severely violate the basic norms of international relations, and seriously damage Chinese-American relations," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters.

"China will give more answers depending on how the situation develops."

Hua didn't give details.

UN experts and activists say at least one million ethnic Uighur and other Muslims are being held in detention centres in Xinjiang. China describes them as training centers that help eradicate terrorism and extremism and give people new skills.

The Executive Committee of the U.S. Congress on China oversees human rights and the development of the rule of law and submits an annual report to Trump and Congress.

Washington's actions against Chinese leaders, including the secretary of the Xinjiang Communist Party, consist of freezing U.S. assets, banning travel, and banning Americans from doing business with them. [nL1N2EG1C5]

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Load-Date: July 14, 2020