

US sanctions Chinese computer makers in widening tech fight

9 April 2021, by Joe McDonald



In this Feb. 22, 2021, file photo, a woman wearing a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus sits near a screen showing China and U.S. flags as she listens to a speech by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Lanting Forum on bringing China-U.S. relations back to the right track, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Beijing. The Biden administration has added seven Chinese supercomputer research labs and manufacturers to a U.S. export blacklist in a spreading conflict with Beijing over technology and security. (AP Photo/Andy Wong, File)

China's government on Friday criticized the Biden administration's curbs on access to U.S. technology for its supercomputer developers and said sanctions "only strengthen China's determination" to invent its own.

The sanctions announced Thursday are the latest sign President Joe Biden is sticking to the tough line taken by his predecessor, Donald Trump, toward Chinese tech industries seen by Washington as potential threats.

The step adds to conflict over the ruling Communist Party's industrial plans, access to American technology and accusations of computer attacks and theft of business secrets.

A foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, accused Washington of misusing phony security warnings to "maliciously suppress" Chinese industry.

"Containment and suppression by the United States cannot stop the pace of China's scientific and technological progress, but will only strengthen China's determination and will to innovate independently," Zhao said.

Zhao said Beijing would protect its companies, echoing Chinese warnings after previous U.S. trade penalties that often are followed by no action.

The latest penalties block access to U.S. technology for researchers and manufacturers the Commerce Department said build supercomputers used by the Chinese military in weapons development. They can be used to simulate nuclear explosions and the aerodynamics of high-speed or stealth aircraft and missiles.

Biden has said he wants better relations with Beijing but has given no indication he will roll back sanctions imposed by Trump on Chinese telecom equipment giant Huawei and other companies.

The Communist Party has responded by declaring that accelerating efforts to transform China into a self-reliant "technology power" will be this year's top economic priority.

Chinese supercomputers have set speed records but use U.S.-supplied processor chips and other hardware. They can support weapons development by simulating nuclear explosions and the aerodynamics of high-speed or stealth aircraft and missiles.

"The United States has implemented a technical blockade of China in the supercomputer field for a long time, but China's supercomputers still lead the world due to independent innovation," Zhao said.

The U.S. penalties apply to National Supercomputing Centers in the cities of Jinan, Shenzhen, Wuxi and Zhengzhou, Tianjin Phytium Information Technology, Shanghai High-Performance Integrated Circuit Design Center and Sunway Microelectronics.

Meanwhile, American telecom regulators are in the process of stripping three Chinese phone carriers of the right to operate in the United States.

Trump also tried to force the Chinese owner of video service TikTok to sell its U.S. unit and issued an order barring Americans from investing in securities of companies deemed by the Pentagon to be linked to China's military.

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