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China Seeks Ways to Help Russia While Avoiding Sanctions – Washington Post

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Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

China is searching for ways to help Russia financially amid tightening Western sanctions without violating the restrictions itself, The Washington Post reported Thursday.

Moscow has requested greater trade, financial and technological support from its largest trading partner Beijing in at least two "tense" exchanges in recent weeks, unnamed Chinese officials told the newspaper.

Weapons and ammunition were apparently not part of the request.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has reportedly tasked his advisers to find ways to give Russia financial assistance that won't run afoul of the Western sanctions on Moscow.

"We understand [Moscow's] predicament. But we cannot ignore our own situation in this dialogue," an unnamed Chinese official was quoted as saying.

"The Chinese side is willing to fulfill its commitments to the Russian side, and is doing that

when suitable conditions are met," they added.

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High-level discussions among officials have emphasized fast-tracking Russian ventures in China while minimizing the risk to Beijing, The Washington Post reported. Several documents showed Russia's gas pipeline and nuclear projects inside China forging ahead, the newspaper added.

Beijing has also ordered regional and municipal governments to expand trade and financial ties with Russia, The Washington Post reported, citing Chinese officials and bidding documents filed in China.

Beijing has walked a diplomatic tightrope between refusing to join sanctions against Moscow and maintaining economic ties with the West after Russia invaded Ukraine in late February.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed support for Moscow during an online forum, attended by his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, ahead of a long-awaited cross-border bridge's opening this week.

But China has balked at helping Russia evade sanctions out of fears that it could be cut off from critical Western semiconductor and aerospace technology, an unnamed Chinese official told The Washington Post.

The unprecedented sanctions have "unnecessarily damaged" Russian-Chinese trade exchanges, said Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

Beijing has also reportedly made clear to Moscow that an end to the 100-day conflict would give China "more leeway" to oppose sanctions and grow business ties with Russia.

Days before the invasion, Russian President Vladimir Putin and China's Xi announced a "no-limits" partnership with plans to grow bilateral trade to $250 billion by 2024.

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