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Putting North Korea Back on Terror Blacklist Threatens Diplomacy

The announcement that the US is putting North Korea back on the blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism isn't expected to have much real impact, sanctions-wise, since the US already sanctions all things North Korean to essentially the maximum as it is. Even Secretary of State Rex Tillerson conceded the move was "largely symbolic."

But a symbolic hostile gesture is still a hostile gesture, and [analysts are warning that](#) this move is likely to do further harm to any efforts to get negotiations with North Korea started,



as it will encourage North Korea to retaliate with some move, and the US will be even less willing to be seen communicating with "terrorists."

The US removed North Korea from the list back in 2008 as part of an effort to improve ties. Reversing the move seems to be just a knee-jerk impulse, but it's still likely to have the opposite effect, and further sour ties between the two nations.

This continues a trend in which US-North Korea relations appear to send a lot of mixed messages. Though the State Department insists diplomacy is a top priority and all efforts are being made to resolve the disputes between the nations, President Trump has

repeatedly gone out of his way to both undercut the Secretary of State's talk of diplomacy and to raise tensions with North Korea by talking up a unilateral US attack.

Whatever the actual US intentions on the matter, putting North Korea back on the terror list accomplishes nothing, but risks damaging diplomacy. This has been an alarmingly common combination for US policy toward North Korea to achieve.