

US says working with India to help avoid sanctions

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The US on Saturday said it is working with partner countries, including India, to help them identify and avoid engaging in potentially sanctionable activity under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

The state department asserted that it is fully committed to implementing CAATSA under which sanctions kick in against countries that purchase significant military equipment from Russia. "We have discussed CAATSA with the government of India, and the United States is working with our partners including India to help them identify and avoid engaging in potentially sanctionable activity," a state department spokesperson said.

The spokesperson was responding to a question on a statement by US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis a day earlier in which he had sought waiver from sanctions under CAATSA for countries that are making a transition from their military dependence on Russia.

Providing the secretary of state with a CAATSA waiver authority, Mattis said, doing so allows nations to build a closer security relationship with the US as they continue to transition from their reliance on Russian military equipment.

"The fundamental ques-

tion we must ask ourselves is do we wish to strengthen our partners in key regions or leave them with no other option than to turn to Russia, thereby undermining a once in a generation opportunity to more closely align nations with the US vision for global security and stability," Mattis had said. The state department tended to differ from the stand taken by the Pentagon on CAATSA.

"This administration is fully committed to implementing CAATSA, including Section 231, which provides for sanctions on any person determined to knowingly engage in a significant transaction with a person that is a part of, or operates for or on behalf of, the defense or intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation," the spokesperson said.

"I am not going to speculate on future sanctions actions or go into details of the agenda for the 2+2 (dialogue) other than to say that we will discuss the full range of issues central to strategic, security, and defence cooperation," the official said when asked about possible sanctions being imposed on India under CAATSA.

Though the Act targets Russia, it is having its unintended consequences on India which is planning to buy five S-400 Triumf air defence systems for around \$4.5 billion from Russia, that US officials say could be considered as a significant military purchase.