



Evelyn Sheehan and Beau Barnes Analyze the DOJ's Civil Forfeiture Bid Against Iranian Oil En Route to Venezuela

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A recent civil forfeiture application from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is further evidence of their increasing attempts to seize assets outside the U.S. in national security cases, Kobre & Kim's Evelyn Sheehan recently told *Global Investigations Review*.

On July 1, 2020, federal prosecutors filed a civil forfeiture application targeting all the petroleum on board four cargo ships from Iran en route to Venezuela; the sale of the oil could support Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC). Sheehan observed that "civil forfeiture complaints like this are the tip of the spear" of U.S. policy denying sanctioned regimes like Iran, Venezuela and North Korea access to foreign currency.

"They allow prosecutors to seize property anywhere in the world, including cash, electronic deposits, and oil," Sheehan added, "with a much lower burden of proof than criminal charges and no need to navigate complex extradition procedures."

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Evelyn Sheehan and Beau Barnes also spoke with Reuters on the application. They further highlighted the significance of Washington's increased use of civil forfeiture to not only stop illicit trade involving Iran and Venezuela but to also complement their own sanctions policy.

"U.S. policy towards both Venezuela and Iran is focused on denying both regimes access to foreign currency," Sheehan added. "Intercepting gasoline cargoes with civil forfeiture is a novel way to achieve that goal."

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