



Insights

Jason Short on Scope and Risks of New Whistleblower Program Aiding Sanctions Against Russia

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The U.S. Department of Treasury launched a new whistleblower program for information leading to the seizure of stolen assets linked to foreign government corruption, just in time to join global sanctions efforts against Russian oligarchs. Kobre & Kim's Jason Short, who represents high-net-worth individuals in asset forfeiture proceedings and sanctions enforcement, spoke to *USA Today* on the program's scope – as well as its risks and limitations.

The Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Rewards Program was approved by Congress in 2020, offering up to US \$5 million to whistleblowers and becoming part of the toolkit of economic sanctions against Russia. However, Mr. Short pointed out that the reward could be considered low compared with other programs, and that the program was written "fairly vaguely" about what constitutes foreign government corruption. While this gives greater discretion to investigators, "it can create some uncertainty, particularly amongst whistleblowers or people who are wondering whether or not they can avail themselves of that program," Mr. Short explained.

Mr. Short also expressed concerns about the potential for overbroad applications of the program leading to unwarranted government enforcement. "People need to be mindful about perfectly legitimate activity that shouldn't trigger those kinds of red flags and shouldn't be considered reportable," he said.

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