

U.S. lawsuit seeks to deter deliveries of Iranian fuel to Venezuela



Washington, July 3 (RHC)-- U.S. prosecutors have filed a lawsuit to seize the much-needed gasoline aboard four tankers that Iran is shipping to Venezuela, the country which is facing fuel shortages due to the American economic embargo.

In the latest attempt by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to target the two nations, the civil-forfeiture complaint was filed by the federal prosecutors in the US District Court for the District of Columbia.

The lawsuit aims to stop delivery of Iranian gasoline aboard the Liberia-flagged Bella and the Bering, and the Pandi and the Luna, according to the Wall Street Journal. The complaint also seeks to deter future deliveries of Iranian fuel to Venezuela, and it also aims to stop the flow of revenues from petroleum sales to Iran.

The lawsuit alleges that profits from the shipments support the "full range of nefarious activities, including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, support for terrorism, and a variety of human rights abuses, at home and abroad."

This week, the fourth tanker of a five-vessel Iranian flotilla carrying gasoline to Venezuela entered Venezuelan waters, approaching its fuel-starved final destination. The tanker, Faxton, will be escorted by the Venezuelan armed forces en route to its destination, as in the case of its three predecessors.

The five-tanker Iranian-flagged flotilla is carrying up to 1.53 million barrels of gasoline and components to help the country ease an acute scarcity that has forced Venezuelans to wait for hours in lines at service stations.

The second cargo, on the vessel Forest, has been discharging at the Cardon refinery since Tuesday, according to Refinitive Eikon data.

As the Iranian tankers deliver their cargos one by one, the Venezuelan government has started preparations to distribute the imported fuel among desperate citizens stranded in long gas station queues.

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