

New U.S. sanctions to ban humanitarian trade with Iran



Washington, December 14 (RHC)-- The U.S. Treasury Department has stressed that Washington's newly announced sanctions targeting Iran's air and maritime transport industries will lead to the restriction of trade related to humanitarian goods.

"U.S. persons will be prohibited from engaging in transactions involving Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) or E-Sail, including transactions for the sale of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices," the Treasury's guidelines on Iran sanctions read.

"In addition, non-U.S. persons that knowingly engage in certain transactions with IRISL or E-Sail, even for the sale to Iran of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices, risk exposure to sanctions under additional authorities," it added.

The announcement comes after the Trump administration announced Wednesday that it was targeting IRISL and Iran's major airline, Mahan Air, over baseless allegations of Tehran supporting "terrorists" in the region.

The United States has unveiled illegal sanctions this time targeting an Iranian airline and the country's shipping industry. The Wednesday order put IRISL and Mahan under US presidential Executive Order (EO) 13382, which allegedly targets "weapons of mass destruction proliferators."

The Treasury's guidelines on the new sanctions stressed that entities put under EQ 13382 would not be eligible for any humanitarian sanction exceptions.

The statement comes despite Washington's claim that its sanctions do not affect Iran's access to humanitarian goods. U.S. officials have, nonetheless, signaled on numerous occasions that Washington's sanctions seek to harm Iran's general population in a bid to force Tehran to accept Washington's dictates.

Earlier this year, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Tehran had to listen to Washington "if they want their people to eat."

The new bans mark the latest round of Washington's wide sweeping sanctions against the country after the U.S. government unilaterally pulled out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions lifted under the deal last year.

Speaking on Thursday, U.S. Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook boasted that U.S. sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector have led to more than \$50 billion in revenue losses, have hindered Iran's refined-oil products and have undermined foreign investment.

"Both upstream and downstream investments in Iran's oil and gas sector have stopped," Hook said. "Foreign investors have almost entirely pulled out of Iran due to the risks and billions in investment has been lost," he added.

Hook said that the wide sweeping oil sanctions seek to force Iran to negotiate with the US, a demand which Iranian officials have firmly rejected as long as Washington fails to uphold the previously negotiated nuclear deal agreement.

Following Washington's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, the U.S. has since adopted a policy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran, coupling sanctions with stepped up regional provocations and military deployments aimed at Iran.

The U.S. has also sought to provoke internal unrest in the country by supporting various destabilizing elements targeting the country, such as the terrorist Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) and violent separatist groups.

According to observers, Reza Pahlavi, son of deposed Iranian king Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, is one of the main figureheads being "groomed" by Washington as part of its campaign to destabilize Iran amid recent foreign-backed riots in Iran.

In recent remarks to the U.S.-based magazine Newsweek, Pahlavi expressed his support for Trump's aggressive policies targeting the Iranian economy and called for stepped-up western intervention in Iran. He also claimed that the Iranian people "understand and appreciate" the U.S.-imposed sanctions and believe that the Iranian government is to blame for the "maximum pressure" targeting Iran.

Pahlavi's remarks come despite numerous studies indicating that Iranian resentment against Washington has largely increased amid the sweeping sanctions. A recent study published by the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) and the Toronto-based IranPolls shows that an overwhelming 86 percent of Iranians despise U.S. policies.

The study's results come despite stepped-up efforts by foreign media outlets to stir unrest in Iran and promote anti-government sentiment amid tightening US sanctions crippling the country's economy.



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