

U.S. enforces sanctions on Iran's shipping network, aimed at hitting imports of medical supplies



Washington, June 9 (RHC)-- The United States has activated a set of sanctions it imposed on Iran's shipping network six months ago, in a move expected to further hamper imports of food and medical supplies into Iran at a time when the country is fighting to contain a deadly coronavirus outbreak.

In a statement released in Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and its Shanghai-based subsidiary, E-Sail Shipping Company, "have come into effect," 180 days after the restrictive measures were first announced under the claim of Tehran's support for proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Pompeo threatened sanctions against trade and maritime industries as well as governments if they engaged in business with the aforementioned companies. He noted that the anti-Iran bans took effect following what he called a "generous delay" to allow humanitarian supplies companies time to find

alternative methods for their shipments to Iran.

“Now that this generous delay has come to an end, those in the commercial and maritime industries doing business with Iran must use carriers or shipping methods other than IRISL or E-Sail; any government, entity, or individual that chooses to continue doing business with IRISL and/or E-Sail now risks exposure to US WMD sanctions,” Pompeo said.

The U.S. has said that newly announced anti-Iran sanctions will ban humanitarian trade with the country. He also claimed that IRISL had repeatedly transported items related to Iran’s ballistic missile and military programs and was also a longstanding carrier of other proliferation-sensitive items.

Last December, Pompeo alleged that IRISL was “the shipping line of choice for Iranian proliferators and procurement agents,” while E-Sail “knowingly transports illicit materials from Iran’s Aerospace Industries Organization.”

Elsewhere in his statement, the top U.S. diplomat asked governments around the world to investigate activity by the shipping entities in their ports and seas, encouraging them to take appropriate action to stop the activity. “These designations serve as a clear warning that anyone doing business with or otherwise supporting IRISL or E-Sail are exposed to potential sanctions,” he added.

Top diplomats and officials from all around the world are increasingly urging the United States to remove its unilateral sanctions against Iran amid the country’s battle against the novel coronavirus.

The guidance notes published on the US Treasury Department’s website say the E-Sail sanctions also apply to “agricultural commodities, food, medicine or medical devices,” threatening anyone who engages in humanitarian transactions “risks exposure to sanctions.”

In May 2018, the U.S. under President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from a UN-endorsed nuclear deal, which it had signed as a member of the P5+1 with Tehran in 2015, and re-imposed the anti-Iran sanctions it had lifted under the agreement.

Iran sued the U.S. at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) afterwards. The tribunal ruled that Washington should lift its sanctions on humanitarian supplies.

The U.S. has long claimed that humanitarian supplies are exempt from its coercive measures against Iran, but Tehran dismisses the claim as a lie. The bans imposed on the Iranian banking system have dissuaded many pharmaceutical firms from doing business with Iran.

The new sanctions fly in the face of growing international calls for Washington to ease its Iran sanctions, which have severely hampered the country’s access to lifesaving medical items during the battle against the coronavirus outbreak.

The Donald Trump administration has turned a deaf ear to those calls and instead imposed even more such restrictive measures on the Islamic Republic.

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