

Owners of Oil Tankers Seized by the US File Lawsuits

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The US unilaterally imposes its own sanctions universally as much as it can becoming the self-appointed global policeman. Many countries obey because of the financial and military power of the US.

US must prove oil is from Iran and going to Venezuela

The US seized the cargo of four tankers that the US claimed were carrying oil from Iran to Venezuela violating US sanctions. The sanctions do not apply to either Iran or Venezuela. The US simply uses its global power to force other countries to obey the sanctions or face punishment by the US. However, even given that the US may often have the power to enforce its will it still must show where the oil in the tankers came from and where it was bound. Otherwise, the US actions will still face problems as it now does after seizing four tankers.

The US has already sold the oil to another UAE company and allowed it to be shipped to Trinidad. The companies filing the suit claim it was still their oil. At the time of the seizure, Iran's ambassador to Venezuela, Hojad Soltani called US President Trump a terrorist and denied that the tankers were Iranian [saying in a tweet](#): "The ships are not Iranian, and neither the owner nor its flag has anything to do with Iran." The owners said the ships were bound for Trinidad and had been sold to UAE-base Citi Energy FZC and were to be sold to customers in Peru and Colombia. The owners were to be paid only on delivery of the cargoes to Trinidad.

Three companies file lawsuits

The owners of the four tankers include UAE-based Mobin International, Sohar based in Oman, and UK-based Oman Fuel. The three companies claim ownership of the tankers and claim the claim the cargo was never for Iran or bound for Venezuela as the US claims. They add that the US claims and actions have harmed their businesses. The lawsuit is substantial with four ships and \$40 million in cargo at stake.

The US position

The US claims that the fuel was being shipped by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) that it has designated a foreign terrorist organization and that the fuel was being

shipped to Venezuela. The US says this is the largest ever seizure of fuel shipments from Iran.

The legal basis for the seizure is explained in a [recent article](#): "On July 2, 2020, the United States filed a complaint seeking to forfeit all petroleum-product cargo aboard four foreign-flagged oil tankers, including the M/T Bella with international maritime organization (IMO) number 9208124, the M/T Bering with IMO number 9149225, the M/T Pandi with IMO number 9105073, and the M/T Luna with IMO number 9208100 (all pictured below). A seizure order for the cargo from all four vessels was issued by U.S. District Court Judge Jeb Boasberg of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia." Note that this is an order by a US court. It is not explained how such an order is consistent with international law.

US sanctions should apply only to US companies trying to carry on trade not to Venezuela and Iran which are sovereign countries who should be able to carry on legitimate trade with one another without interference by a third country. It is surely not illegal for one sovereign nations to sell fuel to another. The US is apparently a global government which can apply its own laws globally.

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