

US Imposes Additional Economic Sanctions Against Venezuela and Iran

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The US government is seeking to economically drown Venezuela and Iran by wanting to seize fuel that Tehran is sending to Caracas. This is part of a sustained aggressive and illegal policy against both countries. The US Attorney's Office requested before a court on July 2 to embargo Iranian fuel that is being exported to Venezuela. It is an aggression that goes beyond the legal borders of the US, meaning the embargoes are extraterritorial and violate international law.

District of Columbia prosecutor **Zia Faruqui** accused Iranian businessman **Mahmoud Madanipour** of organizing the fuel shipment from Iran to Venezuela through fictitious firms registered in the United Arab Emirates to circumvent Washington's extraterritorial sanctions against both countries. In this sense, the US is provoking a deepening of the economic crisis in Venezuela and Iran, largely caused by American sanctions. Washington intends to deepen what it created, that has not only triggered an economic crisis in Venezuela and Iran, but also a humanitarian one. Very few international shipowners dare to challenge US threats and have therefore mostly severed their relations with Venezuela.

In late May and early June, Iran sent fuel to Venezuela on five ships as part of the energy cooperation between the two nations. Venezuela bought fuel from Iran so it can deal with the shortage in its country. A few weeks later, Washington imposed sanctions against the five captains of the Iranian ships that brought gasoline to the South American country.

However, US sanctions against Venezuela and Iran can be seen as a sign of desperation as Washington is failing in its plans to topple the governments in Caracas and Tehran through economic pressure. These measures demonstrate a great despair for Washington as the world is far different from the US-dominated unipolar world that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As the US loses its place as the world's leading country, it can only enact its aggressive ambitions via economic pressures knowing that it is overextended to be able to engage in an invasion of either Venezuela or Iran like it did with Iraq in 2003.

Despite US sanctions, Iran has said it will continue to send fuel to Venezuela, which demonstrates the strengthening of diplomatic relations between Caracas and Tehran. By sending the first five ships, Iran has showed that it will not abide by illegal US demands that violates international law and that it will act with Venezuela within the framework of fair-trade relations. The US has launched pressures and aggression against not only both states, but also individuals and investors who dare develop commercial relations with Venezuela.

In May, the US warned foreign governments, seaports, shipping companies and insurers that they could face severe sanctions if they help the Iranian flotilla carrying fuel to Venezuela. The shipment of Iranian tankers to Venezuela caused tension between Tehran and Washington. Washington threatened to attack them and in response Iran warned that it would not tolerate problems caused by the US against oil tankers sent to Venezuela. Faced with US threat, the Venezuelan government provided a military escort to the ships once they entered their own territorial waters.

Washington's measures against Venezuela have intensified in the last four years with the aim of removing **President Nicolás Maduro** from power. In 2017, the sanctions reached the country's main industry, Petróleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA), initially preventing financing and later prohibiting any company or person to make transactions with the state-owned company. These measures have limited PDVSA's ability to acquire spare parts for its refineries, additives to produce gasoline, and even the purchase of fuel, generating a critical situation in the country.

On repeated occasions, the US and the Venezuelan opposition have assured that sanctions are directed only at Maduro and officials of his administration, but the fuel shortage has seriously affected the transportation and supply of essential goods and services to the population. Such measures demonstrate, once again, the criminal nature of Washington, which is capable of appropriating the immense wealth and resources belonging to the Venezuelan people. But such measures truly show desperation as Washington is working hard to destroy the two countries and prevent them from cooperating with each other.

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