

Washington warns civil aviation industry against dealing with Iranian airlines



Washington, July 25 (RHC)-- In the U.S., the Donald Trump administration has warned the civil aviation industry against dealing with Iranian airlines, saying any company found to have business with them would put itself in the crosshairs of sanctions.

A formal advisory from the US Treasury Department's pro-Israeli Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued on Tuesday claimed that Iran's commercial airliners were a key component of support for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

The advisory said entities providing services for designated Iranian airlines, including financing, reservations and ticketing as well as procurement of aircraft parts, would be at risk of enforcement actions or economic sanctions. The advisory singled out Iran's Mahan Air, blacklisted by the US in 2011, alleging that the airline has a role in providing financial, material and technological support to the IRGC's Qods Force.

"Lack of adequate compliance controls could expose those operating in the civil aviation industry to significant risks, including civil or criminal enforcement actions or economic sanctions," Mandelker said.

Since 2018, the United States has imposed economic sanctions on 11 entities and individuals for dealing with Mahan Air. The United States also designated Qeshm Fars Air, a commercial cargo airline controlled by Mahan Air, in early 2019.

The U.S. Treasury revoked licenses for 200 passenger planes ordered by national flag carrier Iran Air from Airbus, Boeing and Franco-Italian turboprop maker ATR after President Donald Trump pulled out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Only 16 aircraft were delivered ? 13 by ATR and three by Airbus - before the licenses were withdrawn.

Sanctions are the key tool the United States uses Iran as part of its ?maximum pressure? policy and Mandelker is the one with her hand on the lever.

She is one of the key figures eager to push the Iranians, designing the policy Trump?s administration hopes will force Iranian capitulation. Touting herself as a child of Holocaust survivors, Mandelker succeeded Stuart Levey, the founding official in the role she now holds.

The United States has been going after Iran?s cash flow and frozen assets for decades ever since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and Mandelker has become the stewardess of the campaign.

In February, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the UN tribunal has jurisdiction to hear a claim by Iran to recover \$1.75 billion in assets frozen by Washington, rejecting US objections.

Last year, the Hague-based court reprimanded the US over its reimposition of sanctions on Iran, ordering Washington to lift restrictive measures linked to humanitarian trade, food, medicine and civil aviation. The ruling was a victory for Iran after it complained to the ICJ that the return to sanctions imposed by the US withdrawal from the nuclear agreement was in violation of the Treaty of Amity, a 1955 pre-revolutionary friendship treaty.

Iranian officials say the U.S. is publicly propagating a policy intended to damage as severely as possible Iran?s economy and its national companies, and therefore Iranian nationals. U.S. officials have said Washington?s tough sanctions against the Islamic Republic are aimed at giving the Iranian people a chance to have better lives.

"The sanctions on Iran have this ultimate goal: creating an outcome where the Iranian people can have better lives than they have today," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in January.

Unilateral US sanctions on Iran's transportation sector, especially the country?s civil aviation, are taking their toll on Iranian civilians. Pompeo earlier told BBC Persian that Iranian officials must listen to Washington "if they want their people to eat."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif shot back, saying Pompeo?s open threat to starve the Iranian nation was "a crime against humanity" and "a desperate attempt to impose U.S. whims on Iran." On Monday, Trump tweeted, ?Their Economy is dead, and will get much worse. Iran is a total mess."

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