

US calls Venezuelan Vice President an 'international drug trafficker', slaps severe sanctions

14/02/2017 22:14 by admin

Washington: US authorities called Venezuelan Vice President Tareck El Aissami an "international drug trafficker" and slapped severe sanctions on him.

US calls Venezuelan Vice President an "international drug trafficker"

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Monday that El Aissami had played a "significant role in international narcotics trafficking", a news release said.

"OFAC's action today is the culmination of a multi-year investigation under the Kingpin Act to target significant narcotics traffickers in Venezuela and demonstrates that power and influence do not protect those who engage in these illicit activities," said John Smith, acting director of OFAC.

El Aissami, who was appointed Vice President of Venezuela in January, is a former Interior and Justice Minister and Governor of the country's Aragua state.

The Treasury Department said he "facilitated shipments of narcotics from Venezuela to include control over planes that leave from a Venezuelan air base, (and) narcotics shipments of over 1,000 kg from Venezuela on multiple occasions, including those with the final destinations of Mexico and the US", CNN reported on Tuesday.

In addition, the department said El Aissami was linked to coordinating drug shipments to Los Zetas, a violent Mexican drug cartel, and provided protection to a Colombian drug lord.

Monday's action imposed sanctions on El Aissami that prohibit anyone in the US from doing business with him, and freezing any assets the US.

A senior administration official said sanctions are "not a reaction to El Aissami's role as executive Vice President of Venezuela. The designation was the result of a years-long investigation of narcotics trafficking by OFAC".

An intelligence document obtained by CNN linked El Aissami to 173 Venezuelan passports and ID's, that the report said, were issued to individuals from the Middle East, including people connected with the terrorist group Hezbollah.

The report said that the official who ordered the issuing of the passports was El Aissami, who "took charge of issuing, granting visas and nationalising citizens from different countries -- especially Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians, Iranians and Iraqis."

- IT