

The US seized a North Korean ship and moved it thousands of miles to check whether it's being used to violate sanctions



An undated photo from the US Department of Justice shows “Wise Honest,” a North Korean cargo ship, that the US has now seized. Department of Justice via AP

- **The US has sailed a North Korean cargo ship thousands of miles to American Samoa to investigate it over sanctions violations.**
- **The US is accusing the 17,000-ton ship, one of North Korea’s largest cargo ships, of illicit coal shipments that violate US and UN sanctions.**
- **The assistant attorney general said that US “will use all tools at our disposal ... to enforce the sanctions enacted by the U.S. and the global community.”**
- **The US accuses North Korea of “concealing the origin” of the ship and of using US financial institutions to “fund weapons programs which will be used to threaten our nation.”**
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The US seized a North Korean ship and sailed it thousands of miles to check whether it has been used to violate international sanctions.

The US alleges that the “Wise Honest,” North Korea’s second-largest cargo ship, was making illicit shipments of coal and heavy machinery — in violation of US and UN sanctions on North Korea.

The Department of Justice announced Thursday that it had seized the 17,000-ton ship, the first time a North Korean ship has been commandeered over sanctions violations.

The announcement came after North Korea appeared to launch two short-range missiles in a test, adding further tensions to its relations with the US.

The Wise Honest arrived in the port of Pago Pago in the US territory of American Samoa on Saturday after a three-week journey, The Associated Press reported.

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Assistant Attorney General Demers called the “Wise Honest” a “sanctions-busting ship” and said the US would ensure that North Korea complies with the international sanctions.

“This sanctions-busting ship is now out of service,” Demers said on Thursday.



The US brought the North Korean ship, first detained by Indonesia, to American Samoa. Google Maps/Business Insider

“North Korea, and the companies that help it evade US and UN sanctions, should know that we will use all tools at our disposal — including a civil forfeiture action such as this one, or criminal charges — to enforce the sanctions enacted by the U.S. and the global community.”

“We are deeply committed to the role the Justice Department plays in applying maximum pressure to the North Korean regime to cease its belligerence.”

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The UN Security Council has banned North Korea from exporting commodities like coal, lead, and iron, in a bid to prevent it from funding its nuclear and weapons programs.

The Department of Justice accused North Korea of “concealing the origin of their ship” and accused Korea Songi Shipping Company, which was using the ship, of violating US law by paying US dollars for improvements and purchases for the ship through oblivious US financial institutions.



The North Korean cargo ship, Wise Honest, middle, was towed into the Pago Pago Harbor on Saturday, May 11, 2019, in Pago Pago, American Samoa. AP Photo/Fili Sagapolutele

“This seizure should serve as a clear signal that we will not allow foreign adversaries to use our financial systems to fund weapons programs which will be used to threaten our nation,” Demers said.

US Coast Guard public affairs officer Amanda Wyrick told the AP that the US would investigate the ship in American Samoa. She did not say where the ship would be brought after the investigation was complete.

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The ship was first detained by Indonesia in April 2018, because it was not broadcasting a signal required to give information to other ships and authorities, the Department of Justice said.

Source:

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