



Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, June 22, 2021

United States Seizes Websites Used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union and Kata'ib Hizballah

Today, pursuant to court orders, the United States seized 33 websites used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU) and three websites operated by Kata'ib Hizballah (KH), in violation of U.S. sanctions.

On Oct. 22, 2020, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated IRTVU as a Specially Designated National (SDN) for being owned or controlled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC). SDNs are prohibited from obtaining services, including website and domain services, in the United States without an OFAC license. OFAC's announcement explained that components of the government of Iran, to include IRTVU and others like it, disguised as news organizations or media outlets, targeted the United States with disinformation campaigns and malign influence operations. Thirty-three of the websites seized today were operated by IRTVU. The 33 domains are owned by a United States company. IRTVU did not obtain a license from OFAC prior to utilizing the domain names.

Three additional websites seized today were operated by KH. On July 2, 2009, OFAC designated KH an SDN, and the Department of State designated KH a Foreign Terrorist Organization. The announcements described KH as an Iraqi terrorist organization that committed, directed, supported or posed a significant risk of committing acts of violence against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. OFAC further explained that the IRGC provides lethal support to KH and other Iraqi Shia militia groups who target and kill Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. The three domains operated by KH were owned by a United States company. KH did not obtain a license from OFAC prior to utilizing the domain names.

These website seizures were investigated by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement and the FBI. The National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section prosecuted the seizure.

Assistant Attorney General John C. Demers for the Justice Department's National Security Division; Special Agent in Charge J.C. (Chris) Hacker, of the FBI's Atlanta Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Ariel Joshua Leinwand, of the Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement's Atlanta Office, made the announcement.

The National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section is investigating this matter in coordination with the FBI's Counterterrorism Division and Atlanta Field Office.

Topic(s):

Cyber Crime
Counterintelligence and Export Control
National Security

Component(s):

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
National Security Division (NSD)

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