

Questions for the Record from Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
“Global Gangsters: Hezbollah’s Latin American Drug Trafficking
Operations”
October 21, 2025

Submitted to Ambassador Nathan Sales

1. Under current U.S. law, the U.S. government can proceed with *in rem* administrative forfeiture against assets valued up to \$500,000. Using *in rem* administrative forfeiture, the U.S. government can take possession of certain assets and then provide public notice of the government’s intent to confiscate the property; the owner can then file a claim to challenge the seizure in a judicial proceeding before the property is forfeited. If no one files a viable claim, then the property is summarily forfeited. However, the U.S. government currently cannot use *in rem* administrative forfeiture against a foreign kleptocrat’s illicit assets valued above \$500,000 and must instead rely on time-intensive judicial forfeiture.
 - a. Should a foreign kleptocrat or narco-trafficker have more rights in the U.S. court system for a forfeitable asset worth \$1 billion than a U.S. citizen does with respect to forfeitable property up to \$500,000?
 - b. Would it make sense to allow the U.S. government to proceed with *in rem* administrative forfeiture against illicit assets of international criminal organizations and foreign kleptocrats, even if the illicit assets are valued above \$500,000?

Answer:

It seems incongruous that any foreign national – let alone a suspected kleptocrat or narcotics trafficker – would enjoy stronger protections under U.S. law than U.S. citizens do. The U.S. government should reconsider whether authorities have adequate tools to counter international criminal organizations and foreign kleptocrats.