



SANCTIONED

082 / 08 AUG 2022 / TORNADO CASH / RARE

SEALED

On 8 August 2022, the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned Tornado Cash, an Ethereum cryptocurrency mixer designed to obscure links between transactions. The action placed a privacy tool at the centre of a confrontation over illicit finance and government power.

Treasury said the service had been used to launder cryptocurrency stolen by cybercriminals, including more than \$455 million taken by the North Korean Lazarus Group. It also cited funds from the Harmony Bridge and Nomad heists, arguing that Tornado Cash had failed to implement effective controls against abuse.

The designation blocked covered property under U.S. jurisdiction and generally prohibited U.S. persons from transactions involving it, subject to exemptions or OFAC authorization. It was a sanctions action, not a physical seizure of the technology.

Privacy advocates challenged its breadth. Coin Center argued that sanctioning autonomous smart contracts targeted a neutral tool rather than a particular wrongdoer, restricting people seeking privacy for lawful reasons. The dispute exposed a difficult question: how should authorities confront criminal use without treating every user as a suspect?

On 21 March 2025, Treasury announced the removal of the sanctions after reviewing legal and policy issues. This card records the 2022 action, not the current legal position. Its bottled storm and wax seal turn attempted containment into a visual metaphor.

DETAILS IN THE ART

01 THE BOTTLED STORM

The green tornado is a visual pun on Tornado Cash. Its glass enclosure symbolizes attempted containment of intangible software, not an object seized by the government.

02 THE RED WAX SEAL

The official pressing a seal over the cork represents government restriction. This fictional figure and sealing ritual are not a documented event or an identified individual.

03 THE GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Formal furnishings and the classical building outside evoke Treasury and OFAC. The office is an imagined setting, not a verified reconstruction of where the decision was made.

04 THE PAPER TRAIL

Sheets on the desk suggest administrative orders and sanctions documentation. They are illustrated props, not authentic records, readable orders or evidence against a particular person.

SOURCE & ART NOTE

Sources: U.S. Treasury, 8 August 2022; Coin Center, contemporaneous response; U.S. Treasury, 21 March 2025. The official, bottle, seal, office and papers are fictional symbols. SEALED is an approved editorial caption, not a historical quotation. This chapter dates the original 2022 designation; Treasury announced delisting in 2025.