

## Veteran Cyber Prosecutor To Lead DOJ's New Crypto Team

By **Elise Hansen**

*Law360 (February 17, 2022, 4:15 PM EST)* -- A longtime U.S. Department of Justice attorney and seasoned cybercrime and digital-asset prosecutor will head up the department's new National Cryptocurrency Enforcement Team, the DOJ said Thursday.

Eun Young Choi has been a federal prosecutor for nearly a decade and most recently served as the DOJ's senior counsel to the deputy attorney general, the announcement said. Over the course of her career, Choi has worked on prosecutions against the founder of darknet site Silk Road, the operators of bitcoin website Coin.mx and a prosecution linked to the Panama Papers.

"Eun Young [Choi] is an accomplished leader on cyber and cryptocurrency issues, and I am pleased that she will continue her service as the NCET's inaugural Director, spearheading the department's efforts in this area," Kenneth A. Polite Jr., assistant attorney general of the DOJ's criminal division, said in a statement.

Choi takes on her new role as director of NCET effective today, the announcement said. The DOJ unveiled the NCET initiative last year, saying it's aimed at helping the agency dismantle markets used by cybercriminals. In particular, the team will focus on cryptocurrency exchanges and infrastructure providers that enable money laundering, and will work with state and local government as well as international bodies in its law enforcement efforts.

"The department has been at the forefront of investigating and prosecuting crimes involving digital currencies since their inception," Choi said in a statement. "The NCET will play a pivotal role in ensuring that as the technology surrounding digital assets grows and evolves, the department in turn accelerates and expands its efforts to combat their illicit abuse by criminals of all kinds."

Choi has considerable experience in the cybercrime field and has worked on some of the top headline-grabbing cases in the space.

Earlier in her career, Choi worked at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, where she assisted in investigations and prosecutions of cybercrime and money laundering schemes. Her work included the investigation of a hack into J.P. Morgan and other financial institutions; the prosecution around Coin.mx, which led to multiple convictions for running an illegal bitcoin website; and arguing the Second Circuit appeal in the government's case against Silk Road founder Ross Ulbricht.

She also assisted in the only U.S. prosecution brought in connection with the infamous Panama Papers, a

document leak that exposed a web of shell companies used to hide funds offshore.

Choi earned her law degree from Harvard Law School and went to Harvard as an undergraduate as well.

William Frentzen, a partner at Morrison & Foerster LLP who previously worked with Choi on a DOJ cryptocurrency working group, said Choi's selection as group leader signals the department's intent focus on illicit cyber and digital-asset activity.

"When the DOJ first started prosecuting these cases almost a decade ago, there were only a few prosecutors in a couple of offices focusing on cryptocurrency," Frentzen told Law360. "The announcement of an experienced cryptocurrency prosecutor like Eun Young Choi signals the department's further need to deal with the spread of illegal use of cryptocurrency arising in areas like ransomware, hacking, narcotics trafficking [and] money laundering."

--Additional reporting by Pete Brush. Editing by Alex Hubbard.