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India Joins Missile Technology Control Regime

After years of talking and blocking and talking again, India formally joined Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) as its 35th member June 27. "India possesses substantial missile-relevant technology and has excellent nonproliferation and export control credentials. Its accession bolsters substantially the Regime's effectiveness and objectives," a State Department spokesperson said in a statement.

> "The MTCR welcomes India into the Regime, convinced that its membership will strengthen the international efforts to prevent proliferation of delivery systems (ballistic missiles or unmanned aircraft) capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. The MTCR looks forward to India's full participation in the Regime," said a statement from the MTCR chair.

The country's membership in another multilateral regime, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), is more controversial. "We understand that despite procedural hurdles persistently raised by one country, a three hour long discussion took place last night on the issue of future participation in the NSG," the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement. "It is also our understanding that the broad sentiment was to take this matter forward," the ministry added.

India failed in its first attempt to gain MTCR membership during the annual plenary in Rotterdam in October 2015 (see **WTTL**, Oct. 19, page 8). The U.S. affirmed its support for India's membership in MTCR, NSG and other global nonproliferation export control regimes during the first meeting of the U.S.-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue meeting in September.

U.S., Canada Use Nice Words on Softwood Lumber

On the sidelines of the North American Leaders' Summit June 29, the heads of the U.S. and Canada tried to put a positive spin on ongoing negotiations toward a new softwood

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lumber agreement. A previous agreement expired in October 2015, and the differences between the two nations, as well as within each country's domestic industry, still persist.

"The U.S. and Canadian federal governments have made significant advances in understanding our industries' sensitivities and priorities since March. The United States and Canada are working together to find a path forward that reflects our shared goals and that results in durable and equitable solutions for softwood lumber producers from both countries," Prime Minister Trudeau and President Obama said in a joint statement.

> After a meeting in March, the two leaders ordered their trade ministers to "intensively explore all options." After 100 days of talking, the U.S. and Canada "made significant advances in exploring the key issues and priorities," U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Michael Froman and Canadian Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland said in a joint statement June 17 (see **WTTL**, June 20, page 6).

Trade sources are still skeptical. "There is no deal and there more likely will not be a deal," one wrote WTTL in an email July 1.

The U.S. and Canada "have made important progress in our negotiations, but significant differences remain regarding the parameters of the key features. Our governments will explore approaches to ensure effective management of the agreed market share," the leaders noted.

"Both industries remain committed to working toward an agreement and will continue to consider ideas for achieving that objective. Our dialogue will continue and, building on the progress achieved to date, our Ministers will maintain an intensive pace of engagement with a view to achieving a mutually-acceptable agreement this fall, bearing in mind the expiration of standstill after October 12, 2016," they said.

The U.S. Lumber Coalition welcomed the joint statement. "The Coalition supports continued negotiations between the two nations aimed at designing an effective framework for offsetting trade distortions and job losses in the U.S. market caused by unfairly priced Canadian imports," it wrote. "The Coalition applauds the acknowledgement by the two leaders that a key feature of any new agreement is for it to be designed to maintain Canadian exports at or below an agreed U.S. market share," the group said.

TTIP Negotiations to Move Forward Despite Brexit

Can the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) survive the Brexit? "Of course it can and it will," EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom said June 29 at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

Malmstrom and USTR Michael Froman met in Washington June 28 and will meet again in Brussels July 11-15 for the next formal round of TTIP negotiations. Both representatives insist the goal remains to conclude the negotiations before the expiration of

President Obama's final term in office. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka scoffed at the notion that the deal will be completed so soon. "It's a complicated subject and you make it more complicated by pretending that there will be an agreement before the end of the year because I don't see any likelihood at all of that happening," Trumka told the event. He also criticized special investment courts and argued that TTIP's proposed rules "decrease the existing standards" making his organization "skeptical" of the deal.

Malmstrom said her team will continue to negotiate on behalf of 28 member states as the United Kingdom (UK) has yet to trigger Article 50, which would begin the two-year extrication of the UK from the EU. She was adamant that "out is out; they cannot be half in." She elaborated that per EU rules the UK cannot negotiate a new trade deal with the bloc before exiting. Any new trade deal would not permit the UK to pick and choose as they please, particularly when it comes to freedom of movement.

> Separately, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) called for trade negotiations with the UK in parallel to ongoing TTIP negotiations. "Number one, we need to emphasize that they are our indispensable ally, we have a special relationship, and I think that does mean we should have a trade agreement with England – with Great Britain," he said in a recent radio interview.

Ryan was backed by Republican Sens. Mike Lee (Utah) and Tom Cotton (Ark.), who introduced the "United Kingdom Trade Continuity Act" June 29 (S.3123). The proposed legislation would obligate the U.S. to continue all existing commercial agreements with the UK as if it were part of the EU. The bill further calls on the president to initiate negotiations for a new bilateral agreement 30 days after enactment.

Ahead of the next round of talks the EU has offered a proposal on medicines and is expected to submit texts on energy and raw materials. The European Commission is expected to propose text for an engineering chapter. In Washington, the commissioner conceded that a lot of work must happen quickly in sensitive areas, such as the financial services industry, but she expressed confidence that a deal will be concluded soon.

"[W]e can make these adaptations because the political support is there for this agreement. In the EU, for all our debates - and they are tough - we have a unanimous mandate from Member States. And that commitment remains solid. In the U.S., as well as from the Administration, we hear strong support for TTIP from Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle," said Malmstrom.

Froman Defends TPP, Earns Support of Cato Institute

USTR Michael Froman took his Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) touting show on the road to the Cato Institute June 30. The libertarian think tank endorsed the deal and will publish its evaluation of the agreement later this summer. Froman reiterated his main talking points – the elimination of 18,000 tariff lines, internet freedom, market-based competition – but spent the latter part of his talk doubling down on the threat of China stepping in, should the U.S. fail to lead.

"The choice isn't between TPP and the status quo; it's between TPP and what is likely to evolve in the absence of TPP. As other countries move forward with their own preferential market access agreements, our businesses stand to see their market share in these key countries shrink rather than expand. And instead of seeing our rules put in place, we'll face adverse implications for the free flow of data and the integrity of the internet; for disciplining subsidies and state-owned enterprises; and for cooperating against counterfeit medicines and consumer goods," said Froman.

> In a panel discussion following Froman's talk, Derek Scissors, resident scholar, American Enterprise Institute, rejected the notion of supporting TPP out of fear that China might step in and added that the passage of TPP does not prevent the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership from becoming a reality.

In conjunction with Froman's speech, Cato released an abstract of a forthcoming chapter-by-chapter evaluation of the trade deal. Of the 30 TPP chapters, Cato evaluated 22 on a zero to 10 scale (zero equaling protectionist and 10 equating to free trade). Five chapters received a rating of eight: national treatment and market access, customs administration and trade facilitation, cross border trade in services, dispute settlement, and final provisions. Textiles and apparel, trade remedies, and labor received the lowest score given with a three rating.

"Obviously, not everything in a free trade agreement is going to be to the liking of free traders. Some issues simply don't belong in trade agreements. But in our view every little bit of liberalization helps, and as long [as] it doesn't come at a cost that exceeds the benefits, it is worthy of support," wrote Daniel Ikenson, director of Cato's Herbert A. Stiefel Center for Trade Policy Studies.

"The bottom line is that, in our assessment, the TPP would be net liberalizing – it would, on par, increase our economic freedoms. I hope it will be ratified and implemented as soon as possible," concluded Ikenson.

The day before Froman's Cato talk, the International Trade Commission (ITC) released a report estimating the historical impact of trade agreements. Notably, the report found that since 2012, trade agreements increased total U.S. exports by 3.6%, imports by 2.3%, total employment by .1%, and real wages by .3%. Bilateral and regional trade agreements resulted in tariff savings of up to $13.4 billion in 2014 "with a significant part of these savings benefitting U.S. consumers."

"The ITC confirmed that our recent trade agreements have helped America's economy. I appreciate the ITC's work and specifically welcome the news that trade agreements increased overall economic growth, employment, and wages in America and decreased the U.S. trade deficit. And the ITC found that middle- and lower-income Americans benefit the most from tariff cuts due to trade agreements because they suffer the most under these taxes," said House Ways and Means Committee Chair Kevin Brady (R-Texas).

Rep. Sander Levin (D-Mich.) had a decidedly different take on the ITC's findings, lambasting the committee for failing "to address the costs associated with workers losing their jobs or factories leaving communities as a result of trade agreements. Those transition costs are largely ignored in this report. They focus on the long-term benefit of lower tariffs in other countries and cheap imports coming into the United States, failing to capture the impact – which they may call short term – which can have a dramatic impact on jobs in America."

Court Rejects Extra CBP Charges to Enforce Penalty

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) can't seek alternative charges in court enforcement of a penalty notice. Court of International Trade (CIT) Senior Judge Richard W. Goldberg ruled June 20. Goldberg sided with the defendant's plea to dismiss the government's charges of negligence and gross negligence, leaving only a single fraud charge.

> The government was seeking enforcement of a penalty notice against Leslie M. Toth and LBS Marketing for entering merchandise produced in China and misclassified as langostino instead of crawfish meat, which was subject to antidumping order. CBP had issued a pre-penalty notice and later a penalty notice, charging that misclassification of the merchandise was fraudulent.

Goldberg ruled that CBP had failed to exhaust its administrative responsibilities by not examining and charging the negligence and gross negligence claims in first place, citing *U.S. v. Nitek Electronics, Inc.* He rejected the government's request for voluntary remand to take up those issues.

"In ruling on this motion, the court has two options: It can deny or grant the motion. There is no third option allowing the court to either (1) deny that claims exist but remand anyway or (2) refuse to grant or deny the motion but remand anyway. The Government exhibits great chutzpah to propose this third option," Goldberg wrote.

"And the reason is clear. Nitek mandates that the government has no claims for gross negligence or negligence before this court, because those claims exist only if CBP developed them through the penalty claim pursued in this court. Given that the government has no claims under Nitek, and there is no relevant underlying agency proceeding or record, there is nothing to remand," he ruled (slip op. 16-61).

North American Leaders United On Trade

The leaders of the largest countries in North America are united when it comes to free trade. President Obama, alongside Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, June 29 pushed back against critics of free trade at the North American Leaders' Summit in Ottawa.

"Restricting trade or giving in to protectionism in this 21st century economy will not work. It will not work. Even if we wanted to, we can't seal ourselves off from the rest of the world," Obama said in his address before Canadian Parliament June 29. "The drag that economic weaknesses in Europe and China and other countries is having on our own economies right now speaks to the degree to which we depend – our economies depend, our jobs, our businesses depend – on selling goods and services around the world," he added.

> The three leaders committed to agreements related to energy, the environment, and emphasized the importance of integrated markets. The three pledged to work together to protect workers and ensure a level playing field for North American steel and aluminum producers.

Ahead of the summit, TransCanada, the company behind the nixed Keystone XL Pipeline, announced it will challenge the denial before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) arbitration panel. The company is seeking in excess of $15 billion for actual and future losses.

TransCanada maintains that the U.S. failed to meet its NAFTA obligation to treat all members fairly and "ultimately denied Keystone's application, not because of any concerns over the merits of the pipeline, but because President Obama wanted to prove his administration's environmental credentials to a vocal activist constituency that asserted that the pipeline would lead to increased production and consumption of crude oil, and therefore, significantly increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions," the company wrote in its submission to the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. A three-member panel will determine whether TransCanada was treated unfairly. No hearing date has been set.

ITC Must Consider "Magnitude of Dumping Margins," Court Rules

The ITC got its negative injury determination in a case against hardwood plywood from China mostly right, but CIT Judge Richard Eaton remanded the ruling because the commission had failed to take into account the "magnitude of the dumping margins" for the imports and also for not taking into account the nature of the countervailable subsidies. Eaton issued his ruling June 8 but it was only made public June 24.

Eaton noted that the ITC had stopped using the Commercial Policy Analysis System (COMPAS) as its economic model to examine the health of a domestic industry. "Indeed, since the Commission abandoned its use of the COMPAS model, it appears to have concluded dumping margins are no longer relevant to an injury determination," he wrote.

"In an underselling inquiry, the ITC looks at the amount that the foreign product undersells the domestic product in the U.S. market, not the difference in sales price of the foreign product in its home market and its price in the United States. Even so, this Court has cautioned that 'explicit discussion of the rol[e] of the dumping margin in injury determinations would better serve the statute,' and in the absence of such a discussion, whether the Commission considered the magnitude of the dumping margins depends on the facts and circumstances of a specific case," he added (slip op. 16-57).

"Indeed, use of dumping margins in injury determinations has quite a history," the judge pointed out. Dumping margins were considered even before Congress enacted requiring the commission to consider the magnitude of the dumping margins in its material injury determinations. "The addition of this requirement after the practice had been abandoned, moreover, serves to underscore the mandatory nature of Congress's action," he wrote.

> "Here, the Commission's consideration of this factor amounts to nothing more than the recitation of the dumping margins found by Commerce in a footnote. Taking into account the long history of the use of dumping margins in injury determinations, coupled with Congress's explicit inclusion of the 'magnitude of the margin of dumping' as a factor to be considered, this is clearly insufficient," Eaton ruled.

Despite the remand, the American Alliance for Hardwood Plywood (AAHP), a defendant-intervenor in the case, claimed victory. "The Court of International Trade's ruling now confirms the ITC's core findings and means that the AAHP's legal theory was supported by evidence while the petitioners' opposing theories were not," the group said in a statement. The CIT "only ordered the ITC to provide further explanation on these issues and did not authorize the ITC to revisit its core finding that Chinese plywood had no impact on the domestic plywood industry," AAHP stated.

Ex-Im Bank Competitiveness Report Paints Bleak Picture

The Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im) lost its competitive edge in 2015 and is unlikely to experience a resurgence anytime soon, according to the 2015 Competitiveness Report published June 29 and released to Congress the following day.

Unsurprisingly, the report found a lack of customer confidence due to the lapse in the bank's authority June 30 through Dec. 4, 2015, and the lack of quorum on the Ex-Im board. Without a quorum, the bank cannot approve transactions greater than $10 million, and there has been a 50% drop in authorizations. Foreign export credit agencies (ECAs) have stepped into the void left by Ex-Im and by commercial banks reluctant to finance long-term projects.

The report highlighted a number of troubling metrics. More than 66% of ECA activity falls outside of international frameworks and more than half of all global export credit support comes from China, Japan and Korea. In fact, just two Chinese ECAs were responsible for ten times more export credit than Ex-Im and China's new ECA investment activity was greater than the rest of the world combined. The report cautioned that the trend of ECAs operating outside of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits guidelines is likely to continue.

"The committee worries that U.S. exporters will be left behind, as Ex-Im remains constrained in an environment where new export credit products are being developed at an alarming rate in other parts of the world," wrote Christine Gregoire, chair of the Ex-Im Bank Advisory Committee, in a statement to Congress.

Ex-Im approved $12.4 billion in total authorizations in FY2015, supporting approximately $17 billion in export sales and 109,000 American jobs. That is significantly fewer than the 164,000 jobs created or maintained in 2014 when the bank was last functioning fully.

"In spite of our lapse, increasing competition from China and around the world, and our lack of a board quorum, I am proud that competitors and customers alike continue to view EXIM as one of the highest-capacity, most versatile, and most customer-oriented ECAs in the world," said Fred P. Hochberg, chairman and president of Ex-Im, said in a statement.

China Proposes Snap-Back Provision During EGA Negotiation

China upped its engagement in ongoing Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) negotiations, one of the bright spots in a week of meetings among 17 EGA members that concluded June 24 in Geneva. China is reportedly worried about free-riding by countries not covered in the agreement, particularly India and Brazil, so it put forward a snap-back proposal.

> The proposal asks that if market share of EGA members drops below a certain level, then environmental goods exporters who are not part of the agreement would be compelled to join. Should the non-member refuse, then members can ask WTO to waive zero-tariff privileges for that country.

Seven EGA members, including the U.S., said in a press release in early June that the goal is to conclude EGA negotiations ahead of the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, China in September. To that end, trade ministers are expected to discuss EGA on the sidelines of their July 9 meeting in Shanghai.

* * * Briefs * * *

ZTE: BIS June 28 extended temporary general license for exports, reexports and transfers (in-country) to two entities (ZTE Corporation and ZTE Kangxun) until Aug. 30. Companies were added to Entity List in March but sanctions were quickly suspended (see **WTTL**, May 2, page 7).

HONEY: Déjà vu. Special agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Chicago June 29 seized nearly 60 tons of illegally imported Chinese honey. Smuggled honey was contained in195 55-gallon drums that were falsely declared as originating from Vietnam to evade antidumping duties on Chinese-origin honey, ICE said in press release. Honey likely originated from same exporter in Vietnam as another 60 tons of honey that was seized by HSI Chicago in April (see **WTTL**, May 9, 2016).

OFAC: HyperBranch Medical Technology of Durham, N.C., agreed June 23 to pay OFAC $107,691.30 to settle charges of violating Iran sanctions. In 2011, company allegedly exported sealant samples to UAE distributor "with knowledge or reason to know that the goods were ultimately destined for Iran," OFAC said. HyperBranch voluntarily self-disclosed apparent violations.

STEEL: In 6-0 final vote June 24, ITC found U.S. industry is materially injured by dumped imports of corrosion-resistant steel products from China, India, Italy, Korea, and Taiwan and subsidized imports from China, India, Italy, and Korea.

VEU: In June 23 Federal Register BIS updated list of eligible items and destinations (facilities) for Validated End User (VEU) Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. (AMD) in China. Specifically, it removed existing "eligible destination" (facility); added building to existing address and reflected recent removal of existing "eligible item" from CCL.

ENTITY LIST: BIS in Federal Register June 21 added 28 entities under 31 listings in Afghanistan, Austria, China, Hong Kong, Iran, Israel, Panama, Taiwan and UAE to Entity List. Agency also removed three entities in Finland, Pakistan and Turkey as result of removal requests.

UNVERIFIED LIST: In June 21 Federal Register BIS added 36 entities in Finland, Hong Kong, India, Latvia, Singapore, Switzerland, and UAE to its Unverified List (UVL). In addition, rule added new address for current UVL in Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.Star Electronics Technology Co.

CONGO: OFAC June 23 added Congolese government official Céléstin Kanyama to SDN list. Kanyama is Congolese National Police (PNC) Provincial police commissioner for Kinshasa. "Under his leadership, police forces engaged in the targeting of civilian protestors through acts of violence," OFAC noted.

FLANGES: Weldbend and Boltex Mfg., L.P. filed antidumping and countervailing duty petitions June 30 at ITA and ITC against finished carbon steel flanges form India, Italy and Spain.

DIOCTYL TEREPHTHALATE: Eastman Chemical Company filed antidumping duty petition June 30 at ITA and ITC against dioctyl terephthalate from Korea.

EXPORT ENFORCEMENT: Kan Chen of China was sentenced June 29 in Wilmington, Del. U.S. District Court to 30 months in prison and three years supervised release for conspiring to violate Arms Export Control Act (AECA). Chen caused or attempted to cause illegal export of over 180 export-controlled items, valued at over $275,000, including sophisticated night vision and thermal imaging scopes. He pleaded guilty March 2, 2016. Chen "purchased the devices via the internet and telephone and had them mailed to several reshipping services in New Castle, Delaware, which provide an American shipping address for customers located in China, accept packages for their customers and then re-ship them to China," Justice wrote in sentencing memo.

MORE EXPORT ENFORCEMENT: Alexander Brazhnikov Jr. of Mountainside, N.J., was sentenced to 70 months in prison June 30 in Newark, N.J., U.S. District Court for conspiracy to violate International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) and money laundering. He pleaded guilty in June 2015 (see **WTTL**, June 15, 2015, page 9). Brazhnikov admitted to illegally shipping $65 million worth of sensitive electronics, including semiconductor microchips, to Russian military and security services from July 2010 to February 2014. Naturalized U.S. citizen born in Moscow, he owned four N.J. microelectronics export companies.

EVEN MORE EXPORT ENFORCEMENT: Worthington Products, Inc. (WPI) of Canton, Ohio, and its president Paul Meeks agreed June 17 to pay BIS $250,000 to settle charge of exporting waterway barrier debris system designated as EAR99 valued at $420,256 via UAE to Iran without OFAC authorization in 2011. System was sent to Mahab Ghodss, Iranian government entity, that was added to OFAC list of Specially Designated Nationals in August 2010. WPI and Meeks neither admitted nor denied charges.

STILL MORE EXPORT ENFORCEMENT: Fulfill Your Packages (FYP) of Portland, Ore., agreed June 17 to pay BIS $250,000 to settle charge of evasion in connection with export of FLIR thermal imaging camera to China. Camera was classified under ECCN 6A003, controlled for national security and regional stability, and valued at approximately $2,617. Of civil penalty, $190,000 will be suspended for two years then waived if FYP commits no further violations. FYP "allows its foreign customers in China to use its U.S. domestic address for the purchase and delivery of items from U.S. companies. After FYP receives shipments on behalf of its foreign customers from U.S. suppliers or manufacturers, it repackages and/or relabels the items for export to China," BIS said.

CATFISH: AFL-CIO told Congress in letter June 29 to oppose resolution returning catfish import inspection from USDA to FDA (S.J. Res. 28). "Despite claims to the contrary, the program is not duplicative. Consistent with the directives of the 2014 Farm Bill, the USDA and FDA executed a [MOU] indicating that FSIS will exercise primary regulatory oversight over catfish and catfish products, and that FDA will not inspect such products," wrote William Samuel, AFL-CIO government affairs director. Letter claims USDA already rejected shipments from Vietnam containing "dangerous drugs and carcinogens." House adjourned for break without consideration of S.J. Res. 28 (see **WTTL**, June 27, page 7).

CHINA: Commerce reached affirmative preliminary determination June 28 in CVD investigation of truck and bus tire imports from China: Double Coin Holding Ltd. 17.06%, Guizhou Tyre Co. Ltd. 23.38%, all others 20.22%. Final CVD determination due in November. In 2015 imports from China were estimated at $1.07 billion. United Steelworkers (USW) filed original petition.

CIVIL PENALTIES: OFAC is implementing "catch-up" adjustments to maximum amounts of civil monetary penalties (CMPs) it assesses under IEEPA, agency said in Federal Register notice July 1. Under rule, maximum IEEPA CMP effective Aug. 1 is increased to inflation-adjusted amount of $284,582 (previously $250,000) or twice amount of underlying transaction per violation, OFAC said. DDTC implemented catch-up adjustments earlier in June (see **WTTL**, June 13, page 10).

BEEF: Saudi Arabia June 28 announced decision to reopen its market to U.S. beef following four-year ban due to bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Prior to ban, U.S. exported over $31 million of beef and beef products to country in 2011. Products eligible for export include bone-in and de-boned beef, offal, ground and processed beef, noted USTR Froman and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in joint statement.

ITA: USTR began July 1 implementing expanded Information Technology Agreement (ITA), cutting tariffs on 201 products, including microphones, loudspeakers, headphones and receivers. WTO estimates ITA expansion will eliminate tariffs on approximately $1.3 trillion in annual global exports. New ITA agreement reached in December 2015 at WTO Ministerial (see **WTTL**, Dec. 21, page 5). EU also announced implementation same day. "Procedural delays have occurred in China, Japan and Korea, but implementation by these countries is expected soon," EU said.

TRADE PEOPLE: Rose Gottemoeller, under secretary of State for arms control and international security, was named NATO Deputy Secretary General June 27, replacing Alexander Vershbow. She will take up post Oct. 1. Gottemoeller was chief U.S. negotiator of New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia.

WTO: Liberia will become 163rd WTO member July 14 and Afghanistan will become 164th member two weeks later, organization announced June 29. Members approved countries' membership in December 2015 at Nairobi ministerial (see **WTTL**, Dec. 21, page 5). Liberia will become the 35th least developed country (LDC) member and Afghanistan the 36th.