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[Eztevez at CSET: Export Controls at Inflection Point](#)

In a wide ranging conversation at Georgetown University, Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security Alan Estevez shared his perspective on the evolution of export controls and the road ahead.

"I believe now that we are at sort of a foundational inflection point as to the role and purpose of export controls," Estevez said. " Commerce is in the middle of national security in a number of spheres these days.

"We do it from two perspectives. We do it from offense and we do it from defense. Offense is things like Chips Act. So how are we going to build chip production in the United States, where we have assured supply? Semiconductors are the foundation of a lot of what goes on in our economy.

"The core of the defense structure is our export controls. Protecting the technology that our adversaries could use against us, should it ever come to any kind of kinetic action. [READ MORE](#)

[Know Your Cargo Advisory Issued](#)

Five Federal trade enforcement agencies issued a " Know Your Cargo" announcement to industry Monday, describing best practices for shippers to comply with the current enforcement regime.

The Department of Justice, Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Investigations, State's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls (DDTC), and Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued the joint compliance note, advising entities in maritime and transportation industries to implement compliance measures against illicit practices, particularly in high-risk areas and cargo types. [READ MORE](#)

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ET:

[WTO: Delaying Decisions for MC13](#)

The year-end meeting of the World Trade Organization's General Council appears to have kicked the can on several mandated issues for trade ministers to decide at the upcoming 13th ministerial conference, raising serious questions on the utility of the GC meetings to find any solutions or compromises, said people familiar with the discussions. [READ MORE](#)

[Divisions Threaten MC13 Outcomes](#)

As World Trade Organization members struggle to advance outcomes for the 13th ministerial conference scheduled to take place in two months, the General Council met last week for three days of intensive discussions.

The conflicting narratives and goals on fisheries subsidies, agriculture, dispute settlement system reform and issues concerning development among others, may not augur well any likely concrete outcome at the MC13, said several people preferring not to be quoted. [READ MORE](#)

[WTO: 2024 Budget Deal](#)

World Trade Organization members have agreed to a 3.6% percent hike in the WTO's regular budget for 2024, an increase of about CHF 7.09 million (approximately \$7.1 million) from CHF 197.2 million in 2023 to approximately CHF 204.29 million in 2024.

A separate proposal for increased contribution to the WTO Pension fund of CHF 4.4 million (around \$4.5 million) was turned down by India, Indonesia and Russia till the Secretariat carries out substantial reforms, said people familiar with the development. [READ MORE](#)

[House Panel Grills BIS Leaders](#)

"Don't try to bullshit a bullshitter," admonished Chairman Brian Mast (R-FL), as Assistant Commerce Secretary for Export Administration Thea Kendler responded to his subcommittee's questions on decision making in the Bureau of Industry and Security.

Observers who thought Oversight and Accountability Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing "Reviewing the Bureau of Industry and Security, Part II: U.S. Export Controls in an Era of Strategic Competition," with Ms. Kendler and Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Matt Axelrod would inform the conversation on enforcement priorities and resources may have been disappointed December 12, as the committee's questioning centered on a deal removing China's Ministry of Public Security's Institute of Forensic Science (IFS) from the entity list. [READ MORE](#)

[House Foreign Affairs Marks Up Export Control Bills](#)

After a year of limited productivity, Congress has decided to get some work done in the last working week of the year.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman held a markup session to consider various measures regarding export controls, restricting the flow of foreign nations' support to the Taliban, and strengthening sanctions against Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups on Wednesday, December 13th. [READ MORE](#)

[House China Committee Issues Wish List](#)

Following a year of hearings and demands for reams of disclosure from government and industry, the House Select Committee on China released its work product for 2023.

The 53 page report enumerated recommendations to address Beijing's human rights violations and military modernization, focusing on halting the genocide of the Uyghur population and curtailing profits from forced Uyghur labor. Additionally, it aims to build a more credible deterrent in the Taiwan Strait. [READ MORE](#)

[Sen. Cruz Blocks Ban on Russian Uranium](#)

The US Senate and House have passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), enabling the Nuclear Fuel Security Act. The bill, however, has encountered a delay in the Senate due to a hold placed by Senator Ted Cruz for reasons not directly related to the bill itself. [READ MORE](#)

[USTR: Philippines Labor Working Group Calls for "Increased Concrete Actions"](#)

On December 12, the United States and the Philippines held the first meeting of a Labor Working Group under the U.S - Philippines Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), which was established by President Biden and President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos in May 2023.

U.S. officials encouraged "increased concrete actions and bilateral engagement" to protect union organizers against violence and harassment, promote workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and facilitate dialogue among U.S. and Philippine governments, worker organizations, and employer organizations to inform the objectives of the Labor Working Group. [READ MORE](#)

[More Yellen About China](#)

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is hoping for better communication with China next year in order to avoid major disputes, but also to make sure Beijing is aware of US concerns about its unfair economic practices.

In remarks on the US-China economic relationship delivered at the US-China Business Council, Ms. Yellen laid out her priorities for the bilateral relationship. [READ MORE](#)

[BIS Unveils Beta Version of New Website](#)

The Bureau of Industry and Security released a beta version of its new website in December, making changes to functionality and user experience. [READ MORE](#)

[Trick Assistant USTR for Europe & Middle East](#)

The Office of the United States Trade Representative has announced that Bryant Trick will serve as the Assistant United States Trade Representative for Europe and the Middle East. Trick had served as the Acting Assistant United States Trade Representative for Europe and the Middle East since September 5, 2023. [READ MORE](#)

[Mexican Steel Grates on Senate](#)

A bipartisan group of senators are calling on the Administration to put a halt to a surge in steel imports from Mexico.

In a letter to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, the senators demanded the Administration set a clear deadline for Mexico to enforce the steel agreement reached with the United States in 2019. That agreement set quotas for Mexican steel and aluminum in place of the global Section 232 tariffs imposed by the Trump Administration. [READ MORE](#)

[Another USMCA Automotive Case](#)

The United States is once again asking the Mexican government to review worker rights violations at a automotive plant under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement's rapid response labor mechanism.

The latest request is for Mexico to look at whether workers at the Fujikura Automotive Mexico facility in Piedras Negras in the state of Coahuila are being denied the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, including through the company blacklisting or otherwise retaliating against workers because of union activity at their prior employer, Manufacturas VU.... [READ MORE](#)

[Levis Mexico Plant Settles USMCA Complaint](#)

The United States announced the successful resolution of the first USMCA facility-specific Rapid Response Labor Mechanism (RRM) petition in the garment sector.

The US action comes in response to a petition alleging that workers at an Industrias del Interior garment facility in the state of Aguascalientes, were being denied the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Factory sews for US fashion brand Levi Strauss & Co. [READ MORE](#)

[FCPA: Connecticut Oil Traders Pay \\$106 million to Clean Up Brazil Graft](#)

Operation Car Wash, the wide ranging graft case involving Petrobras officials and the commodity trading community snared another trophy culprit.

Stamford, Connecticut based Freepoint Commodities agreed to pay the DOJ \$98 million to resolve an investigation into bribery of Brazilian government officials. The firm has also agreed to pay more than \$7.6 million to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission in a related matter. [READ MORE](#)

[Servers Sales Earn 18 Month Sentence](#)

A California man was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison for conspiring to procure and illegally ship high-end computer servers from the United States to Iran. [READ MORE](#)

[Chinese Furniture Manufacturer Fined \\$800K for Customs Evasion](#)

Fujian-based furniture and housewares manufacturer Homestar North America, LLC has agreed to pay \$798,334 to resolve allegations that it violated the False Claims Act by failing to pay customs duties owed for furniture imports from China.

The settlement resolves allegations that Homestar North America, LLC and its parent company Homestar Corporation, conspired to underreport the value of imported goods delivered to Homestar North America, LLC in the United States following the two increases on Section 301 tariffs for certain products manufactured in China under the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. [READ MORE](#)

[Hoosier Brothers Built Machineguns for ISIS](#)

The elder of two Indiana brothers was sentenced to 200 months in federal prison followed by a lifetime of supervised release, after pleading guilty to attempting to provide material support or resources, namely, firearms, to a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Moyad Dannon's brother, Mahde Dannon, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in October 2021, after pleading guilty to the same charges. At the time of their arrests (2018) the men were aged 21 and 20, respectively. [READ MORE](#)

[EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority Moves Forward](#)

The European Council and the Parliament have reached a provisional agreement on creating a new European authority for countering money laundering and financing of terrorism (AMLA) - the centrepiece of the anti-money laundering package, which aims to protect EU citizens and the EU's financial system against money laundering and terrorist financing.

AMLA will have direct and indirect supervisory powers over high-risk obliged entities in the financial sector.

In addition to supervisory powers and in order to ensure compliance, in cases of serious, systematic or repeated breaches of directly applicable requirements, the Authority will impose pecuniary sanctions on the selected obliged entities. [READ MORE](#)

[OFAC/ State Target More Suppliers to Russia](#)

Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and the State Department announced sanctions on over 100 entities and individuals including those engaged in sanctions evasion in numerous third countries, complicit in furthering

Russia's ability to wage its war against Ukraine, and responsible for bolstering Russia's future energy production and export capacity.

The December 11 action highlights Russia's utilization of Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the People's Republic of China (PRC), as well as the use of complex transnational networks and third-country cut-outs, to acquire much-needed technology and equipment for its war economy. [READ MORE](#)

[Agreement to Criminalize Violation of EU Sanctions](#)

The Council and the European Parliament concluded their negotiations for an EU law which introduces criminal offences and penalties for the violation of EU sanctions. This directive ensures that those who violate or circumvent EU sanctions will be prosecuted.

The law lays down that member states will need to define certain actions as criminal offences. [READ MORE](#)

[Former Afghan Allies Sanctioned for Corruption](#)

The U.S. Treasury on December 11 slapped sanctions on a former Afghan official, his son, and related entities, accusing them of misappropriating millions of dollars of funds provided by U.S. government contracts.

The sanctions statement cited former Afghan parliament speaker Mir Rahman Rahmani and his son Ajmal Rahmani. "Through their Afghan companies, the Rahmanis perpetrated a complex procurement corruption scheme resulting in the misappropriation of millions of dollars from U.S. Government-funded contracts that supported Afghan security forces," it said, adding that other family members were also designated. [READ MORE](#)