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[EXIM: Gas Plant Finance Draws Fire](#)

The Export-Import Bank of the U.S. Board of Directors approved a \$90 million guarantee under EXIM's Supply Chain Finance Guarantee Program to Dutch Financier ING Capital to finance U.S. Natural Gas processor Freeport LNG Marketing.

In 2020 Exim approved a deal with Freeport LNG, "with the first-ever use of a funder guarantee structure" for \$50 million. That deal was a "tripartite agreement" between EXIM, Private Export Funding Corporation (PEFCO), and the scandal-plagued, now insolvent Greensill Capital.

In June 2022 a blast attributed to safety failures caused approximately \$275 million in damages and took the plant offline for 18 months. [READ MORE](#)

[African Growth and Opportunity Act Update](#)

The White House announced year-end amendments to its trade relations under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Mauritania has been reinstated as a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country following its compliance with the eligibility requirements of the AGOA and the Trade Act. The designations for the Central African Republic, Gabon, Niger, and Uganda as beneficiary sub-Saharan African countries have been terminated. [READ MORE](#)

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[USTR: Caribbean Basin Initiative Report](#)

The Office of the United States Trade Representative has released the Fifteenth Biennial Report on the Operation of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA).

On a biennial basis, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) is required to submit a report to Congress regarding the results of the general review of CBI beneficiary countries and their performance under the CBI eligibility criteria. [READ MORE](#)

[USTR: Millán Named Acting General Counsel](#)

United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced the appointment of Juan A. Millán as Acting General Counsel, replacing Greta Peisch

Mr. Millán most recently served as the Deputy General Counsel for Monitoring and Enforcement in the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). From 2005 to 2012, he was Legal Advisor and Senior Legal Advisor at the U.S. Mission to the WTO in Geneva. [READ MORE](#)

[USDA and USTR Seek New Trade Advisory Committee Members](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative are accepting applications for new members to serve on agricultural trade advisory committees.

Members of the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee provide advice to the administration on the implementation and enforcement of existing U.S. trade agreements, negotiation of new agreements, and other trade policy matters.

Members of the six Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees, or ATACs, provide technical advice and recommendations on international trade issues that affect specific agricultural commodity sectors. [READ MORE](#)

[Lobbyists Settle Foreign Agent Registration Violations](#)

A Virginia lobbyist and a New Jersey political consultant each have entered into Deferred Prosecution Agreements (DPAs) to resolve allegations that they failed to comply with the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and committed related offenses while representing the government of Qatar.

Barry P. Bennett, 60, of Alexandria, Va., owned and operated Avenue Strategies, LLC and Avenue Strategies Global, LLC, a pair of consulting firms in Washington D.C. Douglas Watts, 73, of Jersey City, N.J., is a former presidential campaign consultant who also founded and ran a lobbying and public relations company.

In 2017, Bennett signed a contract for Avenue Strategies to perform lobbying services for the embassy of Qatar. As part of his lobbying strategy on behalf of, and for and in the interest of Qatar, Bennett covertly operated Yemen Crisis Watch, a Limited Liability Company (LLC) founded by Watts at Bennett's direction.

As directed by Bennett and managed by Watts, Yemen Crisis Watch ran a public relations campaign designed to cast Qatar's rivals, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E., in a negative light, and thereby to improve Qatar's standing with the U.S. government relative to these rivals. [READ MORE](#)

[U.S. Beneficial Ownership Information Registry Now Accepting Reports](#)

January 1st, Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) began accepting beneficial ownership information reports.

Reporting companies created or registered to do business in the United States before January 1, 2024 must file by January 1, 2025.

Newly created or registered companies: Reporting companies created or registered to do business in the United States in 2024 have 90 calendar days to file after receiving actual or public notice that their company's creation or registration is effective. [READ MORE](#)

[House China Hawks Call for IoT Maker Blacklisting](#)

The leaders of the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party kicked off the new year by writing to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, asking for a Chinese wireless company to be blacklisted.

Shenzhen-based Quectel manufactures "Internet of Things (IoT)" modules which connect equipment to central control and monitoring systems. Markets include Transportation, Industrial Telematics, and Smart Metering of utilities. [READ MORE](#)

[Commerce Chip Grant Announced](#)

The Department of Commerce and Microchip Technology Inc. have reached a non-binding preliminary memorandum of terms (PMT) to provide approximately \$162 million in federal incentives under the CHIPS and Science Act to support the onshoring of the company's semiconductor supply chain.

Microchip's microcontroller units and mature-node semiconductors are critical components in the production and manufacturing of electric vehicles and other automotives, washing machines, cell phones, airplanes, and the defense-industrial base. Shortages of microcontrollers during the pandemic affected over 1% of global GDP. [READ MORE](#)

[CBP: COAC Wraps; Trade & Cargo Summit Registration Opens Jan 10th](#)

The Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee (COAC), a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) federal advisory committee, unanimously passed 12 recommendations on export modernization, rapid response and North American trade during its most recent public meeting.

The 2024 Trade Facilitation and Cargo Security Summit, which will be held in Philadelphia March 25 – 28. Registration will open January 10, 2024, at noon Eastern time [READ MORE](#)

[Türkiye to Host the U.S. Government's Largest Annual Trade Mission in May 2024](#)

This year, the Trade Winds Europe/Eurasia Trade Mission and Business Forum will be hosted in Istanbul, Türkiye from May 13-15, 2024.

Led by the International Trade Administration (ITA), Trade Winds is a multi-country trade mission and business development forum that provides U.S. businesses with the expertise of commercial diplomats from over 25 European and Eurasian markets, and connects them with potential business partners across the region. [READ MORE](#)

[Tin Mill Products: Final Determination](#)

On January 5, Commerce announced the final determinations in the antidumping duty (AD) investigations of tin mill products from Canada, the People's Republic of China (China), Germany, the Republic of Korea (Korea), the Netherlands, Taiwan, the Republic of Turkey (Turkey), and the United Kingdom.

Commerce also announced the final determination in the accompanying countervailing duty (CVD) investigation of tin mill products from China. [READ MORE](#)

[2024 European Union Section 232 Tariff Rate Quota Hold Released](#)

European Union steel and aluminum quota "Hold" status has been released effective January 2, 2024. As reported last week, the White House published two documents on December 28, 2023 extending current EU Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) programs:

2024 EU steel and aluminum quota limits will remain at previous years' limits. For detailed filing instructions please choose the appropriate link below. [READ MORE](#)

[Thermo Fisher Backs Down on Tibet DNA Kit Sales](#)

Tibet rights campaigners have welcomed a commitment by Boston-based biotech giant Thermo Fisher Scientific to halt sales of its DNA test kits ("HID") products to police in occupied Tibet.

Thermo Fisher communicated this commitment to shareholders in a letter in December and it took effect on 31 December 2023.

The announcement comes after more than a year of campaigning by Tibet groups. The campaign was prompted by reports in 2022 revealing that Chinese police forces in occupied Tibet had been extensively

using Thermo Fisher's HID products, including DNA testing kits and DNA sequencing equipment to carry out a widespread, ethnically-targeted collection of DNA samples from Tibetans. [READ MORE](#)

[FAQs Updated for BIS Semi Rules](#)

December 29, the Bureau of Industry & Security published a series of updates to the Frequently Asked Question (FAQs) associated with the October 7th, 2022 and October 17, 2023 Semiconductor Rules.

The Interim Final Rules (IFRs) amend the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) to implement more effective export controls on semiconductor manufacturing equipment (SME), advanced computing items, and supercomputers, addressing national security concerns. [READ MORE](#)

[BIS: Export Enforcement 2023 Recap:](#)

Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement Alan Estevez's office released their Export Enforcement: 2023 Year in Review, detailing enforcement actions, technological safeguards, and international collaborations. The document is reproduced below. [READ MORE](#)

[WTO: Fisheries Deal Still not Landed](#)

"We will resume work right after the holidays, with a 'fish month' of continuous negotiations taking us to mid-February, when texts for MC13 need to be ready," vowed Ambassador Einar Gunnarsson of Iceland, chair of the fisheries subsidies negotiations.

At the end of the latest Fish Week in early December, members were unable to reach agreement on additional fisheries subsidies disciplines.

Developing nations are wary of a possible loophole that could allow industrialized countries like the European Union, U.S. and China to continue handing out certain subsidies – such as paying cash for access to third countries' waters – while still adhering, on paper, to an agreed deal. [READ MORE](#)

[WTO: Trade More Restrictive in 2023](#)

Trade measures introduced by G20 economies have become more restrictive in recent months, according to the 30th WTO Trade Monitoring Report on G20 trade measures issued on 18 December. The report shows that between mid-May and mid-October 2023, G20 economies introduced more trade-restrictive than trade-facilitating measures on goods, although the value of traded merchandise covered by facilitating measures continued to exceed that covered by restrictions. [READ MORE](#)
