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[Congress Offended by Viet Trade Upgrade](#)

Democratic lawmakers joined their republican colleagues in calling out the Biden Administration's efforts to declare the Socialist Republic of Vietnam a market economy.

"We are especially concerned by reports that Commerce pledged to the government of Vietnam that your agency's review will result in a favorable determination, to the detriment of U.S. industries and workers," the Senators write. [READ MORE](#)

[HFAC to Consider ECRA Reform and Other Bills](#)

The House Foreign Affairs Committee will hold a markup to consider various measures regarding export controls, prohibiting US contributions to UNRWA, restricting Iran's access to U.S. goods and technology to manufacture missiles and long-range drones, designating the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization, and enhancing efforts to end international human trafficking on Tuesday, February 6th. [READ MORE](#)

[USMCA Auto Teamwork Wanting - GAO](#)

A performance audit of coordination of the implementation, enforcement, and verification of the new automotive rules of origin included in the USMCA found material gaps, placing responsibility on the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), which is responsible for coordinating efforts. [READ MORE](#)

[Gallagher Ups Pressure on Ford Battery Plans](#)

House Select Committee on China Chairman Mike Gallagher (R-Wisc) is continuing to put pressure on Ford Motor Company because of its partnership with China-based electric-vehicle battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology Company Limited (CATL) to build a Michigan factory.

Mr. Gallagher and House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash) said their " cursory review" uncovered evidence that Ford plans to use technology and software from at least four Chinese companies that supply the same types of information technology tools to the Chinese military, North Korean government and China's Ministry of Public Security. [READ MORE](#)

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[Deliverables Possible at Next TTC](#)

US and European Union officials are looking to the next meeting of the Trade and Technology Council to deliver results in key areas discussed at this week's session, European Commission Executive Vice President Margrethe Vestager said Wednesday..

Those issues – artificial intelligence, semiconductors and standards setting – are ones that Brussels and Washington have been engaged on since the TTC was launched. [READ MORE](#)

[IPEF Supply Chain Deal Ready](#)

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework Agreement's deal on supply chains will enter into force of February 24, the Commerce Department announced Wednesday.

The focus in the coming months will turn to various milestones set out in the agreement related to establishing three supply chain bodies – the Supply Chain Council, Crisis Response Network and Labor Rights Advisory Board, including: [READ MORE](#)

[Bill to Address Foreign Ownership of US Farmland](#)

House and Senate lawmakers have introduced legislation to beef up the reporting and enforcement of foreign ownership of US agricultural land.

The legislation would implement several recommendations put forward in a recent report on foreign investment in US farmland by the Government Accountability Office. [READ MORE](#)

[Congressman Calls out Sister Cities as Communist Plot](#)

U.S. Rep. Jim Banks of Indiana on Tuesday asked the Indianapolis suburb of Carmel to withdraw from a sister-city agreement with a Chinese municipality and to refuse trips organized by groups linked to China's ruling party.

"China has successfully leveraged sister-city agreements to force American and foreign politicians to endorse its one-China policy and to oppose policies that could harm China," Banks wrote. The policy asserts that Taiwan, governed by an opposing party, is part of China. [READ MORE](#)

Initiative on electronic commerce co-convenors – Australia, Japan, and Singapore – have escalated negotiations, aiming for a decision at the World Trade Organization's 13th ministerial conference. They race to announce a decision concurrent with the proposed plurilateral Investment Facilitation for Development at MC13, issuing a draft chair's text.

The co-convenors released two restricted proposals (INF/ECOM/84 and INF/ECOM/85), reviewed by WTD, for intensive negotiations at the upcoming meeting from January 30 to February 2. [READ MORE](#)

[WTO: Kicking the Can Down the Road at MC-13](#)

The upcoming 13th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization in Geneva seems to be becoming an event focused on deferring critical issues previously agreed upon during the MC12 ministerial meeting held in July 2022, according to informed sources.

Recent developments within the WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Council indicate that there will be no decision to extend the TRIPS-partial waiver to COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.

Similarly, the sixth draft of the ministerial decision on dispute settlement reform, particularly regarding the appeal review mechanism, suggests that the two-tier dispute settlement system, considered the "jewel in the crown," will not be reinstated at MC13, despite the mandate provided in MC12. [READ MORE](#)

[WTO: Dispute Reform Dead in the Water](#)

The World Trade Organization is unlikely to achieve a reform outcome during the 13th ministerial conference commencing in Abu Dhabi on February 26, our correspondent writes.

They recognized the importance and urgency of addressing these issues and committed to conducting discussions with the aim of establishing a fully functional dispute settlement system accessible to all Members by 2024.

However, the current status of these discussions remains uncertain due to the United States' position, which favors continued deliberations without hastening towards an outcome that might overlook certain members' needs or impose constraints hindering constructive dialogue. [READ MORE](#)

[WTO: Agriculture Draft Text for MC-13](#)

Many countries lent support to the draft agriculture negotiating text issued last week by the chair of the Doha agriculture negotiations. They expressed that it could serve as a basis for advancing negotiations leading up to the World Trade Organization's 13th ministerial conference, which commences on February 26.

During a meeting of the Doha agriculture negotiating body, several members, including Brazil and the United States, indicated their approval of the draft text put forth by Ambassador Alparslan Acarsoy of Türkiye, considering it a viable foundation for negotiations. [READ MORE](#)

[DoD China Military Companies List Updated](#)

The Department of Defense released an updated blacklist with more than a dozen new Chinese companies on it, including memory chip maker YMTC, artificial intelligence company Megvii, LiDAR maker Hesai Technology and tech company NetPosa.

Section 1260H of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry NDAA for FY21 (Pub. L. 116–283) directs the Secretary of Defense to continue to list "Chinese military companies" (CMCs) annually until December 31, 2030. [READ MORE](#)

[Congress Calls for Shipping Exchange Rules](#)

A bipartisan group of lawmakers has urged the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) to "work expeditiously" to initiate a rulemaking on shipping exchanges and "establish healthy and fair competition in the global shipping market."

"If the U.S. does not approve a competitor, the CCP could obtain a monopoly, leading to a troubling outcome for American shippers and global commerce," the lawmakers write. [READ MORE](#)

[Tractor Maker Pays \\$2 Million Origin Label Settlement](#)

Tractor maker Kubota North America Corporation will pay a \$2 million civil penalty as a result of a Federal Trade Commission action against the company for falsely labeling some of its replacement parts as being "Made in USA."

Kubota will be prohibited from making deceptive claims in addition to requiring them to pay the penalty, which is the largest ever in a Made in USA case. [READ MORE](#)

[BIS Cloud KYC Rule Proposed](#)

The Commerce Department published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for establishing new requirements for Infrastructure as a Service providers (IaaS or "cloud infrastructure providers").

The proposed rule introduces potential regulations that require U.S. cloud infrastructure providers and their foreign resellers to implement and maintain Customer Identification Programs (CIPs), which would include the collection of "Know Your Customer" (KYC) information. [READ MORE](#)

[Rail Supplier Fined for Anti-Boycott Violations](#)

Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) imposed a civil penalty of \$153,175 against Wabtec Corporation, a global manufacturer and supplier of rail technology headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to resolve 43 violations of the antiboycott provisions of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) (antiboycott regulations) alleged in BIS's Proposed Charging Letter.

Wabtec voluntarily disclosed the conduct to BIS, cooperated with the investigation by BIS's Office of Antiboycott Compliance (OAC), and took remedial measures after discovering the conduct at issue, which resulted in a significant reduction in the penalty. [READ MORE](#)

"Large Scale" Global Oil Laundering Network Charged

The Justice Department announced the unsealing of three federal cases, across two U.S. Attorneys' Offices, as the most recent in a series of efforts to combat the illicit trafficking of Iranian oil that funds Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and its Qods Force (IRGC-QF), Iran's primary mechanism for cultivating and providing lethal support to terrorist organizations abroad

Seven defendants are charged in the Southern district of New York, along with the seizure of \$108 million. Two more defendants were named in a case filed in the District of Columbia, along with a forfeiture complaint for 500,000 barrels of oil in transit. [READ MORE](#)

After 20 Years on the Lam, Rogue Exporter Pleads Guilty

A citizen of the United States and the Republic of Taiwan, residing in Taiwan, pleaded guilty January 31 to a federal conspiracy charge, related to the export of defense materials to Iran 20 years ago.

The defendant had remained a fugitive until his arrest on April 10, 2023, at Rome-Fiumicino International Airport in Italy and subsequent extradition to the United States. [READ MORE](#)

Chinese Tech Buyers for Iranian Dual-Use Goods Charged

Four Chinese nationals are charged in an indictment in the District of Columbia with various federal crimes related to a years-long conspiracy to unlawfully export and smuggle U.S.-origin electronic components from the United States to Iran. [READ MORE](#)

UK Citizen Sentenced in Iran Tech Exports Case

A British man was sentenced to 18 months in prison for attempting to export an Industrial Microwave System (IMS) and counter-drone system from the United States to Iran, without first obtaining the requisite license from the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Saber Fakhri was arrested in the United Kingdom pursuant to a U.S. Extradition Request on or about February 10, 2021. On January 25, 2022, he entered a plea of guilty to count two of the indictment in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia. In addition to the prison term, Saber Fakhri was ordered to serve three years of supervised release. [READ MORE](#)

Compliance Executive Guilty in Money Laundering Scheme

In a federal court in Brooklyn, Gyanendra Asre pleaded guilty to failing to maintain an anti-money laundering program in violation of the Bank Secrecy Act, as part of a scheme to bring lucrative and high-risk international financial business to a small, unsophisticated credit union. When sentenced, Asre faces up to 10 years in prison.

In a parallel action, Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) assessed a civil money penalty of \$100,000 and a five year ban from AML supervisory employment. [READ MORE](#)

Bown State's Chief Economist

Chad P. Bown is the new State Department Chief Economist, serving as the Secretary of State's most senior advisor on economics.

Mr. Bown has been senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics since 2016. There, His research examined international trade laws and institutions, trade negotiations, and trade disputes. Much of his published research has addressed the WTO Dispute Settlement process. [READ MORE](#)

USTR: Bianchi Latest to Bolt

The rumored departure of Deputy United States Trade Representative Sarah Bianchi was made official with a Saturday announcement January 27.

Ms. Bianchi, a highly regarded policy advisor had responsibilities for for Asia, Africa, Investment, Services, Textiles, and Industrial Competitiveness. [READ MORE](#)