

Washington Tariff & Trade Letter

Vol. 45, No. 6

wttonline.com

February 10, 2025

POLITICS OF TRADE

Never Mind...

What are we to make of the chaos being promulgated by the Trump White House as it settles in to governing? Check back tomorrow; we'll have a new answer. From eliminating Valentine's Day roses, guacamole for the Super Bowl, the North American automotive industry, and America's compulsion for flimsy fast fashion, the Administration's "flood the zone" policy prescription has generated much heat and chatter, only to be walked back by weekend. Friday President Trump continued the drumbeat, promising more tariff announcements to come: "I'll be announcing that next week. Reciprocal trade so that we're treated evenly with other countries. We don't want any more or any less," [READ MORE](#)

Justice Pogrom Update

Her first full day as Attorney General, Pam Bondi issued a raft of policy changes, including a memorandum outlining the new administration's policies on charging, plea negotiations and sentencing. Tacked onto the end of the five-page memo, Ms. Bondi continued the purge of the National Security Division, disbanding the Foreign Influence Task Force and the National Security Division's Corporate Enforcement Unit, and instructing the Counterintelligence and Export Control Section to "focus on civil enforcement, regulatory initiatives, and public guidance." Another memo directs FCPA prosecutors to prioritize the investigation drug cartels and transnational criminal organizations and to "shift focus away from cases that do not involve such a connection." [READ MORE](#)

Jamieson Greer Calls for "Pragmatic" Trade Policy

Jamieson Greer, President Trump's nominee for U.S. Trade Representative, signaled a forceful approach to trade policy in his Senate Finance Committee confirmation hearing, emphasizing reciprocity, domestic production, and national security concerns. If confirmed, Greer is expected to reshape U.S. trade strategy with a strong emphasis on reducing trade deficits, enforcing trade agreements, and leveraging tariffs as a tool for economic and security objectives. Greer, who previously served as chief of staff at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) during the Trump administration, framed his approach as "pragmatic," focused on securing better terms for U.S. producers while addressing economic vulnerabilities. "If the United States does not have a robust manufacturing base and innovation economy, it will have little in the way of hard power to deter conflict and protect Americans," he told senators. He underscored the need to restructure the international trading system to prioritize U.S. interests, warning that the window for such reform is narrowing. [READ MORE](#)

© Copyright 2025 Gilston-Kalin Communications LLC P.O. Box 7592, Arlington, VA 22207
All rights reserved. Subscription and corporate site license information 703.283.5220

www.wttonline.com

Editor: Frank Ruffing +1.703.283.5220. fruffing@tradereqs.com

[US Firms: Keep PNTR, Exclusions, Nix Diffusion Rule](#)

The trade group representing 270 American companies operating in China, announced its policy priorities for US-China commercial relations. "With new US leadership, USCBC sees a fresh chance to address structural issues in China's economy that disadvantage American businesses, workers, and farmers," states The US-China Business Council (USCBC) in announcing the report. The report calls for ensuring the enforcement of China's "phase one" commitments, preserving China's permanent normal trade relations status, and "recalibrating national security restrictions" including reversing the AI Diffusion Rule introduced at the close of the prior administration. [READ MORE](#)

[Nippon, US Steel File Challenge to CFIUS](#)

Japan's Nippon Steel and the US Steel Corporation are continuing the fight against the Biden Administration's decision to block their proposed \$14.9 billion merger. The two companies filed their opening brief with the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit arguing that President Biden halted the merger for political reason and not because of a national security threat. The two companies said in a statement that the merger "will enhance, not threaten, United States' national security, protect US Steel workers, revitalize jobs in communities that rely on American steel and make American Steel bigger and better. [READ MORE](#)

[Senate Finance Trade Rosters Set](#)

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) announced the final roster for the panel's subcommittees yesterday, including the subcommittee on international trade, customs and global competitiveness. [READ MORE](#)

TARIFFS

[Beijing Parries White House Gambit](#)

China has responded to Washington's imposition of a 10 percent tariff on all Chinese imports with a mix of retaliatory measures, including targeted tariffs, World Trade Organization (WTO) challenges, and diplomatic overtures. After President Trump announced a blanket tariff on China Tuesday, China's

Finance Ministry declared 15 percent levies on US Coal and LNG and 10 percent on crude oil, farm equipment and some autos. Beijing also restricted exports of five critical minerals: tungsten, tellurium, bismuth, molybdenum, and indium. [READ MORE](#)

[De Minimis Rollback Begins, Pauses](#)

Shippers were whipsawed by the news cycle as the White House rolled out its America First Trade Policy, with Presidential actions caroming from Colombia to Canada and Mexico, finally settling on China. More fulsome in scope than previous actions, included are measures ensuring e-commerce heavyweights Temu, Shein and Amazon will no longer be able to take advantage of what House Ways and Means Committee Chair Jason Smith has described as a “free trade agreement with China.” [READ MORE](#)

[Senators Call for Reins on Tariff Powers](#)

Two Democratic Senators have introduced legislation aimed at limiting the president’s ability to impose tariffs unilaterally on U.S. allies and free trade agreement (FTA) partners. The Stopping Tariffs on Allies and Bolstering Legislative Exercise of (STABLE) Trade Policy Act seeks to reinstate congressional oversight over trade policy, requiring congressional approval before implementing new tariffs on allied nations. [READ MORE](#)

WTO / GENEVA

[WTO Agriculture Chair Decries "Groundhog Day"](#)

At a meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) agriculture negotiations, outgoing Chair Ambassador Alparslan Acarsoy of Türkiye delivered his final report, urging members to overcome longstanding divisions and achieve substantive progress ahead of the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé in 2026. Reflecting on efforts over the past two years, Ambassador Acarsoy expressed regret that MC13 in 2024 had failed to deliver an outcome on agriculture, despite nearing consensus. “The position we find ourselves in is very similar to where we stood before MC13. I urge you to collectively consider what steps can be taken to break free from this recurring ‘Groundhog Day’ scenario and drive meaningful progress forward,” he stated. [READ MORE](#)

[China Takes Trump Tariffs to WTO](#)

China has requested WTO dispute consultations with the United States in regard to new tariff measures applied by the United States on goods originating in China. The request was circulated to WTO members on 5 February. China claims that the 10 per cent additional ad valorem duties applied on all

goods originating in China, as well as measures with respect to the availability of drawback and duty-free de minimis treatment, which apply to all products of Chinese origin, are inconsistent with US most-favoured-nation obligations under Article I:1 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 and US tariff obligations under Article II:1(a) of GATT 1994. [READ MORE](#)

[Services Trade Up in 3rd Quarter: WTO](#)

Global trade in services grew by 10% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2024, the World Trade Organization (WTO) reported this week. Services exports increased by 16% in Asia, followed by 8% in Europe and 7% in North America, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. According to the WTO report, services remain a key driver of trade growth, expanding by 9% year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2024. This contrasts sharply with goods trade, which grew by only 2% over the same period. [READ MORE](#)

SANCTIONS & EXPORT CONTROLS

["Maximum Pressure" Back for Iran](#)

Tuesday February 4th the White House issued a National Security Memorandum (NSM) directing multiple federal agencies to impose maximum pressure on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The memorandum outlines aggressive measures aimed at denying Iran all paths to a nuclear weapon, countering its regional influence, and disrupting its financial and military networks. The document, addressed to senior U.S. officials including the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Defense, and Homeland Security, mandates immediate actions to intensify economic, diplomatic, and law enforcement measures against Iran. [READ MORE](#)

[Fresh Iran Oil Sanctions](#)

Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has imposed sanctions on an international oil smuggling network that has facilitated the shipment of millions of barrels of Iranian crude oil, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, to the People's Republic of China (PRC). This action aligns with the February 4 National Security Presidential Memorandum, which mandates maximum economic pressure on Iran to prevent its nuclear advancement and regional destabilization. [READ MORE](#)

[Senators Warren and Hawley Agree on China Controls](#)

Sens. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass) and Josh Hawley (R-Mo) are calling on the Commerce Department to beef up export controls on China. In a letter to Commerce Secretary nominee Howard Lutnick, the two members of the Banking Committee said the Administration needs to strengthen export controls and close regulatory loopholes that are undercutting US technology leadership against challenges from China. [READ MORE](#)

[EU Dual Use Export Controls Report](#)

A European Commission report assessing patterns of Member-State exports of dual-use items shows that both authorisations and denials for the export of those most sensitive goods is on the rise as compared to 2021. The report includes, for the first time, extensive information on licensing data that will allow for a better understanding of how export controls are applied, and the risks identified relating to exports of sensitive items in the current geopolitical context. [READ MORE](#)

ENFORCEMENT

[Brinks to Pay \\$37 Million for Handling Dirty Currency](#)

The Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) assessed a \$37,000,000 civil money penalty against Brink's Global Services USA, Inc. for willful violations of the Bank Secrecy Act (BSA). As a result of Brink's failures, hundreds of millions of dollars in bulk currency shipments were transmitted across the Southwest Border on behalf of high-risk entities—including a Mexican currency exchanger that later pleaded guilty to violating the BSA. This is FinCEN's first enforcement action against an armored car company. [READ MORE](#)

[Another PdVSA Aircraft Seized](#)

The Justice Department announced Thursday that Dominican Republic authorities seized a Dassault Falcon 2000EX aircraft used by Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PdVSA), the sanctioned Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural-gas company, at the request of the U.S. government based on violations of U.S. export control and sanctions laws. The Justice Department previously announced in September 2024 the seizure of a Dassault Falcon 900EX aircraft in the Dominican Republic that was owned and operated for the benefit of Nicolás Maduro Moros and persons affiliated with him in Venezuela. [READ MORE](#)

[Google IP Theft Indictment Expanded](#)

A federal grand jury returned a superseding indictment February 4, charging a Chinese national with seven counts of economic espionage and seven counts of theft of trade secrets in connection with an alleged plan to steal from Google LLC proprietary information related to AI technology. Linwei Ding, also known as Leon Ding, 38 was initially indicted in March 2024 on four counts of theft of trade secrets. The superseding indictment describes seven categories of trade secrets stolen by Ding and charges Ding with seven counts of economic espionage and seven counts of theft of trade secrets. [READ MORE](#)