

Escalating Tariffs: Timeline

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Updated September 24, 2018

Concerns over trading partner trade practices and the U.S. trade deficit have been a focus of the Trump Administration. Citing these concerns and others, the President has imposed tariffs under three U.S. laws and authorities that allow the Administration to unilaterally impose trade restrictions: (1) Section 201 (**Table 1**) on U.S. imports of washing machines and solar products; (2) Section 232 (**Table 2**) on U.S. imports of steel and aluminum, and potentially autos and uranium, and (3) Section 301 (**Table 3**) on U.S. imports from China. Congress delegated aspects of its constitutional authority to regulate foreign commerce to the President through these trade laws. These statutory authorities allow presidential action, based on agency investigations and other criteria, to impose import restrictions to address specific concerns (see text box). They have been used infrequently in the past two decades, in part due to the 1995 creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its enforceable dispute settlement system. Prior to this Administration, U.S. import restrictions were last imposed under these trade laws in 1982 for Section 232, 2001 for Section 301, and 2002 for Section 201. For more on the impact of these actions, see CRS Insight IN10971, *Escalating Tariffs: Potential Impacts*.

U.S. Laws Related To Trump Administration Trade Actions

Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974—Allows the President to impose temporary duties and other trade measures if the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) determines a surge in imports is a *substantial cause or threat of serious injury* to a U.S. industry.

Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962—Allows the President to take action to adjust imports of products the Department of Commerce finds to be imported into the United States in such quantities or under such circumstances as to *threaten to impair U.S. national security*.

Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974—Allows the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to suspend trade agreement concessions or impose import restrictions if it determines a U.S. trading partner is *violating trade agreement commitments or engaging in discriminatory or unreasonable practices that burden or restrict U.S. commerce*.

Increasing U.S. tariffs or imposing other import restrictions through these laws potentially opens the United States to complaints that it is violating its WTO and free trade agreement (FTA) commitments. Several U.S. trading partners, including Canada, China, Mexico, and the European Union, have initiated dispute settlement proceedings and imposed retaliatory tariffs in response. The retaliatory actions also raise questions with regard to their adherence to WTO commitments.

Timeline and Status of U.S. Trade Actions

The tables below provide a timeline of key events related to each U.S. trade action. In addition to tariffs, the President has imposed quotas, or quantitative limits on U.S. imports of certain goods from specified countries, as well as tariff-rate quotas (TRQs), for which one tariff applies up to a specific quantity of imports and a higher tariff applies above that threshold.

Table I. Section 201 Global Safeguard Investigations

Key Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5/17/2017—U.S. industry petition initiates ITC injury investigation on solar cells/modules. 6/5/2017—U.S. industry petition initiates ITC injury investigation on large residential washers. 9/22/2017—ITC makes affirmative solar cells/modules injury determination. 10/5/2017—ITC makes affirmative large residential washers injury determination. 11/13/2017—ITC submits report and recommended action on solar cells/modules to President. 12/4/2017—ITC submits report and recommended action on large residential washers to President. 1/23/2018—President proclaims actions on solar cells/modules and large residential washers, effective February 7, 2018.
U.S. Import Restriction	<p>Solar Cells: 4-year TRQ with 30% above quota tariff, descending 5% annually.</p> <p>Solar Modules: 4-year 30% tariff, descending 5% annually.</p> <p>Large Residential Washers: 3-year TRQ, 20% in quota tariff descending 2% annually, 50% above quota tariff descending 5% annually.</p> <p>Large Residential Washer Parts: 3-year TRQ, 50% above quota tariff, descending 5% annually.</p>
Countries Affected	Canada excluded from the duties on washers. Certain developing countries excluded if they account for less than 3% individually or 9% collectively of U.S. imports of solar cells or large residential washers, respectively. All other countries included.
Current Status	Effective February 7, 2018.

Table 2. Section 232 Steel and Aluminum Investigations

Key Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4/2017—Commerce initiates investigations on effects on national security of U.S. steel (4/19) and aluminum (4/26) imports. President signs memoranda prioritizing steel and aluminum investigations. 1/2018—Commerce submits steel (1/11) and aluminum (1/17) findings and recommendations to President. 3/8/2018—President proclaims steel and aluminum duties, effective March 23, 2018, temporarily exempting Canada and Mexico. 3/22/2018—President temporarily exempts Argentina, Australia, Brazil, South Korea and the European Union (EU) in addition to Canada and Mexico from steel and aluminum duties. 4/30/2018—President permanently exempts South Korea from steel duties, based on a quota arrangement. South Korea's exemption from aluminum duties expires. 5/31/2018—President permanently exempts Argentina, Australia, and Brazil from steel duties, and Argentina and Australia from aluminum duties, based on quota arrangements. Brazil's exemption from aluminum duties, and Canada, Mexico, and EU's exemptions from steel and aluminum duties expire. 8/10/2018—President doubles the tariff rates to 50% on steel imports from Turkey, effective August 13, 2018.
U.S. Import Restriction	<p>Aluminum: 10% tariffs on specified list of aluminum imports effective indefinitely.</p> <p>Steel: 25% tariffs on specified list of steel imports effective indefinitely; 50% tariffs on steel imports from Turkey.</p>
Countries Affected	<p>Aluminum: Australia and Argentina* permanently exempted.</p> <p>Steel: Australia, Argentina*, Brazil*, and South Korea* permanently exempted.</p> <p>All other countries included.</p> <p>(*) Quantitative import restrictions imposed in place of tariffs.</p>
Current Status	<p>Effective March 23, 2018.</p> <p>(Retaliation also in effect, see CRS Insight IN10971, <i>Escalating Tariffs: Potential Impacts.</i>)</p>

Table 3. Section 301 China Trade Barriers Investigation

Key Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8/14/2017—President directs USTR to determine whether it should investigate China’s laws, policies, practices, or actions affecting U.S. intellectual property and forced technology transfers. 8/18/2017—USTR announces it will proceed with Section 301 case against China. 3/22/2018—USTR releases Section 301 report and finds that China’s policies are “unreasonable or discriminatory, and burden or restrict U.S. commerce.” President signs memorandum proposing to: (1) implement tariffs on certain Chinese imports; (2) initiate a WTO dispute settlement case against China’s discriminatory technology licensing; and (3) propose new investment restrictions on Chinese efforts to acquire sensitive U.S. technology. 4/3/2018—USTR releases proposed list of 1,300 tariff lines to be subject to 25% import tariff. 4/5/2018—President directs USTR to consider additional list of Chinese imports to be subject to 25% tariff if China retaliates. 5/29/2018—President Trump announces U.S. plan to proceed with Section 301 actions, including 25% tariff on \$50 billion of U.S. imports from China. 6/15/2018—USTR releases two-stage plan to impose 25% tariffs on approximately \$50 billion of Chinese imports (includes final stage 1 product list). 6/18/2018—President directs USTR to propose a list of imports from China valued at \$200 billion (stage 3) that would be subject to an additional 10% tariff if China retaliates against Section 301 tariffs, and an additional \$200 billion if such retaliation occurs again. 7/10/2018—USTR releases list of proposed imports (stage 3) subject to additional 10% tariff accounting for approximately \$200 billion of U.S. imports in 2017. 8/1/2018—President directs USTR to consider increasing the proposed stage 3 tariffs from 10% to 25% on \$200 billion of U.S. imports from China. 8/7/2018—USTR publishes final list of stage 2 tariffs. 9/7/2018—President threatens potential stage 4 tariffs on \$267 billion of U.S. imports. (As of this writing USTR has not made a formal announcement or published a proposed list of products covered by these tariffs.) 9/17/2018—USTR publishes final list of stage 3 tariffs and announces that tariffs on these products will begin at 10% and increase to 25% on January 1, 2019.
U.S. Import Restriction	<p>Stage 1—25% import tariff on 818 U.S. imports (final, approx. \$34 billion)</p> <p>Stage 2—25% import tariff on 279 U.S. imports (final, approx. \$16 billion).</p> <p>Stage 3—10% import tariff increasing to 25% on January 1, 2019 on 5,745 U.S. imports (final, approx. \$200 billion).</p>
Countries Affected	China
Current Status	<p>Stage 1—Effective July 6, 2018.</p> <p>Stage 2—Effective August 23, 2018.</p> <p>Stage 3—Effective September 24, 2018.</p> <p>(Retaliation also in effect, see CRS Insight IN10971, <i>Escalating Tariffs: Potential Impacts</i>.)</p>

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