

Section 232 National Security Tariffs on Copper Imports

September 30, 2025

Congress has constitutional authority over foreign commerce and tariffs. [Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962](#) (19 U.S.C. §1862, as amended) [authorizes](#) the President to take action if the Secretary of Commerce determines that imports of a good threaten U.S. national security. President Trump has imposed Section 232 tariffs on [steel](#), [aluminum](#), and [automotive goods](#) based on investigations completed during his first term. On August 1, 2025, President Trump also [imposed](#) 50% tariffs on certain copper imports under Section 232. The copper tariffs are President Trump’s first action based on an investigation by the Commerce Department completed during his second term. Issues facing Congress include whether to support, curb, or exercise oversight of the executive branch’s use of Section 232 copper tariffs and to consider the potential implications of copper tariffs for the U.S. economy.

Background

Copper is used in a variety of sectors, including construction, electronics, transportation equipment, energy infrastructure and technology, and consumer products. According to the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) (USGS), in 2024, the United States produced 1.1 million tons of copper, refined 890,000 tons of copper, and relied on imports for about 45% of total U.S. refined copper consumption. President Trump has [asserted](#) that “copper is the second most widely used material by the Department of Defense” (which is using “Department of War” as a “secondary title” under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025) and is “indispensable” for critical U.S. infrastructure. The [Department of Energy](#) included copper on its 2023 [critical materials list](#), and USGS has [proposed](#) including copper in its 2025 [critical minerals list](#).

Presidential Tariff Proclamation

Upon President Trump’s [direction](#), in March 2025, the Commerce Secretary [initiated](#) an investigation into imports of “copper in all forms, including, but not limited to, raw mined copper; copper concentrates; refined copper; copper alloys; scrap copper; and derivative products” (products containing copper). [Table 1](#) gives a timeline of the Section 232 copper investigation in comparison to the Section 232 steel investigation concluded during the first Trump Administration.

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Table 1. Selected Section 232 Investigation and Tariff Timelines

Action	Steel (2017-2018)	Copper (2025)
Commerce Secretary initiates investigation	April 19, 2017	March 10, 2025
Public hearing held	May 24, 2017	N/A
Public comments due	May 31, 2017	April 1, 2025
Commerce Secretary submits report to President	January 11, 2018	June 30, 2025
President decides to take action	March 8, 2018 (Proclamation 9705)	July 30, 2025 (Proclamation 10962)
Tariffs go into effect	March 23, 2018	August 1, 2025

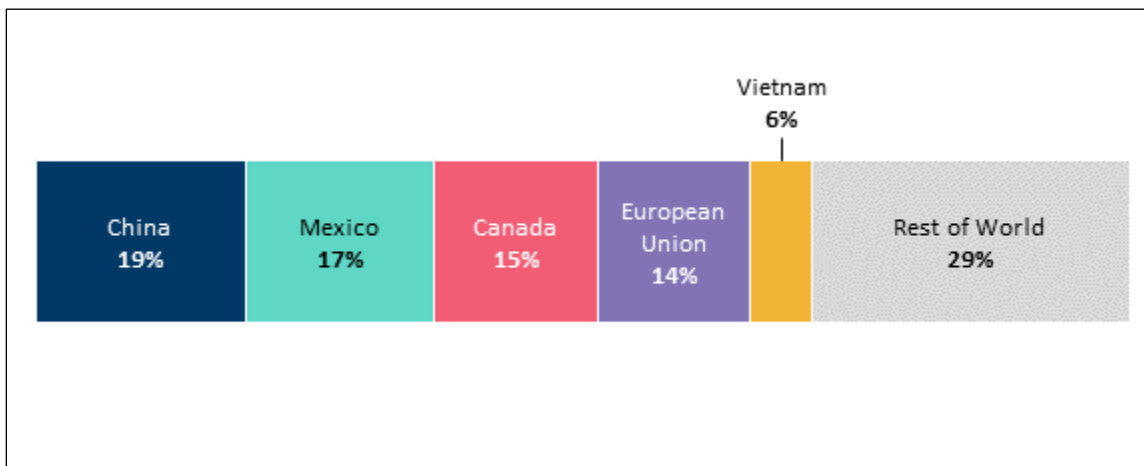
Source: CRS, based on various executive branch documents published in the *Federal Register*.

On July 30, President Trump issued a [proclamation](#) stating that the Secretary of Commerce had submitted to him a report finding that copper imports threaten to impair U.S. national security. As of September 29, 2025, the Commerce report had not been published. According to the proclamation, U.S. copper production “has plummeted.” and “unfair trade practices abroad, exacerbated by overly burdensome environmental regulations at home, have hollowed out United States copper refining and smelting, caused the United States to be overly reliant on foreign copper imports, and prevent a path forward without strong corrective action.” According to President Trump, the Commerce Secretary recommended a range of actions including an immediate 30% tariff on semi-finished copper products and intensive copper derivative products, a phased universal tariff on refined copper of 15% in 2027 and 30% in 2028, a domestic sales requirements starting at 25% in 2027 for copper input materials, and a 25% domestic sales requirement and export controls for high-quality copper scrap. The Commerce Secretary is to provide the President with an update on U.S. copper markets by June 30, 2026, after which the President may then determine whether to impose a phased duty on refined copper.

Based on the Commerce report, President Trump declared that, starting August 1, he would impose 50% tariffs on global imports of semi-finished copper products (such as copper pipes, wires, rods, sheets, and tubes) and copper-intensive derivative products (such as pipe fittings, cables, connectors, and electrical components). The United States imported \$15.5 billion worth of such products in 2024. **Figure 1** lists the top sources of 2024 U.S. imports of copper products covered by the Section 232 tariffs.

Figure I. Top Sources of U.S. Copper Imports (2024)

Products Covered by Section 232 Copper Tariffs



Source: CRS with U.S. Census Bureau data, as presented by Trade Data Monitor, accessed August 2025. Based on product codes in Proclamation 10962 of July 30, 2025.

According to a [White House fact sheet](#), copper input materials (such as copper ores, concentrates, mattes, cathodes, and anodes) and copper scrap are not subject to Section 232 or country-specific tariffs imposed by President Trump under the [International Emergency Economic Powers Act](#) (IEEPA; 50 U.S.C. §§1701 et seq.).

Section 232 tariffs apply only to the [copper content of a product](#). Non-copper content remains subject to [other duties](#). Copper tariffs do not apply to goods covered by [Section 232 automotive tariffs](#). The Commerce Secretary also is to establish a process to include additional products containing copper to the list of goods covered by Section 232 tariffs, consistent with the [process](#) established for steel and aluminum products.

Under a [bilateral U.S.-Japan deal](#), certain aircraft goods from Japan are [exempt](#) from most tariffs, including copper tariffs. The copper tariff [proclamation](#) stated that consistent with its [bilateral deal with the United Kingdom](#) (UK), the United States “intends to coordinate” with the UK “to adopt a structured, negotiated approach to addressing the national security threat in the copper sector.”

Issues Facing Congress

Some [observers](#) assert that targeted tariffs could provide support for U.S. copper producers and reiterate long-standing calls for pursuing [additional regulatory actions](#) to promote U.S. mining, processing, and manufacturing. Other [observers](#) caution that U.S. tariffs could increase costs for U.S. businesses, alienate trading partners, encourage copper exporters to seek other markets (e.g., China), and lead to copper shortages in the United States.

Some Members advocate for expanding the President’s tariff authorities, including under Section 232 (e.g., H.R. 735). Others argue that Congress should play a stronger role in setting and approving U.S. trade policy, including tariffs (e.g., S. 1272/H.R. 2665, S. 348, H.R. 1903, H.R. 2888). A related issue is the extent to which Congress should exercise oversight of the Trump Administration’s ongoing negotiations with foreign partners, including on Section 232 copper tariffs.

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