

# Trump administration plans new tariffs

## U.S. cites forced labor concerns as grounds

David Lawder, Anusha Shah and Philip Blenkinsop  
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The Trump administration has proposed new tariffs of up to 12.5% on imports from 60 economies after determining they had failed to curb trade in goods made with forced labor, an assertion that was rejected by its trading partners.

The proposal from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, issued June 2, comes from a Section 301 unfair trade practices investigation designed to help rebuild President Donald Trump's emergency tariffs, struck down by a U.S. Supreme Court decision in February.

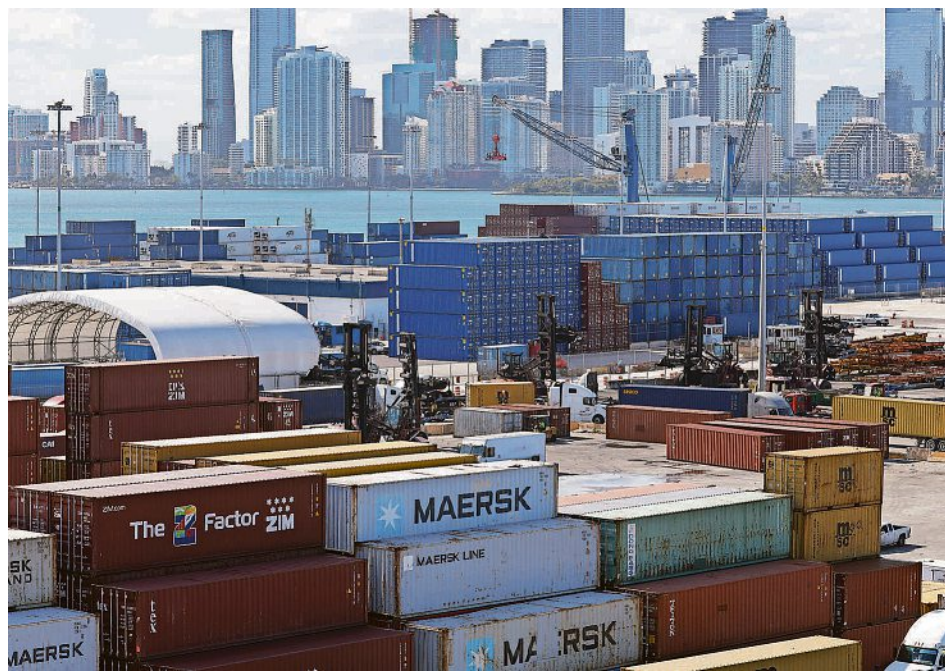
Despite laws banning them, the products of forced labor are deeply embedded in supply chains across the world. European lawmakers bristle at the accusation that the region is less effective than the United States at curbing the trade in such goods, with one describing the U.S. findings as "utterly absurd." Business leaders said the U.S. move created more confusion for companies.

The USTR proposed 10% additional duties on imports from Canada, Ecuador, the European Union, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Malaysia, Taiwan and Britain. The USTR said all had plans or partial schemes in place.

The trade agency said it would impose additional duties of 12.5% on the remaining 45 countries that it investigated. These include China, India, Nigeria, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand.

"The failure of our most important trading partners to address the importation of goods made with forced labor is unacceptable," U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement. "This creates a dynamic where American workers are forced to compete globally on an unlevel playing field."

The USTR said it would accept public comments on the proposed tariffs and



Although proposing new tariffs, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative may also include a textile mechanism that would allow for a certain volume of apparel and textile imports to enter the United States at a reduced tariff rate.

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES FILE

other remedies through July 6, with a public hearing scheduled for July 7.

The announcement comes ahead of the July 24 expiration of a 10% temporary tariff imposed by the Trump administration on Feb. 20, the day the Supreme Court struck down Trump's tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

The European Commission said the tariffs were unjustified and reiterated its commitment to the trade deal sealed with Washington last year. Bernd Lange, the chair of the European Parliament's trade committee, which voted on June 2 to accept that trade deal, said the new tariffs were expected, but said the results of the U.S. investigation were still "utterly absurd" given a 2024 EU law to ban imports of forced labor products.

"The impression is increasingly emerging that a tariff measure is sought first, and only then is a suitable legal justification found," he said. However, he added that the key question would be whether the additional tariffs would exceed those agreed between both sides last July.

"We know there are ups and downs in what people say," French Finance Minister Roland Lescure told reporters after a cabinet meeting. "But the goal is to ratify the (trade) accord and stick to that."

However it was unclear whether the proposed tariffs – which the U.S. release described as "additional duties" – would come on top of levies agreed in bilateral deals signed with the United States.

Britain said it was in regular talks with the United States and was taking action to tackle forced labor. It added that the preferential access to U.S. markets that it had negotiated for United Kingdom businesses remained in place.

Taiwan said it was "hopeful and confident" that the final results would reflect agreements already reached, securing relatively preferential treatment. Beijing, facing 12.5% tariffs, said that it opposed all forms of unilateral tariffs and that there was no forced labor in China.

India, confronted with the same rate, said it was engaged with Washington on the Section 301 proceedings, noting the proposed tariffs were not final.

"There will be deep concerns in the international business community that the U.S. (forced labor law could) become a global template," said Andrew Wilson, deputy secretary general of the International Chamber of Commerce.

"Anyone can make a claim, get a shipment impounded and the company has to prove no forced labor in supply chain."

The USTR moreover said it would exempt from tariffs products including energy, rare earths and some other metals, beef, coffee, certain fruits and vegetables, pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals and aircraft parts.

It also said it was proposing a textile mechanism that would allow for a certain volume of apparel and textile imports to enter the United States at a reduced tariff rate, without giving details.

The ICC's Wilson said the list of exemptions over 76 pages suggested sensitivities over the potential cost-of-living hit to food and other goods with known forced labor risks.

"It doesn't make sense if the object of this is to enhance controls on modern slavery," he said.



U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, right, said "the failure of our most important trading partners to address the importation of goods made with forced labor is unacceptable." RAQUEL CUNHA/REUTERS FILE

The United States' largest trading partner, the EU, agreed last July to accept tariffs of 15% on a broad range of its exports. In its report, the USTR said the EU anti-forced labor measures only came into force in December 2024 and lacked key elements.

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