

Escalating Tariffs: Timeline

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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 1. Section 201 Global Safeguard Investigations

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|-----------|---|
| 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. |
|-----------|---|

Solar Cells: 4-year TRQ with 30% above quota tariff, descending 5% annually.

Solar Modules: 4-year 30% tariff, descending 5% annually.

U.S. Import Restriction

Large Residential Washers: 3-year TRQ, 20% in quota tariff descending 2% annually, 50% above quota tariff descending 5% annually.

Large Residential Washer Parts: 3-year TRQ, 50% above quota tariff, descending 5% annually.

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
- 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

Aluminum: 10% tariffs on [specified list of aluminum imports](#) effective indefinitely.

Steel: 25% tariffs on [specified list of steel imports](#) effective indefinitely; 50% tariffs on steel imports from Turkey.

Countries Affected

Aluminum: Australia and Argentina* permanently exempted.

Steel: Australia, Argentina*, Brazil*, and South Korea* permanently exempted.

All other countries included.

(*) [Quantitative import restrictions](#) imposed in place of tariffs.

Current Status

Effective March 23, 2018.

(Retaliation also in effect, see CRS Insight IN10971, [Escalating Tariffs: Potential Impacts.](#))

Table 3. Section 301 China Trade Barriers Investigation

- 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.

Key Dates

Stage 1—25% import tariff on [818 U.S. imports](#) (final, approx. \$34 billion)

U.S. Import Restriction

Stage 2—25% import tariff on [279 U.S. imports](#) (final, approx. \$16 billion).

Stage 3—10% import tariff increasing to 25% on January 1, 2019 on [5,745 U.S. imports](#) (final, approx. \$200 billion).

Countries Affected

China

Stage 1—Effective July 6, 2018.

Stage 2—Effective August 23, 2018.

Current Status

Stage 3—Effective September 24, 2018.

(Retaliation also in effect, see CRS Insight IN10971, [*Escalating Tariffs: Potential Impacts.*](#))