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Alert | Government Law & Policy/National Security

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President Trump Sets New Drone Section 232 Tariffs

Go-To Guide:

- U.S. President Donald Trump issued a proclamation on Aug. 13, 2026, implementing Section 232 tariffs on unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) and UAS critical components aimed at addressing national security threats posed by such imports and supporting the growth of the U.S. drone industry.
- The President determined that U.S. reliance on foreign drone manufacturers and foreign-sourced components creates supply chain vulnerabilities, cybersecurity risks, and limitations on the ability of the defense industrial base to meet future military requirements.
- Certain large drones, drones equipped with thermal imaging capabilities, drone docking stations, and designated critical drone components will generally be subject to a 100% tariff.
- Smaller drones and certain drone components will be subject to a 25% tariff, with many tariffs taking effect on Feb. 9, 2027.
- Companies participating in the Department of War's Blue UAS program, Blue UAS Framework, or Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Conditional Approval process may qualify for a 180-day delay before tariffs take effect.

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- Drones and components from the European Union, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein may qualify for a maximum 15% tariff rate, while the same products from the United Kingdom may qualify for a maximum 10% tariff rate.
- The proclamation establishes a new Commerce Department onshoring program that allows qualifying companies building new U.S. drone production facilities to import covered products and manufacturing equipment without paying Section 232 tariffs during facility construction.

On Aug. 13, 2026, President Trump issued a proclamation under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 imposing tariffs on certain imported unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or drones) and UAS components. In recent years, demand for drones has increased across military, public safety, critical infrastructure, agriculture, telecommunications, energy, and commercial sectors. American industries rely on UAS technologies for inspection, surveillance, logistics, and emergency response. Concurrently, policymakers have raised concerns about U.S. reliance on foreign manufacturers and supply chains for key drone technologies. The proclamation follows Executive Order 14307, entitled "Unleashing American Drone Dominance," which President Trump issued on June 6, 2025. The executive order stated that "[b]uilding a strong and secure domestic drone sector is vital to reducing reliance on foreign sources, strengthening critical supply chains, and ensuring that the benefits of this technology are delivered to the American people."

The proclamation builds on the executive order and concludes that imported UAS and associated components are entering the United States in quantities and under circumstances that threaten to impair national security by creating supply chain vulnerabilities, limiting domestic manufacturing capacity, and introducing cybersecurity risks.

Tariff Implementation Timeline

Beginning Sept. 3, 2026, imports of certain designated high-risk drone systems and components will be subject to 100% tariffs. These include drones with a maximum takeoff weight greater than 25 kilograms, drones equipped with thermal imaging capabilities, drone docking stations, and certain critical components identified by the Department of Commerce. Beginning Feb. 9, 2027, certain additional drone components identified in Annex III of the proclamation will be subject to a 25% tariff. The delayed implementation is intended to provide time for the industry to expand domestic manufacturing capacity and adjust sourcing strategies.

For companies on the Department of War's Blue UAS Cleared List, the Blue UAS Framework, or the FCC's Conditional Approval List as of Sept. 2, 2026, the proclamation grants a 180-day delay for implementation of the tariffs.

Background

The Department of Commerce's Section 232 investigation found that drones are increasingly essential to both economic and national security. Commerce determined that domestic drone production remains heavily dependent on foreign-produced motors, batteries, electronic speed controllers, docking stations, and other critical technologies. Commerce also identified cybersecurity concerns associated with certain foreign-manufactured systems, particularly where operating systems and software may permit the transmission of sensitive information to foreign entities.

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Lower Rates for Trading Partners

Under the proclamation, drones and drone components of the European Union, Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein may qualify for a maximum tariff rate of 15%, while the same products of the United Kingdom may qualify for a maximum tariff rate of 10%. These reduced rates are available only when substantially all the critical components and technology certified by the importer are of those countries or the United States.

Interactions with Other Tariffs

The new Section 232 tariffs on drones and drone components will not stack on top of country-specific Section 301 forced labor tariffs announced on July 23, 2026. The U.S. Trade Representative clarified that the Administration will exempt "all articles and parts of articles subject to tariffs under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962." Drone and drone component imports from countries that do not qualify for the reduced 10% or 15% tariff will be subject to other applicable duties, taxes, fees, exactions and charges.

Onshoring Initiative

A notable feature of the proclamation is the establishment of a domestic production incentive program administered by the Department of Commerce. The Secretary may solicit and approve onshoring plans for projects involving the construction, refurbishment, or expansion of drone production facilities within the United States, provided construction begins before Jan. 20, 2029.

When evaluating applications, Commerce may consider:

- Whether the company received Conditional Approval with an approved onshoring plan from the Department of War or Department of Homeland Security;
- Whether project milestones and timelines are commercially reasonable;
- Anticipated annual production capacity;
- The projected start date of construction; and
- How tariff benefits will be allocated among project participants.

If approved, a company may import covered products for its supply chain and necessary production equipment without paying Section 232 tariffs while facility construction is underway. The proclamation directs the Secretary to streamline the approval process and align it with the FCC's Conditional Approval framework where appropriate.

Commerce's Authority to Expand Coverage

The proclamation grants the Secretary of Commerce authority to add drone components to these tariffs if imports threaten to undermine the objectives of the action or contribute to the national security concerns identified in the investigation. In making such determinations, Commerce may solicit information and recommendations from domestic manufacturers, trade associations, and other interested stakeholders. The Secretary may also revisit and modify prior inclusion decisions.

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What Comes Next

The proclamation expands the Administration's use of Section 232 authority to support domestic production and secure critical technology supply chains. The Department of Commerce will be responsible for implementing several key elements of the proclamation, including establishing certification procedures for products seeking reduced tariff rates available to listed countries, developing procedures for the onshoring incentive program, and determining which additional components may be added to the tariff regime in the future.

The onshoring program also reflects an expanded role for Commerce in shaping domestic drone production. Companies that commit to constructing, refurbishing, or expanding U.S. production facilities before Jan. 20, 2029, may receive temporary relief from Section 232 duties during the construction period. The proclamation further directs Commerce to streamline the application process and, where appropriate, align program requirements with the FCC's Conditional Approval framework.

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