TRADE NEWS WEEKLY

October 13-October 17, 2025

A summary of international business news prepared by the Hawaii Foreign-Trade Zone 9 with the collaboration of the Research and Economic Analysis Division of the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, and based on research and information from various trade publications, which track news and events related to global trade. Other news sources may occasionally be included where indicated.

Section 232 Steel/Aluminum Derivative Tariff Request with Short, October 21 Comment Deadline

On October 7, 2025, the Commerce Department posted 95 Section 232 Steel and Aluminum Tariff Inclusion Requests for inclusion as steel and aluminum derivatives subject to 50% Section 232 additional tariffs and opened a two-week window for the public to submit comments. The inclusion requests cover a large number of HTSUS provisions. The public can submit comments in response to the Section 232 Inclusion Requests through October 21, 2025, on the Regulations.gov website.

The ninety-five (95) Section 232 Tariff Inclusion Requests filed by domestic producers and trade associations during the two-week period at the end of September propose "including" (i.e., adding) 691 unique 8-digit or 10-digit HTSUS classifications, ranging from HTSUS subheadings 0402.91.10 (milk) to 9406.90.01 (prefabricated buildings). Duty-free agricultural machinery in HTSUS subheading 9817.00.50 is also included, which would set a new precedent for the treatment of HTSUS Chapter 98 classifications under Section 232 tariff actions. HTSUS classifications proposed for inclusion provide for, among other products, beverages, twist ties, prefabricated structural components, commercial truck and trailer wheels, cast iron pipe and fittings, municipal/construction castings, cookware, aluminum powder, hand tools, press plates and related parts, agricultural knives, rotary cutting equipment, engine and automotive parts, canned fruits, meats, seafood, vegetables, seasonings and nuts, gun safes, boilers and boiler equipment, compressors and pumps, oil and gas equipment, truck, van, and trailer liftgates, mold bases, transformers, electric storage battery parts, insulated wires/cables, motorcycles, bicycles and related parts, etc. Some of the HTSUS classifications are requested for inclusion as either steel or aluminum derivatives, while some HTSUS classifications are requested for inclusion as both steel and aluminum derivatives, and some of the HTSUS classifications are already subject to Section 232 additional tariffs as steel or aluminum derivatives.

Once the comment period ends on October 21, 2025, the Secretary of Commerce has 60 days to decide which of the proposed products (i.e., HTSUS classifications) will be added as steel and aluminum derivative articles subject to 50% Section 232 Steel and Aluminum additional tariffs. Given the breadth of HTSUS classifications, many importers will be impacted if these Section 232 tariff inclusions are approved. Therefore, we strongly recommend that clients review the HTSUS classifications and file comments if they oppose a Section 232 Tariff Inclusion Request. For the first cycle, Commerce approved nearly all Tariff Inclusion Requests with almost immediate effect.

The current notice and comment period is the second of three, two-week comment periods to open each year. The next two-week comment periods begin in January 2026.

Source: Miller & Company P.C.

New Tariffs Imposed on China as Ship Fees Modified

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) announced several actual and proposed changes to new fees on Chinese-owned or -operated vessels, Chinese-built vessels, and foreign-built vehicle carriers entering U.S. ports.

These fees, which took effect October 14, 2025, and are scheduled to increase significantly at regular intervals over the next three years, are being imposed following a determination by USTR that China's targeting of the maritime, logistics, and shipbuilding sectors for dominance is unreasonable and burdens or restricts U.S. commerce and is therefore actionable under the Section 301 trade law.

According to USTR, significant aspects of the modifications being made include (1) changing the basis for calculating service fees on vessel operators of foreign-built vehicle carriers and setting the fee at $46 per net ton, effective Oct. 14, (2) eliminating, retroactive to April 17, 2025, a provision permitting the suspension of liquid natural gas export licenses if certain restrictions on the use of foreign-built vessels are not met, and (3) imposing tariffs of 100 percent on imports of certain ship-to-shore cranes and cargo handling equipment, effective November 9, 2025.

USTR is also accepting comments through November 10, 2025, on a proposal to make additional modifications, including (1) adding a carve-out from fees for certain ethane and liquid petroleum gas carriers under long-term charter (these fees may be deferred through Dec. 10, 2025, while USTR considers this change), (2) extending the fees to vessels up to 10,000 DWT through at least April 18, 2029, and (3) imposing additional tariffs of up to 150 percent on certain cargo handling equipment (e.g., rubber tire gantry cranes) and components thereof.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recently stated that the vessel operator, not CBP, is responsible for determining if a vessel owes applicable fees. Operators must pay the applicable fee on or before the entry of the vessel at the first U.S. port or place from outside the customs territory on a particular voyage.

CBP strongly encourages responsible parties to pay fees prior to vessel arrival as vessels without proof of payment will be subject to denial of lading or unlading operations, or granting of clearance withheld, until proof of payment can be verified. CBP recommends that operators initiate payment at least three business days in advance of vessel arrival.
Source: Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.

Lawmakers Protest Trump Administration Tariffs

The Senate has agreed that no later than October 31, 2025, it will be in order to discharge the Finance Committee from considering S.J.Res. 77, which would terminate the national emergency declared under the authority of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose tariffs on articles imported from Canada, and S.J.Res. 81, which would take similar action with respect to tariffs on imports from Brazil. Once that occurs the Senate will proceed to consider these resolutions and vote on whether to approve them.

On October 7, 2025, Sens. Wyden, D-Ore., and Paul, R-Ky. (who sponsored the two resolutions above) introduced a resolution to terminate the IEEPA emergency underlying the Trump administration's "reciprocal" tariffs as well.

On October 8, 2025, nearly two dozen House Democrats sent a letter to President Trump urging him to review his decision to impose 50 percent tariffs (a 25 percent "reciprocal" tariff and an additional 25 percent tariff related to India's purchases of energy from Russia) on imports from India. "These punitive measures have hurt Indian manufacturers," the letter said, "while simultaneously raising prices for American consumers and damaging the

intricate supply chains that American companies depend on to bring products to market." They have also "pushed the Indian government to increase its diplomatic and economic engagement with regimes hostile to the United States, including China and Russia."
Source: Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.

U.S. Container Imports Set to Fall Below 2 Million TEUs

Monthly import cargo volume at major U.S. container ports is projected to drop below the 2 million TEU threshold for the remainder of 2025, according to the latest Global Port Tracker report released today by the National Retail Federation and Hackett Associates.

The decline comes as retailers have already secured most holiday merchandise and continue to grapple with rising tariffs across multiple sectors. Industry experts attribute the downward trend to strategic frontloading by retailers who imported goods early to avoid escalating trade costs.

The report highlights that major U.S. ports handled 2.32 million TEU in August, representing a 2.9% decrease from July's 2.39 million TEU, which marked the peak month for 2025. Year-over-year, August volumes showed a slight 0.1% increase.

September figures, while not yet reported by ports, are projected at 2.12 million TEU, down 6.8% compared to the same period last year. The forecast becomes increasingly concerning moving into the final quarter, with October expected to reach 1.97 million TEU (down 12.3% year-over-year), November at 1.75 million TEU (down 19.2%), and December falling to 1.72 million TEU (down 19.4%).

Ben Hackett, founder of Hackett Associates, warns of broader economic implications: "Ongoing volatility in U.S. tariff policy is creating significant economic uncertainty, with trade volumes expected to see unpredictable shifts over the next four to six months. Many large companies preemptively imported goods to build up inventories, but as those stockpiles are depleted, the full inflationary impact of the tariffs will become apparent."

The latest tariff measures set to impact the maritime shipping industry include a 25% tariff on upholstered furniture regardless of country of origin, along with identical rates on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities. These are scheduled to take effect next week with further increases planned for January. Additionally, a delayed tariff increase on Chinese imports is slated for November 10, 2025, barring any new agreements or presidential intervention.

While the monthly volume declines are clearly linked to tariff avoidance strategies, the report notes that the significant year-over-year percentage drops also reflect last year's elevated import levels, which were driven by concerns over potential port strikes in late 2024.

The first half of 2025 showed promising growth with a total of 12.53 million TEU, representing a 3.7% increase year-over-year. However, the full year forecast now stands at 24.79 million TEU, a 2.9% decline from 2024's 25.5 million TEU.

The October report represents a slight improvement over September's forecast, which had projected the full-year 2025 volumes at 24.7 million TEU (down 3.4% year-over-year). This modest upward revision suggests the industry may be weathering tariff pressures marginally better than initially feared, though the overall trend remains decidedly negative.

Looking ahead to early 2026, the report projects January volumes at 1.87 million TEU (down 16.1% year-over-year) and February at 1.77 million TEU (down 12.8%).
Source: gCaptain

Supply Chain At Inflection Point

U.S. supply chain activity is at an inflection point following the imposition of International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) and a range of Section 232 tariffs. The U.S. government shutdown reduces the availability of macro trade data to track such a change, but bill-of-lading data is still available and shows a

5.8% year-over-year drop in September versus a year earlier, led by the capital goods sector.

It also reflects an early end to the peak shipping season, with imports of consumer electronics and leisure goods combined down by 1.6% from August, compared with a 7.1% rise on average for the period over the past 10 years.

More clarity on tariffs should emerge during the fourth quarter, including a U.S. Supreme Court decision on IEEPA tariffs, trade deal announcements at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit and more announcements on Section 232 duties.

Container shipping rates are already pricing in lower traffic heading into February's Lunar New Year, with container rates for North Asia to North America East Coast down by 48.8% since June to US$2,250 per forty-foot equivalent unit. The S&P Global Purchasing Managers' IndexTM (PMITM) for manufacturing stocks of finished goods was also down to 50.4 in September from a peak of 57.1 in May, showing an end to inventory front-loading.

As a result, our forecasts call for a 14.4% year-over-year drop in U.S. seaborne imports in the fourth quarter of 2025, led by a drop in shipments from mainland China. The downturn is expected to continue through the third quarter of 2026.
Source: Panjiva Data

JPMorgan Chase Reveals $1.5 Trillion Drive to Rebuild U.S. Industry, Including Shipbuilding

JPMorgan Chase has announced a $1.5 trillion, 10-year Security and Resiliency Initiative to finance and invest in industries critical to national economic security, including a focus on revitalizing America's shipbuilding sector.

The financial services firm says will make direct equity and venture capital investments of up to $10 billion to help select companies primarily in the United States enhance their growth, spur innovation, and accelerate strategic manufacturing.

The initiative targets four key areas: Supply Chain and Advanced Manufacturing, Defense and Aerospace, Energy Independence and Resilience, and Frontier and Strategic Technologies. These four themes are divided into 27 sub-areas, ranging from shipbuilding and nuclear energy to nanomaterials and critical defense components.

Shipbuilding is specifically identified as a sub-area under Supply Chain and Advanced Manufacturing, encompassing the construction of both "commercial and military vessels." The firm describes this focus as part of "reshoring key industries and building robust, redundant supply networks" to "safeguard against global disruptions, reduce dependence on potential adversaries and counterparties, and drive productivity growth in critical areas."

JPMorgan Chase had already planned to facilitate and finance approximately $1 trillion over the next decade in support of clients in these industries. With the new initiative, the firm aims to increase this amount by up to $500 billion.

The firm says it will hire more bankers, investment professionals and other experts to address this initiative and will create an external advisory council of experienced leaders from the public and private sectors to help guide the long-term strategy.

The announcement comes amid the Trump Administration's push to revitalize America's maritime shipbuilding sectors to better compete with China. An April 9th, 2025, executive order, titled "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance," addresses a critical national security concern, with the United States currently constructing less than one percent of commercial ships globally, while China produces approximately half.
Source: gCaptain