



Footwear & Politics

By Thomas Crockett • Mar 13, 2026

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The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) [announced](#) the second in a series of 301 investigations against multiple countries in a plan to reimpose tariffs. This one is on forced labor.

Not a surprise: After the Supreme Court ended the reciprocal tariffs last month, the administration moved to Plan B: temporary 10% tariffs (Section 122) and a flood of investigations into specific countries (Section 301).

- Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent predicted last week this would allow the administration to restore the previous tariffs by August.
- We are very familiar with Section 301, because the President used this tool during his first administration to put in place 7.5% tariffs on 🇨🇳 Chinese-made 🧦 footwear, which are still in effect.

Tell me more:

- **The first 301** will investigate “structural excess capacity and production” in 16 countries, including China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, India, Mexico, the EU, and Bangladesh (read more [here](#)).
- **The second 301** will examine whether 🌐 60 countries have done enough to stop the importation of goods made with forced labor. The list includes every major footwear-producing country.

One more thing: The official notice on the forced labor investigation highlights the Labor Department’s 2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor (available [here](#)):

The [list] includes 134 products produced with forced labor in particular countries. The TVPRA List includes 34 downstream goods in particular countries that are produced with inputs that are produced with forced labor. These inputs made with forced labor include cotton used to produce garments, textiles, thread and yarn; critical minerals used to produce solar products or auto-parts; fish used to produce fish oil and fish meal; and palm fruit used to produce kernel or palm oil used in various cooking oils and biofuels.

Go deeper: The public — and affected industries — will have an opportunity to weigh in during the process. USTR will hold hearings starting on April 28th for forced labor and May 5th for structural excess capacity.

- Be sure to join us on our weekly member call next Tuesday, March 17th, as we unveil our comment and hearing strategy. Register below (one-time signup for the rest of the year):

[Weekly Member Call](#)

Thanks for reading this key update. Please share with others on your team.

Matt and Thomas

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