



# EIB World Trade Headlines

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July 1, 2023 Volume 18, Issue 13



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 28, 2023

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### Five Eyes Partners Agree to Formalize Cooperation on Export Control Enforcement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, in a collaborative endeavor to enhance global security, the United States joins its Five Eye partners – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom – in committing to formally coordinate on export control enforcement. This effort builds on existing information sharing and other cooperation among these key partners and will leverage enforcement resources to expand each country's capacity to take action to prevent and deter evasion of export controls, including by restricting Russia's access to technologies that fuel its unlawful invasion of Ukraine.

"As is evidenced by today's gathering, the United States and our Five Eyes partners stand united in our commitment to vigorous enforcement of the Russia and Belarus export restrictions," said Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Enforcement Matthew S. Axelrod. "By formalizing our coordination, we hope to drive additional enforcement outcomes in each of the Five Eyes countries, including detentions, penalties, and public identification of diversionary actors."

Delegations from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States met in Ottawa, Canada this week and jointly committed to facilitating the exchange of information related to export control violations, including trends in illicit procurement methods, which will enable Five Eyes countries to identify and address export evasion risks and enhance their ability to prevent unauthorized transfers and safeguard collective national security interests.

Specifically, this formal partnership on export control enforcement will significantly enhance the effectiveness of each country's export control regimes, minimize gaps in enforcement, and foster joint investigations and coordinated enforcement actions. The countries also seek to strengthen enforcement partnerships with industry, as this is a key component to countering diversion efforts. By fostering a strong public-private partnership, the initiative aims to strengthen the resilience of global supply chains and prevent unauthorized diversion of controlled items.

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## Senator Reed: Defense bill would deliver \$18 billion for Rhode Island

Defense manufacturing in Rhode Island would gain traction under the \$886.3 billion National Defense Authorization Act approved 24-1 by the Senate Armed Services Committee late last week.

The measure includes around \$18 billion to directly benefit the Ocean State, said U.S. Sen. Jack Reed in a release. The money would support submarine production, undersea technology, R&D, workforce development, facilities upgrades and more.

“This NDAA recognizes the critical contributions that Rhode Island makes to our national defense and continues to invest in enhancing the Navy’s submarine fleet and undersea capabilities,” said Reed, Democratic chairman of the committee. “It will help strengthen defense manufacturing in Rhode Island for years to come.”

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## MIT researchers use gel found in diapers to draw record amounts of water from thin air

By Ross Cristantiello  
June 26, 2023

- Engineers at MIT have developed an incredibly absorbent version of material commonly found in disposable diapers that could potentially help communities ravaged by drought and make air conditioners more energy-efficient.
- Hydrogels are transparent, rubbery materials that are known to retain large amounts of water. Aside from their use in diapers, hydrogels are also useful for producing contact lenses, hygiene products and wound dressings.

The team at MIT created an extra-absorbent hydrogel that is able to pull water from the air in even the most desert-like conditions, according to MIT News.

To do this, researchers infused the hydrogel with lithium chloride, a specific type of salt. They found that they were able to put more salt into the hydrogel than previously thought possible, and that the salt-infused gel retained “unprecedented” moisture levels in all sorts of environments, according to MIT.

Researchers say that this new hydrogel offers tantalizing possibilities because it can be mass-produced quickly.

“We’ve been application-agnostic, in the sense that we mostly focus on the fundamental properties of the material,” Carlos Díaz-Marín, a researcher at MIT, told the school’s news outlet. “But now we are exploring widely different problems like how to make air conditioning more efficient and how you can harvest water. This material, because of its low cost and high performance, has so much potential.”

The gel could theoretically be used to passively harvest water in the desert and regions experiencing drought. It would be set up to continuously absorb water vapor, which could then be condensed and used as drinking water.

(\*Continued On The Following Column)

Scientists envision it also being used as a dehumidifying element in air conditioning units, which would make them consume less energy. The team at MIT’s Device Research Lab set out to find materials that would be useful for harvesting water from the air. They narrowed their focus to hydrogels, and dug up past research that concerned mixing various types of salt with hydrogels. Lithium chloride can absorb more than 10 times its own mass in moisture, according to MIT. It is so absorbent that, if left in a pile, water vapor would automatically pool around it.

“It’s the best of both worlds,” researcher Gustav Graeber told MIT News. “The hydrogel can store a lot of water, and the salt can capture a lot of vapor. So it’s intuitive that you’d want to combine the two.”

In most previous studies, researchers soaked hydrogels in salty water for 24 to 48 hours. The hydrogels gradually absorbed more salt over that time, eventually giving scientists a salt-infused hydrogel that could then be used to soak up water. Past experiments did not yield samples that could absorb a lot of water.

It turns out that the missing ingredient was time. The team at MIT cut up thin disks of hydrogel, dropped them in lithium chloride solutions, and waited. They were taken out each day to be evaluated before being returned to the solution. In the end, researchers found that hydrogels became infused with more salt if simply given more time, according to MIT News.

The salt-infused hydrogel samples were then used in a series of absorption tests in a range of humidity conditions. They highlighted that, at an extremely-dry 30% relative humidity, the gels absorbed 1.79 grams of water per gram of material, a record according to MIT.

“Any desert during the night would have that low relative humidity, so conceivably, this material could generate water in the desert,” Díaz-Marín told MIT News.

Now, the team is focusing on figuring out how to speed up the process.

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## BIS announces 4th TTC Export Control Outreach on July 19

The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), in cooperation with DG Trade of the European Commission, will hold the 4th stakeholders outreach event under the US-EU Technology Trade Council (US-EU TTC) Export Control Working Group on July 19. The event will focus on re-export of dual-use items. Please see the link 4th Joint EU-US stakeholders outreach event Re-export of dual-use items (europa.eu)

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## Secretary Blinken’s Participation in the Ukraine Recovery Conference

06/21/2023 08:32 AM EDT  
Office of the Spokesperson

Secretary Blinken announced today in London at the Ukraine Recovery Conference jointly hosted by the United Kingdom and Ukraine that the United States, working with Congress, intends to provide an additional \$1.31 billion in assistance to help Ukraine recover from Russia’s ongoing assaults on the country. These new funds include general economic assistance, assistance to repair and modernize Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, and support for Ukraine’s commitment to energy sector reforms. The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine will announce specific details about this funding commitment for energy in the coming weeks.

(\*Continued On The Following Page)

The United States believes that a just and lasting peace for Ukraine will be forged not only through Ukraine's long-term military strength, but also the strength of its economy, democracy, and people. The historic size and scope of the assistance the United States has provided, along with our allies and partners, represents the importance of Ukraine to the Euro-Atlantic community, and to our combined security and economic future. The Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform, launched in January following a G7 Leaders' commitment, is serving as the key vehicle for coordinating early recovery and reconstruction support and dialogue around reform with Ukraine.

This new funding announcement is in addition to the approximately \$63 billion in U.S. assistance provided to Ukraine since February 24, 2022, including:

**\*Economic and Development Assistance:** Since February 24, 2022, the United States has provided approximately \$19.3 billion in budget support for the Government of Ukraine through World Bank mechanisms. An additional \$3.7 billion will be provided through September 2023. This additional assistance represents our continued commitment to assisting the Government of Ukraine in maintaining its operational capacity as it defends against Russia's brutal aggression. Along with budget support, the U.S. has provided approximately \$1.4 billion to support economic resilience, energy security, governance, cybersecurity, anti-corruption efforts, health sector, and agriculture production. The United States is collaborating with Ukraine's other key donor and international financial institutions partners via the Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform to ensure assistance for recovery and reconstruction is deployed in a strategic, impactful, and transparent way.

**\*Humanitarian Assistance:** Since February 24, 2022, the United States has provided more than \$2.1 billion in humanitarian assistance for the Ukraine response inside Ukraine and in the region – supporting critical needs such as safe drinking water, shelter, winterization services, livelihood assistance, sanitation, hygiene supplies, emergency health supplies, emergency food assistance, and protection services.

**\*Security Assistance:** The United States has provided more than \$40 billion since Russia launched its premeditated, unprovoked, and brutal war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

## **Settlement Agreement between the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control and Swedbank AS (Latvia)**

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today announced a settlement with Swedbank AS (Latvia) ("Swedbank Latvia"), a subsidiary of Swedbank AB (publ), headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. Swedbank Latvia has agreed to remit \$3,430,900 to settle its potential civil liability for 386 apparent violations of OFAC's Crimea sanctions. Throughout 2015 and 2016, a customer of Swedbank Latvia used Swedbank Latvia's e-banking platform from an internet protocol address in Crimea to send payments to persons in Crimea through U.S. correspondent banks. The settlement amount reflects OFAC's determination that Swedbank Latvia's apparent violations were not voluntarily self-disclosed and were non-egregious.

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## **United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Assistance for the People of Ukraine**

*06/16/2023 09:55 AM EDT*

Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State

The United States is providing \$205 million in additional humanitarian assistance for the people of Ukraine as part of our support for those affected by Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, and brutal war against Ukraine. U.S. humanitarian assistance provides the people of Ukraine with critical support, including food, safe drinking water, protection services, education, livelihoods, legal assistance, accessible shelter, health care, and more through our international and non-governmental partners in the region. These funds also help victims of the conflict maintain contact with family members who have been separated and promotes family reunification when possible.

Since the onset of Russia's invasion, more than six million refugees have fled the country and more than five million have been internally displaced inside Ukraine. Millions more Ukrainians have been impacted by Russia's attacks inside Ukraine. Our funding, which brings the total humanitarian assistance provided to Ukraine in Fiscal Year 2023 to more than \$605 million, provides further support for humanitarian organizations responding to the crisis and complements the generosity of countries that are welcoming and supporting refugees. Since February 2022, the United States has provided more than \$2.1 billion in humanitarian assistance for the people of Ukraine, both inside Ukraine and in the region.

We continue to call for an immediate end to Russia's war of aggression and for Russia to facilitate unhindered access to providers of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine and safe passage for those who seek to move to safer areas. The U.S. response is advancing Ukraine's overall security, economic recovery, energy security, and capacity to cope with the humanitarian crisis created by Russia's war. We welcome the contributions of other donors toward this crisis response and urge yet more donors to generously support the serious humanitarian needs in Ukraine and the region.

## INCOMES HAVE BECOME MORE UNEQUAL SINCE 1980 COMMERCE ADDRESSES INCOME INEQUALITIES

Geographic inequality has widened over the past four decades. The gap in incomes between richer places and poorer places has grown. Strikingly, geographic income inequality continued to climb in recent years even though many measures of overall income and wage inequality have narrowed somewhat as wage growth has been strongest for lower-wage workers

Rising geographic inequality suggests that economic opportunities are becoming less even across the country. Increasingly unequal economic opportunity risks reducing households' ability to move to desired locations, concentrating economic and social challenges in certain places, or contributing to political polarization.

In this first blog post for the Department of Commerce's Regional Economic Research Initiative, we document this increase in geographic inequality and draw out implications for further research and for government programs. Many of the programs in the Biden-Harris Administration's Investing in America agenda target specific places, in part to reduce geographic inequality. The measures of inequality presented in this post will serve as one yardstick of success.

### Local incomes have become more unequal over time

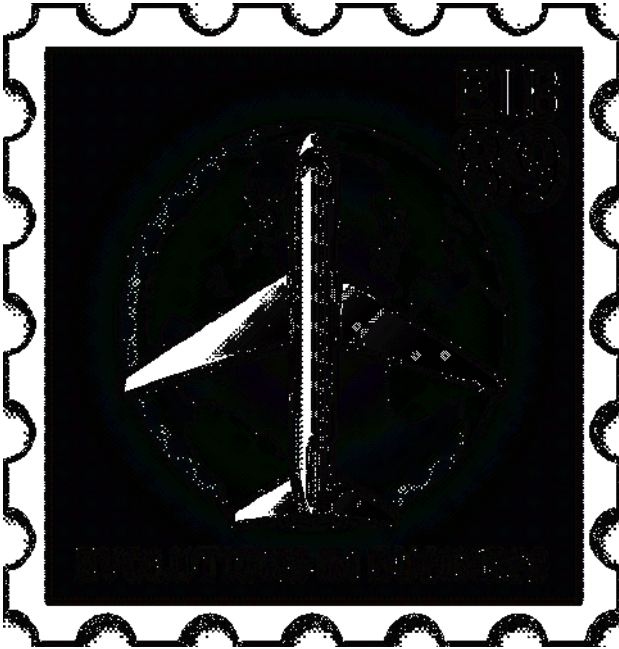
Geographic income inequality has risen more than 40% between 1980 and 2021. We measure geographic inequality as the variation in average income across all places in America -- metropolitan areas, micropolitan areas, and counties outside of metropolitan and micropolitan areas. This measure includes market income -- wages and other earnings as well as interest, dividends, and other capital income -- but not transfers. It increased from 0.22 to 0.31 over the past four decades. Rising geographic inequality suggests that economic opportunities are becoming less even across the country. Increasingly unequal economic opportunity risks reducing households' ability to move to desired locations, concentrating economic and social challenges in certain places, or contributing to political polarization.

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<https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2023/06/geographic-inequality-rise-us>



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