

# Kitchen sink drama: Trump's latest tariffs leave experts scratching heads

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in New York

President places new duties on cabinets, vanities and sofas but national-security justification prompts puzzlement

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A worker produces sofas for sale to Europe and the United States in a furniture workshop in Suqian, Jiangsu province, China. Photograph: CFOTO/Future Publishing/Getty Images

Donald Trump has often cited national security when announcing new tariffs. America and its military can not run without steel and computer chips. The nation's food and drug supply must be protected. But have you considered the security implications of your kitchen sink?

Announcing his latest wave of tariffs on goods from overseas - a 50% levy on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, and 30% on upholstered furniture, to be enforced next month - Trump once again cited the top priority of any president.

On his social media platform, Trump alleged that foreign firms are “FLOODING” the US with such products, and added: “It is a very unfair practice, but we must protect, for National Security and other reasons, our Manufacturing process.”

Experts are scratching their heads.

“It is difficult to see how some of the products subject to tariffs have anything to do with national security, even broadly defined,” said Eswar Prasad, a professor of trade policy at Cornell University, and a former official at the International Monetary Fund.

And while the president has presented these latest tariffs as a defense of US industry, the US industry in question is not immediately celebrating news of these incoming protections.

The National Kitchen and Bath Association represents US designers, builders, remodelers, manufacturers, dealers, and retailers. Bill Darcy, its global president and CEO, said the sector was “carefully reviewing the

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implications” of the tariffs, vowing to “continue to support and identify areas for continued success with our manufacturing partners... across the globe”.

The cabinets, vanities and furniture tariffs are set to be imposed under section 232, a provision of a national security law, through which the president can order an investigation and ultimately impose tariffs - bypassing Congress, despite its constitutional authority - if certain imports are deemed to threaten national security.

The Trump administration has already used section 232 to impose tariffs on steel, aluminum, copper and cars. This latest announcement, focused largely on furniture, is a fresh test of just how far “national security” grounds can be stretched to enact the president’s tariff agenda.

A White House official told the Guardian that an upcoming report into the findings of the section 232 investigation would explain exactly how foreign kitchen cabinets, bathroom vanities and upholstered furniture pose a threat to US national security.

The administration is already **fighting one significant legal battle** over its contested use of legislation - the International Emergency Economic Powers Act - to impose tariffs. And with section 232, many of those closely following its rationale are increasingly dubious.

“This justification for imposing tariffs through executive actions while sidelining the US Congress is wearing increasingly thin,” said Prasad. “All told, such peremptory actions are fomenting enormous uncertainty and volatility in the trade landscape and will ultimately hurt rather than help US consumers and businesses.”

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