

International Trade Update

August 2026

FCC Covered List Targets Foreign-Produced Power Inverters and Advanced Robotic Devices

Key Notes:

- Effective July 28, 2026, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) [Covered List](#) now includes [foreign-produced power inverters](#) and [foreign-produced advanced robotic devices](#). These equipment categories are now prohibited from receiving [new](#) FCC equipment authorizations.
- The term "foreign-produced" refers to any article that does not qualify as a "domestic end product," as that term is defined in [48 CFR § 25.101\(a\)](#). This is a reference to the Buy American requirements, which include substantial transformation and domestic content requirements.
- A Conditional Approval process allows foreign producers to apply for a waiver to this prohibition.
- A separate waiver by the FCC's Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) (through Jan. 1, 2029) permits authorization holders to undertake routine software/firmware updates to previously authorized devices.

Background and FCC Action Summary

On July 28, 2026, the FCC [announced](#) the addition of foreign-produced power inverters and advanced robotic devices to the FCC Covered List. This is only the second time that the FCC Covered List has been used for a broad designation rather than naming specific entities and devices. In December 2025, the FCC [added](#) foreign-produced uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) and UAS critical components to its Covered List.

The [Covered List](#) was required to be established in 2019 and includes a list of communications equipment and services

that are deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States. The initial devices included only certain telecommunications equipment made by specific Chinese manufacturers. The addition of equipment to the Covered List has multiple implications. In this bulletin, we discuss the key impact—that the FCC will not permit, pursuant to Section 302(b) of the Communications Act, equipment authorization applications for radio frequency (RF) equipment manufactured by entities on the Covered List. Being on the Covered List effectively prohibits sales in the United States.

Importantly, being added to the Covered List prohibits only [new](#) authorizations and does not revoke any pre-existing authorizations that companies have received to date, while modifications to authorizations, which can be required for software and equipment alterations, are prohibited. However, the FCC's OET issued a [waiver](#) of prohibitions on certain Class I and Class II Permissive Changes (changes to equipment specifications that do not require new applications to be submitted) to allow for certain modifications. This will cover many software and firmware, but not equipment, modifications, but any planned modifications should be checked against the waiver's scope before being undertaken or an application filed with the FCC. This waiver runs through at least **January 1, 2029**.

Definition of Foreign-Produced

The term "foreign-produced" is defined in the National Security Determinations below to refer to any article that does not qualify as a "domestic end product," as that term

is defined in 48 CFR § 25.101(a). This is a reference to the Buy American requirements, which include substantial transformation and domestic content requirements.

Note: many products that are manufactured in the United States or that qualify as country of origin USA may still be considered “foreign-produced” because they do not meet domestic content requirements in the Buy American statute and regulations.

Details About Covered Robotic Devices

The National Security [Determination](#) on the Threat Posed by Foreign-Produced Advanced Robotic Devices found that networked robotic systems create “broad attack surfaces” enabling data exfiltration, remote disruption, and dependence on unsecured over-the-air updates, while consolidation of the robotics supply chain in a small number of foreign countries poses an unacceptable supply-chain vulnerability. Documented incidents cited in support include unauthorized remote access to thousands of home robots, a backdoor discovered in foreign-produced robotic quadrupeds, and an exploit enabling takeover of robot fleets.

Advanced Robotic Device is defined in the National Security Determination as:

A mechanical mobile device, including autonomous mobile robots, humanoid robots, and quadrupeds, that:

- i. Is capable of locomotion, obstacle avoidance, navigation, or movement on the ground;
- ii. Operates at a distance from a human operator or supervisor based on commands or in response to sensor data or any combination thereof; and
- iii. The combined weight of the device and, if applicable, ground station or docking station is over 4.4 lbs; and
- iv. Contains a component falling within each of the below subparagraphs:
 - a. a sensor capable of perceiving its environment;
 - b. a component that is capable of providing network connectivity (wired or wireless, including Bluetooth/Wi-Fi, cellular, or satellite) with connection speeds of at least 200 kbps in either direction; and

- c. software running either locally or remotely, including firmware and AI or machine-learning model weights, that controls the robot’s autonomous navigation or movement perception, data collection, or remote command-and-control.

It does not include:

- i. A “connected vehicle,” as that term is defined in 15 CFR § 791.301, but including a connected vehicle of any gross weight;
- ii. A vehicle operated only on a rail line;
- iii. An “uncrewed aircraft” or “uncrewed aircraft system,” as defined in 47 CFR § 7.88.5;
- iv. An unmanned underwater vehicle that is able to operate without a human occupant;
- v. Items that are classified as devices under Section 513 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. §360c), including surgical instruments, medical and surgical robotic systems, external limb prostheses and their components, and ambulatory and mobility assistive devices (such as canes, crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs), whether or not powered, and whether the item was cleared under Section 510(k), approved under Section 515, classified under Section 513(f)(2), or exempt from premarket notification; and
- vi. A fixed, stationary, non-mobile robot, including articulating, parallel/delta, Cartesian/gantry, or Selective Compliance Assembly, or Articulated, Robot Arm (SCARA) robots intended for industrial or medical use.

Details About Covered Power Inverters

The Power Inverters National Security [Determination](#) found that the U.S. electric grid’s growing reliance on inverter-based resources (currently over 46 GW, with tens of thousands of additional megawatts projected annually) is compounded by heavy dependence on foreign-sourced inverters and components (only about 7% of 2020 U.S. inverter shipments came from U.S.-headquartered manufacturers). Documented risks cited in support include a real-world incident in which a foreign manufacturer

remotely disabled inverters following a commercial dispute, and researcher-identified vulnerabilities in solar inverters that could disrupt grid stability.

A Power Inverter is defined in the National Security Determination as:

- (a) A bi-directional power device or system that converts direct current electricity to alternating current electricity, or converts alternating current electricity to direct current electricity, to include microinverters, string inverters, central inverters, and hybrid (battery-based) inverters; **and**
- (b) Contains components that enable remote communication, control, sensing, data collection, or monitoring through Wi-Fi, cellular, Bluetooth, or other similar connections.

UPDATE: On August 20, 2026, the FCC released a Public Notice (DA 26-870) reflecting a National Security Determination from the Department of DoW that materially narrows (and in certain respects tightens) the definition of power inverters. **Please [see our update here](#).**

Conditional Approval Process

Entities producing covered devices in a foreign country may apply for an individualized exemption: DoW or DHS may grant [Conditional Approvals for power inverters](#), while only DoW may grant [Conditional Approval for advanced robotic devices](#). Applications must include:

- Corporate structure and ownership information, including beneficial owners holding 5% or greater equity, board/executive nationality, and any foreign government ownership, control, or influence;
- Manufacturing and supply-chain disclosures, including a detailed bill of materials, country of origin for all components and design, and an assessment of supply-chain concentration and single points of failure; and
- A time-bound U.S. manufacturing and onshoring plan, including a dedicated point of contact responsible for providing quarterly progress updates.

Applications must be submitted by January 1, 2028. If granted, the FCC will update the Covered List to reflect the Conditional Approval.

Practical Recommendations

Companies that plan on seeking new FCC Equipment Authorizations or modifying existing FCC Equipment Authorizations should give consideration to the following:

- **Screen products immediately.** Assess products against the new definitions of “power inverter” and “advanced robotic device” and determine whether products are “foreign-produced” under 48 CFR § 25.101(a).
- **Pursue Conditional Approval promptly.** New FCC authorizations or modifications (other than software or firmware) for in-scope foreign-produced devices are barred absent a Conditional Approval – begin the request process without delay.
- **Assemble documentation now.** Conditional Approval requests require bill-of-materials/country-of-origin data, corporate ownership information, justification for foreign manufacturing, and onshoring plans.
- **Confirm existing authorizations.** Pre-July 28, 2026 authorizations remain valid, but verify any planned updates fall within the OET waiver’s scope.
- **Do not assume the waiver covers all modifications.** Changes beyond routine consumer-harm-mitigating software/firmware updates may still be prohibited.
- **Monitor for future Covered List expansions.** Evaluate supply-chain diversification proactively.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:

Francesca M.S. Guerrero
Partner, International Trade
202.973.2774
Francesca.Guerrero@ThompsonHine.com

Barry A. Friedman
Senior Counsel, Corporate Transactions & Securities
202.973.2789
Barry.Friedman@ThompsonHine.com

Kristina Shcheglazova*
Managing Associate, International Trade
312.998.4277
Kristina.Shcheglazova@ThompsonHine.com

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