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Postal and De Minimis Tariff Changes Coming – New Trump' 47 Rules

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Postal and de minims imports are ground zero for e-commerce, drug interdiction, customs duty evasion, and the geopolitical tensions between the United States and China. This type of international traffic lies squarely at the heart of competing forces behind recent tariff actions by the Trump '47 Administration. This article highlights the changes that are coming for postal and de minimis shipments into the United States. Although this is a very fluid environment the trendline is emerging for our near-term approach to these increasingly important movements.

What Does De Minimis Mean for Tariffs and Customs Duties?

The term "de minimis" refers to low value items that qualify for duty-free entry into the United States. A federal statue provides that imports valued at less than $800 per person per day may come into country without payment of customs duties (19 USC 1321). This means that most international movements of postal and small parcel items have historically occurred without burdening United States buyers with the payment of duties and formal entries through customs. Among international logistics providers and customs brokers this type of movement was often referred to as a 321 Program or as the Type 86 Test Program.

What Happened with De Minimis Imports in Recent Years?

International e-commerce movements saw a steep rise in recent years. According to the Biden Administration, by 2024 low-value imports from China reportedly reached an astonishing 40% of all imports into the United States by volume. Among those 70% were textile and apparel imports. President Biden raised concerns at that time that this traffic could pose a national security threat by contributing to fentanyl deaths, challenging domestic textile and apparel manufacturers, and undermining trade policy with respect to China. Potential restrictions on duty free imports and other ways to strengthen supply chain security were explored.

When is Duty-Free Entry Ending for Postal and De Minimis Imports from China?

President Trump as set the date of May 2, 2025, for the end of international postal packages to the United States and for other duty-free de minimis imports from China. This elimination of the program was subsequently expanded to Hong Kong and Macau to prevent evasion in the region. The date was established after the Trump Administration has instructed the Secretary of Commerce (and U.S. Customs and Border Protection) to develop systems capable of adequately processing and collecting tariff revenue on duty de minimis imports. The White House has indicated that duty-free de minimis entry will end for other countries at another date once systems capable of handling adequate volumes become available.

What New Duty Structure is Coming for Postal and De Minimis Imports from China?

At the time of this writing imports from China that were previously de minimis or international postal packages will be subject to an ad valorem duty of 120% for de minimis, $100 per postal item, and then $200 per postal item after June 1. The White House has authorized U.S. Customs to require that carriers collect and remit payment of duties on the parcels they handle. Carriers must maintain an international carrier bond in doing so. They must also report the manifest and value of all items transported together with any required documentation. These changes will certainly impact the consumer as well as those that service movements of consumer goods, although the positive intended results are reducing drug contraband, duty evasion, and supporting other national security interests.

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