

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Rebar Producers Urge Commerce Department to Strike Participation by Belarus's Illegitimate Government in Upcoming Hearing

September 25, 2020

Washington, DC – In a submission filed today with the U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce), members of the U.S. steel concrete reinforcing bar (rebar) industry urged the agency to strike the participation of the government of Belarus in an upcoming hearing regarding the country's status under the U.S. trade laws.

In their submission, members of the Rebar Trade Action Coalition (RTAC), an association of U.S. rebar producers, noted that the United States has rejected the legitimacy of Belarus's August 9, 2020 "election," and that the U.S. State Department has concluded: "The United States cannot consider Alyaksandr Lukashenka (Alexander Lukashenko) the legitimately elected leader of Belarus. The elections August 9 were neither free nor fair. The announced results were fraudulent and did not convey legitimacy." Likewise, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has characterized the election results – which recently resulted in the secret re-inauguration of Aleksandr Lukashenko for a sixth term as President – as "falsified."

In December of 2019, the government of Belarus requested that Commerce initiate proceedings to determine whether to treat the country as a "market economy" for purposes of the U.S. trade laws, entitling it to more favorable calculation methodologies in trade remedy proceedings, such as those involving rebar and other steel products imported into the United States from Belarus. Commerce duly initiated proceedings earlier this year and has scheduled a hearing on the matter for September 30.

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"It would be inappropriate for representatives of the government of Belarus to testify at the Commerce Department's hearing, given the State Department's conclusion that the current government is illegitimate," said Alan H. Price, chair of Wiley's International Trade Practice and counsel to the Rebar Trade Action Coalition.

Mr. Price went on to point out that the government of Belarus has argued to Commerce that it should be granted market economy status on the basis of the country's protections for free speech. "The illegitimate Belarusian government's decisions to shut down the internet across the country, to target journalists, detain peaceful protestors, and drive out opposition leaders show exactly what it thinks of free speech," he added.

RTAC has participated throughout Commerce's proceedings regarding Belarus's treatment under the U.S. trade laws, submitting extensive evidence to demonstrate that the Belarusian economy does not operate on market principles, is subject to a high degree of corruption, and is characterized by repressive government action.