

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

August 21, 2025

The Honorable Howard W. Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

We would like to thank you and the Trump Administration for your hard work protecting and growing American jobs. We are writing to ask that you take urgent action against the escalating threat of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, a crisis that Communist China has turned into a weapon against American fishermen, our environment, and our national security. The United States must no longer tolerate the exploitation of our markets by regimes that flagrantly violate human rights, ravage our oceans, and destroy American jobs.

IUU fishing is not merely a fisheries issue—it is a direct assault on our economy, our values, and the rule of law. Globally, one in five wild-caught fish is illegally harvested, with Communist China leading this lawless behavior¹. These illicit operations generate up to \$36.4 billion annually for criminal syndicates and rogue nations², while American fishers and coastal communities pay the price. In the United States, nearly 11 percent of all seafood imports—worth an estimated \$2.4 billion in 2019—stem from IUU fishing.³ This illegal trade steals tens of thousands of American jobs and deprives our economy of over \$1 billion in potential revenue each year.⁴

Communist China is the world's largest exporter of seafood to the U.S., flooding our markets with products tainted by forced labor, environmental destruction, and blatant disregard for international law. Chinese fishing fleets are notorious for their gross human rights abuses, including the use of forced and child labor—often from persecuted minorities like Uyghur Muslims and North Koreans.⁵ These vessels operate with impunity, decimating marine ecosystems and undercutting honest American

¹ <https://iuufishingindex.net/ranking>

² <https://gfintegrity.org/report/transnational-crime-and-the-developing-world/>

³ https://www.usitc.gov/press_room/news_release/2021/er0318ll1740.htm

⁴ https://files.worldwildlife.org/wwfcmprod/files/Publication/file/22rtuhqshk_iuu_report_package.pdf

⁵ <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/11/21/chinese-forced-labor-seafood-00126642>

businesses with artificially low prices. The result: American fishers are driven out of business, and American families are left vulnerable to unsafe, unethically sourced seafood.

The environmental devastation wrought by Communist China's IUU fishing is staggering. Its fleets plunder the high seas, depleting fish stocks and destroying habitats, all while thumbing their noses at American and global conservation efforts. Meanwhile, American workers suffer as Communist China dumps its illicit, low-cost seafood into our markets, making a mockery of fair competition and the sacrifices of law-abiding Americans.⁶

Communist China's abuses do not stop at the water's edge. Its IUU fishing operations are inextricably linked to a web of transnational crimes – human trafficking, forced labor, and environmental exploitation – that threaten our national security and moral standing. Each year, over 100,000 lives are lost to the brutal conditions in commercial and IUU fishing, with Communist China standing as the world's worst offender.⁷

The United States has powerful tools to fight back. The *High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act*⁸ empowers NOAA to impose severe penalties, including import restrictions and port denials, on nations engaged in IUU fishing. Yet these tools have been underused, allowing Communist China to continue its campaign of economic sabotage and human rights violations. The Biden Administration denied port entries under the *High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act* for Chinese, Russian, and Mexican fishing vessels, but this action is only performative because those nations' fishing vessels were never entering U.S. ports in the first place.⁹ We must act with meaningful purpose – banning imports of all seafood from Communist China and other rogue nations, holding them accountable for their crimes, and defending American jobs.

We urge you to take immediate aggressive action, which means fully enforcing the *High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act* by imposing the toughest possible sanctions on seafood from Communist China and other nations that continue to abuse human rights on the high seas. We must protect American jobs, safeguard our environment, and uphold our values by refusing to be complicit in the gross abuses of Communist China.

⁶ <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/chinese-iuu-fishing-a-global-security-threat-multiplier/>

⁷ <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-hidden-costs-of-chinas-seafood-empire/>


⁸ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2011/01/12/2011-507/high-seas-driftnet-fishing-moratorium-protection-act-identification-and-certification-procedures-to>

⁹ <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/international-affairs/port-denials-under-moratorium-protection-act>

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Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to working with you to defend American fishermen, our economy, and our way of life against the predatory practices of Communist China.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Katie Boyd Britt
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Pete Hegseth, Secretary, U.S. Department of Defense
The Honorable Kristi Noem, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
The Honorable Marco Rubio, Secretary, U.S. Department of State