

September 12, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Subject: Section 232 National Security Investigations

Dear Mr. President:

We write as retired United States armed forces' flag officers and senior national security experts to express our support for using all available tools – including the Section 232 remedy under U.S. trade law – to maintain a strong and ready domestic manufacturing sector to equip our military and to build our critical infrastructure and ensure its resilience.

Our national security rests on a healthy industrial base. Domestic production of steel and aluminum are vital in the manufacture of America's defense and critical infrastructure – used in everything from ships, tanks, and armaments to bridges, rail systems, our electrical grid, and energy infrastructure. While only a percentage of domestic steel and aluminum production is geared toward traditional defense purposes, U.S. companies must remain commercially viable to innovate and produce products that meet military specifications. And, our critical infrastructure is just as vital to a strong nation as is our weaponry.

As other nations build their industrial capacity with substantial government direction and support, the effects of growing global overcapacity have forced the closure of U.S. production and the loss of jobs, innovation, and skills. China alone has added a billion tons of steel capacity since 2000 – a 660 percent increase, and more than 50 percent of global steel production. Meanwhile, U.S. steel production has steadily declined. Similarly, over the same period, China's share of global aluminum production grew from 11 percent to more than 50 percent, while, the U.S. now has just five operational aluminum smelters – down from 23 – and only two are running at capacity.

America's increasing reliance on imported steel and aluminum from potentially hostile or uncooperative foreign governments, or via uncertain supply routes, jeopardizes our national security. If U.S. manufacturing capabilities are compromised, we will be forced to rely on countries like China and Russia to supply our military and critical infrastructure needs. Already, there is just one remaining U.S. manufacturer of high-end grain-oriented electrical steel (GOES) essential for transmission and distribution transformers for all types of energy. Similarly, there is now only one domestic manufacturer that can make the high-purity aluminum needed for fighter jets like the F-35 as well as other military aircraft and vehicles. It is simply unthinkable that we would share the military specifications for the steel and aluminum used in some of our most sensitive weapons systems with strategic competitors such as China and Russia.

The loss of America's industrial capacity should not be overlooked or overshadowed by unsubstantiated concerns. Prompt action is necessary before it is too late. We urge you to proceed without further delay on your Section 232 national security investigations and implement effective and enforceable remedies to maintain and strengthen our manufacturing sector.

Sincerely,

Vice Admiral William Ramsey, U.S. Navy (Retired)

Lieutenant General Martin Steele, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

Vice Admiral Jerry L. Unruh, U.S. Navy (Retired)

Major General Mari K. Eder, U.S. Army (Retired)

Major General Larry Lust, U.S. Army (Retired)

Major General David Morris, U.S. Army (Retired)

Major General Tony Taguba, U.S. Army (Retired)

Brigadier General John Adams, U.S. Army (Retired)

Brigadier General Roger Rowe, U.S. Army (Retired)

Clarence H. Juhl, Department of Defense Senior Executive Service (Retired)