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Brazil On Main "hit List" For Possible U.S. Trade Sanctions; Mexico Placed On List For "priority Observation"

by John Neagle

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On May 25, US Commerce Department spokesperson Carla Hills announced that Japan, India and Brazil were singled out as the worst offenders in failing to meet US standards of free and fair trade. The publication of the list this month was mandated by the Super 301 provision of the 1988 Omnibus Trade Bill. Under trade bill provisions, the administration has 18 months after issuing the list of major offenders to negotiate the elimination of specified trade barriers. If the barriers are not removed, the administration can levy tariffs of up to 100% against selected imports from an offending country. Japan was cited for alleged trade barriers against US satellites, supercomputers, and timber products; India, for restrictions on foreign investment and foreign insurance companies; and Brazil, excessively restrictive import-licensing practices. Next, the administration placed China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and India on a priority observation list. These countries, said Hills, were included on the list for their failure to provide adequate protection for US patents and copyrights. Another 17 countries were mentioned as deserving "special attention" on the issue of copyright and patent protection. Mexico and the other 24 nations are expected to enter into a process of review with the US government with the aim of revising legislation that permits "intellectual piracy." Failing good faith attempts at such review, the US could adopt trade sanctions. In 1988, Japan's trade surplus with the US totaled \$52 billion, equivalent to nearly 50% of the US trade deficit for the entire year. (Basic data from Notimex, AFP, 05/25/89; AFP, 05/28/89)

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