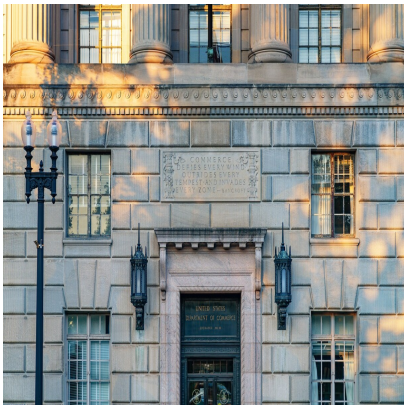


US needs a licence for advanced AI chips shipped to Singapore from 19 November

Description

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From Thursday, 19 November, advanced AI chips covered by US export controls, and the servers built around them, need a US export licence to be shipped to Singapore or passed between companies here, unless the buyer is headquartered in the United States.

The rule comes from the US Commerce Departmentâ??s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS). It is an interim final rule, which means it takes effect on the day it is published in the Federal Register, before any public comment is heard. Publication is scheduled for 19 November. Singapore is one of five countries named, alongside Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Brazil, which the rule describes as presenting â??a higher-than-normal risk of diversionâ?•.



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The US Department of Commerce headquarters in Washington, home of the Bureau of Industry and Security, in May 2024. Photo: Tony Webster, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0

What needs a licence now

The licence covers exports, re-exports and in-country transfers of the most advanced computing chips, classed by the US as ECCN 3A090, and the computers that contain them, classed as 4A090. That is

the hardware data centres use to train and run large AI models. From publication, each shipment to Singapore needs one, and BIS will review applications case by case. One of the tests it names is â??the effectiveness of a destinationâ??s export control regimes and coordination with BIS on the enforcement of export controls.â?•

There is one big exception. Chips going to a firm headquartered in the US, or whose ultimate parent company is, do not need a licence, provided the exporter files a monthly report to BIS. Each report is due by the first business day of the month after the shipment.

Goods already on their way get a short grace period. Shipments already en route on the publication date can still go through under the old rules, as long as the export is completed within 30 days.

The data centre rule

The second part of the rule reaches further than the five countries. Sending advanced chips to any data centre, anywhere, that gives â??a significant volume of computing powerâ?• to a company headquartered in Macau or in a country in the US Country Group D:5, which includes China, now needs a licence. A data centre already serving such customers before 19 November has 90 days to get a licence or face further restrictions. Computing power used only for commercial recommender systems, the kind online retailers and social media companies run, is exempt, provided the required details are reported to BIS.

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Comments on the rule close 60 days after publication, through regulations.gov under docket BIS-2026-0628.

Singaporeâ??s response

The Ministry of Digital Development and Information and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry issued a joint statement on 16 November. â??We are studying the details of this new measure carefully,â?• it reads. The two ministries are talking to affected companies and to US officials â??on the scope and implementation of the measure, as well as exploring how to facilitate trusted access for Singapore companies.â?•

The statement also carried a warning. Singapore does â??not condone companies using their association with Singapore to circumvent or violate the laws of other countries in their international business activities, including export controls.â?•

Minister for Digital Development and Information Josephine Teo, speaking at Semaforâ??s Silicon Valley & The World event the same day, put it this way: â??We will try our best to understand the impact of these new measures and help ensure that legitimate businesses continue to have trusted access to the critical infrastructure they need.â?•

The rule is written around data centre hardware and the companies that buy it in volume. Shipments to firms in Singapore that are not US-headquartered are the ones that now need that licence, starting Thursday.

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