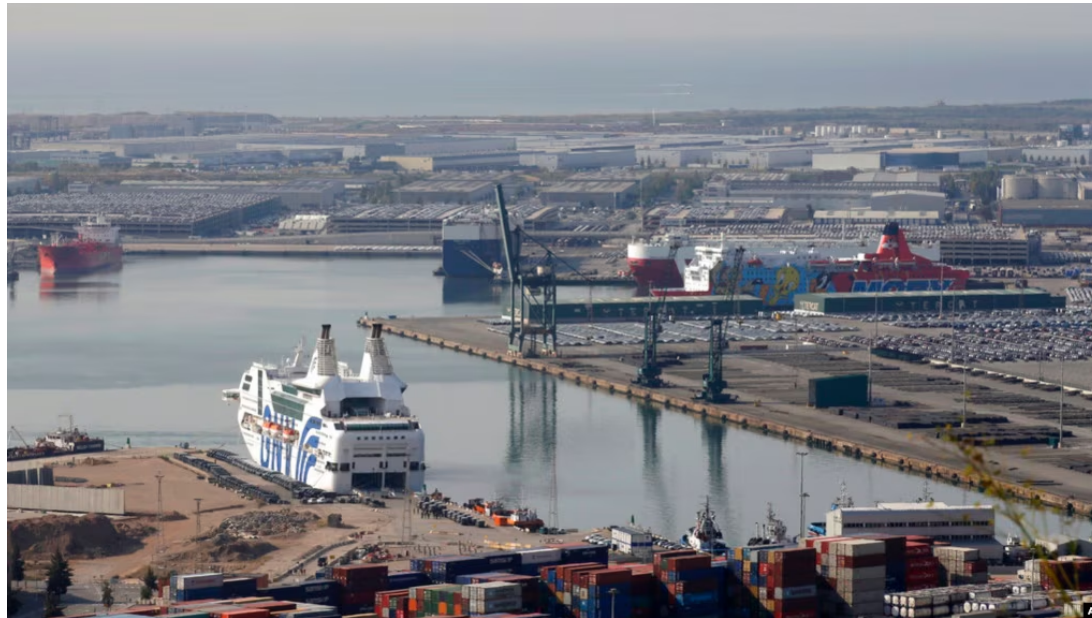




USA

# US Bans Pentagon From Using Chinese Port Logistics Platform

December 21, 2023 7:41 PM By Jessica Stone



A general view of the Port of Barcelona, Spain, Sept. 23, 2017. The port is one of several in Europe that use the Chinese state-owned digital logistics platform LOGINK.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Congress has passed legislation that would ban the Pentagon from using any seaport in the world that relies on a Chinese logistics platform known as LOGINK.

LOGINK, by tracking cargo and ship movements, lets Beijing monitor America's military supply chain, which relies on commercial ports, according to sponsors Senator Tom Cotton and Representative Michelle Steel.

Their amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal 2024 also bans federal funding of any port that uses LOGINK. The spending bill [passed December 14](#) and the LOGINK ban goes into effect six months after the bill is signed. President Joe Biden has not yet signed the NDAA.

Steel, in an email interview with VOA, called LOGINK's threat "very serious" because it operates under the Chinese Communist Party. Beijing already has investments in about 100 ports in more than 60 nations.

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The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC), which monitors the national security implications of U.S.-China trade, said in a September 2022 report, "LOGINK's visibility into global shipping and supply chains could also enable the Chinese government to identify U.S. supply chain vulnerabilities and to track shipments of U.S. military cargo on commercial freight."

A spokesperson for the Pentagon's U.S. Transportation Command told VOA via email on Tuesday, "USTRANSCOM understands the visibility into global logistics China has through their Belt and Road Initiative and related public-private arrangements."

LOGINK partners with more than 20 ports worldwide, including six in Japan, five in South Korea and one in Malaysia. There are also at least nine across Europe and three in the Middle East. There are no LOGINK port contracts in the U.S., according to the commission's report, which says Beijing subsidizes the free platform.

Under the NDAA, Congress must commission a study of how foreign influence at the 15 largest American container ports "could affect" U.S. national and economic security.

"Chinese companies are operating ports in the United States, which poses a national security risk to our critical infrastructure. This report will spur policy to counter that risk," said Ivan Kanapathy, who served on former President Donald Trump's National Security Council as director for China, Taiwan and Mongolia. He is now a senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington referred VOA to China's General Administration of Customs for comment, but an email inquiry received no reply.

### **'Major step' by Congress**

Michael Wessel, an original member of the USCC who helped write the report, now heads a consulting firm, the Wessel Group. He told VOA the legislation is "a major step taken by Congress to begin to address the challenge of the threat posed by LOGINK."

Wessel and others say an alternative to LOGINK needs to be developed.

Gabe Collins, a fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy and a former Department of Defense China analyst, told VOA he's not seen an alternative to LOGINK "that can operate at that scale."

Collins estimates that LOGINK collects data on as much as half of all global shipping capacity — through contracts with ports and data sharing agreements with existing logistics networks.

He said the U.S. ban sends a "demand signal" telling the marketplace it must invent an alternative to LOGINK, though he said it could take as long as five years to develop one.

Washington's new ban also requires the secretary of state to begin negotiations with allies and partners to remove LOGINK from their ports. Compliance must begin in six months.

It is unclear how the amendment will affect ports worldwide used by the U.S. military. The International Association of Ports and Harbors told VOA it would need more time to survey its members on how they might respond to the new legislation.

Randall Schriver, former assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs, said that while working with the USCC in April, he discovered some European leaders were in the dark about LOGINK and its monitoring capacity.

"These were administrative matters handled at a lower level, and they were going with a cheap but good product without thinking through all of the possible implications," he said.