



Committee: House Foreign Affairs Committee
Event: [Winning the AI Arms Race Against the Chinese Communist Party](#)
Date: January 14, 2026

Executive Summary:

On Wednesday, January 14, 2026, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a full committee hearing on winning the artificial intelligence (AI) race against China, with lawmakers focusing their questioning on the Trump administration’s decision to loosen export controls on U.S.-made advanced AI chips to China.

- Bipartisan concern that current U.S. export controls are too weak to stop China from gaining an edge in the AI race. Witnesses and lawmakers warned that letting China buy Nvidia’s H200 chips risks repeating the Huawei telecom mistake, with China using U.S. technology to leapfrog U.S. firms.
- A divide between a “manage the risk” approach and a “cut off access” strategy for chip access. Some lawmakers pushed for strict export conditions to prevent U.S.-made chips from being used for Chinese military purposes, while the witnesses countered that such rules are unenforceable and instead called for blocking exports of advanced chips and semiconductor manufacturing equipment to China.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Brian Mast \(R-FL-21\)](#): Mast pointed to the first Trump administration’s export controls as evidence that restricting China’s access to advanced chipmaking has widened the U.S.’s lead in the AI race and warned that unrestricted chip sales would directly strengthen the Chinese military. To prevent this outcome, he promoted his AI OVERWATCH Act ([H.R. 6875](#)), which would subject sales of advanced AI chips to congressional oversight similar to weapons exports.

*Ranking Member Gregory Meeks (D-NY-05)*¹: Meeks emphasized the broad bipartisan agreement that the U.S. can win the AI race by investing in domestic innovation while ensuring U.S. technology does not strengthen China’s AI capabilities. He warned that the Trump administration is undermining this goal by treating export controls as bargaining chips in trade negotiations and by rolling back restrictions on selling advanced chips to China. He said he had introduced the Restoring Export and Security Trade Restrictions for Integrated Circuit Technologies Act ([H.R. 6875](#)) to ban Nvidia H200 sales and codify Biden-era controls.

Witness Toplines:

¹ Ranking Member Meeks’ opening statement was unavailable at the time of this memo’s distribution.

[Matt Pottinger, Former Deputy U.S. National Security Advisor](#): Pottinger warned that allowing Nvidia's H200 chips into China would help both the Chinese military and state-backed firms leapfrog U.S. companies in the AI race. He concluded that the U.S. should keep China struggling to replicate advanced chips, reverse decisions to sell them AI hardware, and push allies like Japan and the Netherlands to fully align with U.S. export controls to preserve U.S. dominance.

[Oren Cass, Founder and Chief Economist, American Compass](#): Cass argued that advanced AI compute was the central resource of the AI era and that denying it to U.S. adversaries was a core matter of national security and geostrategic competition, a position he said the Trump administration itself had previously embraced. Cass blamed the shift in the administration's export policy on pressure from business executives, particularly Nvidia's CEO, and warned that diverting scarce chip supply to China would weaken U.S. leadership.

[Jon Finer, Former Principal Deputy U.S. National Security Advisor](#): Finer argued that both the first Trump and the former Biden administrations had invested in the U.S. industrial base, strengthened alliances, and imposed export controls on advanced semiconductors and chipmaking tools to protect the U.S.'s AI advantage. He warned that China had no intention of slowing its development of domestic chips.

Major Takeaways:

- Mast and Pottinger warned that when U.S. telecom companies sold technology to Huawei, China used it to leapfrog American firms and ultimately dominate the industry. They argued that allowing China access to U.S.-made advanced chips could lead to the same outcome in the AI race.
 - Pottinger dismissed the claim that easing export controls would leave China dependent on U.S. chips rather than developing its own.
- Rep. **Michael McCaul** (R-TX-10) spoke in favor of the ENDORSE Act ([H.R. 8315](#)), introduced last Congress, which would have blocked the sale of military-grade AI to China. He argued that special interest groups prevented the bill from reaching the House floor.
- Rep. **Joe Wilson** (R-SC-02) asked what security standards could be implemented at U.S. AI labs to prevent adversaries from exploiting American models.
 - Pottinger emphasized the need for strong internal risk-management programs to ensure employees act in good faith, and he also called for greater cooperation with U.S. allies.
- Wilson also asked whether security conditions could prevent U.S.-made chips from being used in supercomputers in adversarial countries. Cass responded that such restrictions are not realistically enforceable, and that the better approach is to block adversaries' access to U.S. chips altogether.
- Rep. **Scott Perry** (R-PA-10) asked whether the U.S. should focus on preventing Japan from supplying Huawei with chip-making equipment used to produce advanced semiconductors.

- Cass argued that strong alliances are essential to a global strategy to block China's access to chips and related equipment, but said this effort is undermined by U.S. policies that still allow such sales.
- Rep. **Bill Huizenga** (R-MI-04) expressed support for the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) for its [final rule](#) governing which entities in China can receive H200 chip exports, but warned that rules are only as strong as their enforcement mechanisms. Rep. **Sarah McBride** (D-DE-AL) followed by asking about the U.S.'s capacity to enforce the rule. Finer acknowledged that the BIS framework relies in part on attestations from Chinese companies.
- Rep. **Keith Self** (R-TX-03) opposed reimposing limits on how powerful U.S. chipmakers like Nvidia can make their chips.
- Rep. **Brad Sherman** (D-CA-32) noted that the U.S. should also worry about AI's domestic development, urging policymakers to ensure AI remains a controllable tool rather than becoming "uncontrollable" or "self-aware."