



OLYMPIC THRILLER

THE UNITED STATES MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM DEFEATED SWEDEN IN OVERTIME TO ADVANCE TO THE SEMIFINALS AT THE 2026 MILAN OLYMPICS. THE U.S. WILL FACE SLOVAKIA TODAY. **B1**

ECONOMY

U.S. trade deficit stayed high in 2025, report shows



Cargo containers line a ship at the Port of Oakland last August in California. U.S. imports of Chinese goods fell by nearly 30% last year, marking a sharp break from decades of economic integration between the world's two largest economies. *AP file*

The U.S. merchandise trade deficit hit a record \$1.2 trillion last year, despite Trump's tariffs.

David J. Lynch, Rachel Siegel
Washington Post

The U.S. merchandise trade deficit hit a record \$1.2 trillion last year, despite President Donald Trump's promise to eliminate it by imposing the highest tariffs in eight decades on foreign-made products.

Thursday's Commerce Department report represents the first full-year assessment of the president's ambitious reordering of global trade. The persistence of the deficit in the face of steep new taxes on imports from China, the European Union and scores of other nations reflects the limits of Trump's preferred policy tool, economists said.

The president has described the trade deficit in goods, which the U.S. has run every year since 1975, as a "national emergency" resulting from unfair trade practices on the part of foreign nations.

A broader measure of the nation's trade balance — including services such as travel, education and financial management — showed a full-year deficit of \$901.5

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billion, down slightly from the previous year, the Commerce Department said Thursday.

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The goods and services deficit for the month of December widened more than Wall Street analysts had expected, reaching \$70.3 billion, up from \$53 billion in November.

The trade deficit, reflecting the gap between the amount of goods Americans

buy from abroad and the value of U.S. goods sold overseas, is driven largely by domestic economic policies, in the view of mainstream economists.

The sizable U.S. budget deficit, a sign of a nation living beyond its means, inevitably draws in large amounts of foreign goods, despite tariffs, they note.

"Tariffs are not the dial to turn if you want to change the overall balance of trade," said Erica York, vice president of federal tax policy with the nonpartisan Tax Foundation.

Although the president has failed thus far in his bid to shrink — let alone eliminate — the trade deficit, he has set in motion a fundamental reordering of global trade flows.

U.S. imports of Chinese goods fell by nearly 30% last year, marking a sharp break from decades of economic integration between the world's two largest economies.

China, which accounted for more than 13% of all U.S. merchandise imports in 2024, provided just 9% last year, according to economist Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

As corporations tried to escape Trump's steep tariffs on Chinese goods, they found new suppliers of products such as laptops and video game consoles in places like Vietnam.

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IMMIGRATION DETENTION

Two months after detained man's death, 'still no answers'

Two congresswomen conducted an oversight visit of North Lake Processing Center.

Rose White *rwhite@mlive.com*

BALDWIN — Lawmakers are still waiting for answers about a Bulgarian man who died in December at Michigan's largest U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center.

Democratic U.S. Reps. Hillary Scholten, of Grand Rapids, and Haley Stevens, of Birmingham, conducted an oversight visit of the North Lake Processing Center in Baldwin on Tuesday after their letter demanding a "thorough and transparent investigation" into the death of Nenko Gantchev was ignored by the federal government.

"We are here today with still no answers about what happened to Mr. Gantchev, why he died here at this ICE processing facility in Baldwin, and we are going to continue to keep asking," Stevens said.

Gantchev, 56, of Chicago, died Dec. 15 at North Lake, an 1,800-bed ICE detention center owned by the private prison firm GEO Group.

North Lake staff found Gantchev unresponsive on the floor of his cell, federal officials said Dec. 18. They called emergency medical services at 9:14 p.m., according to a 911 call log obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, and a doctor pronounced Gantchev dead at 9:54 p.m.

ICE suspects the death is "from natural causes," but it remains under investigation.

Sixty-four days later, Stevens said, that investigation was still ongoing as officials analyze an autopsy to figure out what contributed to Gantchev's death.

"I hope that we can get a full picture of the care and the treatment that he was receiving here and what biological causes or other factors contributed to his death," she said.

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U.S. Reps. Hillary Scholten, left, and Haley Stevens, both Democrats from Michigan, conducted an oversight visit Tuesday at the North Lake Processing Center in Baldwin. They visited the 1,800-bed ICE facility to get answers about a man who died there in December.
Rose White, MLive.com

DTE-owned steel producers ordered to pay \$100 million

The company also must adhere to the Clean Air Act.

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DETROIT — DTE Energy and three of its subsidiaries were ordered Tuesday to comply with the Clean Air Act and pay a penalty of \$100 million.

The decision, rendered by U.S. District Judge Gershwin A. Drain, stemmed from pollution issues at the EES Coke Battery facility on Zug Island, located between River Rouge and Detroit.

The facility uses coal and other raw materials to produce metallurgical coke, which is used for making steel.

"We are extremely disappointed in the court's ruling and its negative implica-

tions on the domestic supply of coke to the U.S. steel industry," a DTE Energy spokesperson said in an email to MLive. "We have been anticipating this order and are eager to make our appeal to the 6th Circuit Court.

"We remain committed to compliance and have been operating within the limits of the valid original state permit — both today and during the time period in question."

The U.S. Justice Department filed suit against DTE and the facility in 2022, alleging the company violated the federal Clean Air Act by increasing sulfur dioxide emissions without obtaining permits or install-

ing pollution controls.

In an August court order, Drain found that DTE had violated the Clean Air Act after increasing its sulfur dioxide emissions following changes it sought to its state air permit in 2014.

In 2018, the plant emitted more than 3,200 tons of sulfur dioxide pollution, compared with permitted baseline sulfur dioxide levels of less than 2,100 tons per year.

In September 2025, the court held a two-week trial to determine which DTE entities were liable and the appropriate relief for the violations.

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