

US launches IP trade probe of Ukraine

May 30 2013

The United States announced Thursday an investigation of alleged officially sanctioned intellectual property theft in Ukraine, a move which could result in trade retaliation by Washington.

Acting US Trade Representative Miriam Sapiro said the "Section 301" investigation comes after Ukraine was identified in a report earlier this month as a major center of IP violations.

The May 1 report labeled Ukraine a "priority foreign country" due to rampant software and Internet-based piracy, as well as fraudulent collection and payment of copyright fees owed foreign artists.

Such a designation means Ukraine can be targeted for trade retaliation under section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974.

"The United States has identified serious concerns with Ukraine's treatment of [intellectual property rights](#)," said Sapiro in a statement.

"We will consult with the Government of Ukraine on the practices that led us to initiate this investigation."

Public hearings will be held on July 18 and the probe is expected to be concluded with an official determination on November 30.

The May 1 report cited several years of rising US concern over widespread IP theft in Ukraine, "including the growing entrenchment of IPR infringement that is facilitated by government actors."

The USTR alleged that "rogue" groups with ties to Ukrainian [government officials](#) had taken over the collection of [music royalties](#), without forwarding them to rights-holders.

The government itself uses a large amount of [unlicensed software](#), the USTR said.

In addition, the country allows the operations of major websites for the download of pirated entertainment and software like ExtraTorrent.com, which illustrates "how Ukraine has become perceived as a safe haven for online piracy enterprises serving other markets," it said.

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