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US Government 'Strike Force' to Block Foreign Adversaries From Obtaining Disruptive Technologies

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The federal government sent another big signal that it's stepping up efforts to keep cutting-edge, dual-use and military technologies out of the hands of adversarial foreign governments when it announced the launch of the Disruptive Technology Strike Force (DIS-TECH) on February 16, 2023. The strike force, led by the Department of Justice and Department of Commerce, will focus on "investigating and prosecuting criminal violations of export laws" and leveraging international partnerships to protect American technology in fields such as biosciences, artificial intelligence, semiconductor technologies, supercomputing and quantum computing.

"Our goal is simple but essential – to strike back against adversaries trying to siphon our best technology," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco.

Emerging technologies companies should be alert to the government's focus on export law violations.

"Illegally exporting sensitive technology is not an abstract economic concern – it is a crime with a direct impact on the safety of the American people," said FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate in the announcement, adding that export crimes also have a negative effect on American businesses.

DIS-TECH will operate in 12 cities across the US and work with the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and multiple US attorney's offices, according to the announcement. The strike force will use data analytics, intelligence gathering and private-sector partnerships to identify illicit activity, according to the announcement.

The federal government had been signaling plans to step up enforcement efforts in this area. Last year, the Commerce Department announced it was revamping its own enforcement program by imposing significantly higher penalties for export violations, increasing incentives for companies to voluntarily self-report and eliminating "no admit, no deny" settlements.

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