

To: Northwestern Community
From: Office for Research, Export Controls & International Compliance
Re: Guidance on Taking “Devices” Outside the United States

Date: 02//24/2023

Northwestern faculty, staff, and students (“Travelers”) commonly take their laptops, cell phones, and other portable storage devices containing information and software (“Devices”) outside the United States. Taking Devices to international destinations is routine and generally acceptable. However, in some circumstances, Travelers doing so may be improperly “exporting”¹ the Device and its information under the U.S. export control laws. Such “exports” may require a license from the federal government. Situations when Travelers must exercise extra caution before leaving the country with their Devices include:

1. Travel to embargoed countries (currently Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Syria, and the Crimea Region of Ukraine). These [countries change](#) over time
2. Travel to destinations with some restricted entities under the military-end use rule (currently Belarus, Burma, Cambodia, China, Russia and Venezuela). These [countries change](#) over time.
3. Travel with Devices containing unpublished technical data or information designed for use with items or materials on one of the technology control lists established by the federal government.²
4. Travel with Devices holding strong encryption software (commercially or research-generated).

The licensing requirements – and exceptions – that apply to the transport of Devices outside the United States must be reviewed carefully. Travelers must be familiar with the applicable export control regulations because violations can result in the imposition of criminal sanctions and heavy civil penalties. The [Export Controls & International Compliance](#) team can assist in navigating the regulations and licensing requirements.

Tips and Recommendations

- Contact the Export Controls & International Compliance team for guidance and consultation.
- Travel with a “clean” laptop,³ ensuring that no sensitive information is compromised while traveling.
- Contact your local IT department for technical questions.
- Maintain control over the Device for the travel duration further reduces the risk of a potential violation.

This memorandum is designed to provide only general guidance on a complex issue. If you think you might need a license or need to rely on an exclusion or exception, or if you have any questions, please contact [Amy Weber](#), Export Controls & International Compliance.

¹ “Export” here is defined as an actual shipment or transmission of items subject to export controls out of the United States, or release of technology or software subject to export controls to a foreign national in the United States. Release of export-controlled technology and source code can also occur through transmission via e-mails, faxes, and oral or written correspondence.

² The federal government publishes the Commerce Control List, 15 C.F.R. 774, Supp. 1, and the United States Munitions List, 22 C.F.R. 121

³ A “clean” laptop does not include proprietary or sensitive information, including unpublished information that might be subject to confidentiality restrictions. Contact Export Controls & International Compliance for further information.