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Fact-Check: Trade Cases Against China

Sharon LaFraniere – October 22nd 2012 - 10:59 pm

President Obama said, “We have brought more cases against China for violating trade rules than the other — the previous administration had done in two terms.” It is true that the Obama administration has brought eight cases against China in the past four years — an average of two a year — before the World Trade Organization.

The tariff on Chinese-made tires, imposed unilaterally by the Commerce Department, makes nine challenges. In eight years under President George W. Bush, the United States brought seven cases — or an average of one a year since China joined the World Trade Organization.

But Dan Ikenson, a trade expert with the Cato Institute, a nonprofit research group in Washington that focuses on libertarian causes, said the president’s claim was “somewhat bogus” because China was granted a kind of honeymoon after it joined the World Trade Organization in December 2001 in recognition of all the effort it had to make to rewrite laws and regulations. “Now we are at a different stage of our relationship,” Mr. Ikenson says. That has led to increasing demands that China practice fair trade, he and other trade experts contend.