

Thailand Removed from Priority Watch List

After having remained on the Special 301 Priority Watch List since 2007, Thailand has eventually been lifted to the Watch List. This change has just been announced by the United States Trade Representative (the USTR) following the conclusion of the 301 Out-of-Cycle Review on the intellectual property situation in Thailand.

In the annual **2017 Special 301 Report released in April 2017**¹, the USTR placed Thailand on the Priority Watch List with an encouraging remark that the status might be reevaluated in the Out-of-Cycle Review if Thailand continued her progress. As the Review was completed, the USTR recognized certain corrective actions taken by various relevant governmental agencies at all levels from policy making to implementation and execution in order to promote intellectual property rights in Thailand on both prosecution and enforcement aspects.

In order to solve the backlogs of patent and trademark applications, the Department of Intellectual Property significantly increased the number of examiners and streamlined the examination procedures. Accession to the Madrid Protocol was also mentioned as one positive factor, which would facilitate a trademark registration procedure for a foreign applicant. For enforcement, the Subcommittee on Enforcement against Intellectual Property Infringement was formed as an integrated force to combat piracy more effectively. The USTR also referred to better protection against on-line infringement for the content industry as well as more transparency in pharmaceutical industry.

Thailand's removal from the U.S. Priority Watch List is proof of the Thai government's effective handling of IP concerns of foreign investors. With a better IP environment, Thailand should become a more attractive investment destination.



¹ Link to <http://www.dsb.co.th/ARTICLES?ID=78#articles> (Thailand Still on the Priority Watch List)