

US Authorizes Chips for the UAE, Saudi Arabia

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The US Commerce Department announced on November 19, 2025, that it had [authorized](#) the export of advanced American semiconductor chips to HUMAIN of Saudi Arabia and G42 of the United Arab Emirates. The approval enables both companies to purchase up to 35,000 Blackwell chips (GB300s). This sale is a core component of a broader “Compute Diplomacy” approach under the second administration of President Donald J. Trump, which was solidified following his May 2025 [visit](#) to the Gulf, where a series of multibillion-dollar artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure agreements were signed.

Why It Matters for the US

- **Establishing regulatory precedent for AI engagement.** This approval reflects the central role that Saudi Arabia and the UAE now play as trusted hubs for large-scale compute deployment within the US-led AI ecosystem. While the initial sale of 35,000 chips is modest compared to the roughly 500,000 chips required to power a single gigawatt (GW) of compute, this decision establishes the legal and regulatory mechanism for a massive [compute](#) buildup in both countries moving forward.
- **Scaling American hyperscalers through secure Gulf infrastructure.** The framework creates a clear path for American [AI labs](#) and hyperscalers that want to expand their operations to service emerging markets in Asia and Africa via a secure, US government-approved environment. This move ensures that as the Gulf scales toward gigawatt-level capacity, it remains anchored to the American technology stack.
- **Expanding the American AI ecosystem through strategic overseas partnerships.** The US and China are currently engaged in a high-stakes “compute marathon” rather than a traditional AI race. Leadership is determined by the volume of available [compute](#), under the principle that more compute yields smarter, more capable, and more deployable physical forms of AI. To maintain its lead, the US must expand its aggregate compute capacity by deepening AI infrastructure partnerships overseas to [outscale](#) China. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the broader Gulf have emerged as the primary theater for this expansion, setting a precedent for other regions to follow.

Policy Considerations

- **Laying out a clear roadmap for Gulf AI exports.** When authorizing the export of Blackwell chips to G42 and HUMAIN, the Department of Commerce stated that it remains contingent on both companies meeting “rigorous security and reporting requirements.” Publicizing these requirements would transform this vague mandate into a clear roadmap for the future, providing the private sector — especially US chipmakers and data center operators — with the certainty needed to invest at scale. Clear public standards ensure that all trusted partners operate under the same high-level protocols, covering everything from physical site security to cybersecurity and the prevention of technology leakage to restricted nations.
- **Creating a standardized timeline for hardware delivery.** The timeframe between approval and delivery needs to be defined to avoid the “regulatory fog” that often delays major infrastructure projects, allowing partners to plan their gigawatt-scale buildouts with confidence. Advanced AI chips have a short peak-performance window before next-generation hardware emerges. Regulatory delays can significantly erode the return on investment. A clear timeline ensures that hardware arrives exactly when a facility is ready to go live, maximizing efficiency.
- **Establishing a scalable “AI statecraft” framework for global compute expansion.** The recent approvals serve as a blueprint for any nation looking to build its own AI infrastructure. These deals create a repeatable, “plug-and-play” framework for the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council, East Africa, and South Asia to connect directly with the American AI stack. Codifying these standards now incentivizes emerging markets to choose US technology over Chinese alternatives, ensuring that the global compute marathon is run on American infrastructure and security protocols.

For more information on US-Gulf AI and technology ties, please visit: www.mei.edu. To arrange briefings on this topic with Mohammed Soliman or Daniel Benaim, please contact Zeina Al-Shaib: zalshaib@mei.edu.