

## U.S. Steel Exports Surpass Imports

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A steel industry trade group said the United States exported more steel than it imported in August for the first time in more than 50 years. But another group said that assessment was based on a selective reading of government data.

The American Institute for International Steel said late Monday that government data indicated U.S. steel exports totaled 800,000 tons while imports amounted to 975,000 tons during the month.

But the group, which advocates for free trade and opposes tariffs, subtracted imports of 156,000 tons of semifinished steel and 30,000 tons of hot-rolled steel because that metal is turned into other steel mill products that are considered domestic, the group's president, David Phelps, said Tuesday.

Steel makers have grappled with sharply lower demand since the global economy deteriorated late last year, undermining key customers in the construction, auto and industrial equipment markets. Steel companies have started to see gains in prices and orders in recent months, however, as manufacturers and distributors replace their depleted stockpiles.

Phelps said in a statement that the August data reflected a "dramatic development" that "shows the increasing importance of U.S. exports of steel to international markets, which are returning to stronger levels of demand."

But Nancy Gravatt, a spokeswoman for the Washington-based American Iron and Steel Institute, said the group's analysis was "puzzling" and "somewhat selective in terms of looking at the big picture." Her group views the government data for August as showing a trade deficit of 175,000 net tons of steel for August.

"Globally, demand has been so low," Gravatt said, though China's economic stimulus plans have "started to generate more activity in Asia than we've seen here so far."

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