

Trump proposes \$100 billion in new tariffs on Chinese goods

By JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump instructed the U.S. trade representative to consider slapping an additional \$100 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods on Thursday in a dramatic escalation of the trade dispute between the two countries.

Trump’s surprise move came a day after Beijing announced plans to tax \$50 billion in American products, including soybeans and small aircraft, in response to a U.S. move this week to slap tariffs on \$50 billion in Chinese imports.

And it intensified what was already shaping up to be the biggest trade battle since World War II. Global financial markets had fallen sharply as the world’s two



AP Photo/Susan Walsh
President Donald Trump waves as walks from Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Thursday, after returning from a trip to West Virginia.

biggest economies squared off over Beijing’s aggressive trade tactics. But they had calmed down Wednesday and Thursday on hopes the U.S. and China would find a diplomatic solution.

Instead, the White House

announced after the markets closed Thursday that Trump had instructed the Office of the United States Trade Representative to consider whether \$100 billion of additional tariffs would be appropriate and, if so, to

identify which products they should apply to. He’s also instructed his secretary of agriculture “to implement a plan to protect our farmers and agricultural interests.”

“China’s illicit trade practices — ignored for years by Washington — have destroyed thousands of American factories and millions of American jobs,” Trump said in a statement announcing the decision.

The latest escalation comes after the U.S. on Tuesday said it would impose 25 percent duties on \$50 billion of imports from China, and China quickly retaliated by listing \$50 billion of products that it could hit with its own 25 percent tariffs. The Chinese list Wednesday included soybeans, the biggest U.S. export to China, and aircraft up to 45 tons (41 metric

tons) in weight. Also on the list were American beef, whiskey, passenger vehicles and industrial chemicals.

Earlier in the week, Beijing announced separate import duties on \$3 billion of U.S. goods in response to the Trump administration’s duties on all steel and aluminum imports, including from China.

U.S. officials have sought to downplay the threat of a broader trade dispute, saying a negotiated outcome is still possible. But economists warn that the tit-for-tat moves bear the hallmarks of a classic trade rift that could escalate. And already, tensions between the world’s two biggest economies have rattled global stock markets.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer called China’s move “unjustified” and said Trump’s proposal

was an “appropriate response to China’s recent threat of new tariffs.”

“Such measures would undoubtedly cause further harm to American workers, farmers, and businesses,” he said in a statement. “Under these circumstances, the President is right to ask for additional appropriate action to obtain the elimination of the unfair acts, policies, and practices identified in USTR’s report.”

The clash reflects the tension between Trump’s promises to narrow a U.S. trade deficit with China that stood at \$375.2 billion in goods last year and China’s ruling Communist Party’s development ambitions. Trump says China’s trade practices have caused American factories to close and lead to the loss of American jobs.

BRIEFLY

Poisoned daughter better as UK-Russia dispute at UN worsens

LONDON (AP) — The daughter of a former Russian spy poisoned by a nerve agent said Thursday in her first public comment that she’s recovering even as the international furor over the attack intensified, with Russia warning Britain it is “playing with fire.”

At the United Nations, Russia claimed that intelligence services of other countries were probably behind the attack. But Britain’s U.N. Ambassador Karen Pieke shot back that Russia has come up with 24 theories on who bears responsibility for the poisoning, but the United Kingdom has only one — that it’s highly likely Russia was responsible.

Yulia Skripal, 33, said in a statement released by British police that her “strength is growing daily” and she expressed gratitude to those who came to her aid when she and her father, Sergei, were found unconscious on a bench a month ago.

“I am sure you appreciate that the entire episode is somewhat disorientating, and I hope that you’ll respect my privacy and that of my family during the period of my convalescence,” she said.

The hospital in the English city of Salisbury confirmed that Yulia’s health has improved, while her 66-year-old father, Sergei Skripal, remains in critical condition.

At the U.N., the confrontation between Russia and Britain and more than two dozen Western allies who have expelled over 150 Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity intensified.

Trump wants out of Syria, but don’t say ‘timeline’

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has spoken: He wants U.S. troops and civilians out of Syria by the fall. But don’t call it a “timeline.”

Wary of charges of hypocrisy for publicly telegraphing military strategy after criticizing former President Barack Obama for the same thing, the White House has ordered Trump’s national security team not to speak of a “timeline” for withdrawal. That’s even after Trump made it clear to his top aides this week that he wants the pullout completed within five or six months.

It wasn’t the result top national security aides wanted. Trump’s desire for a rapid withdrawal faced unanimous opposition from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon, the State Department and the intelligence community, all of which argued that keeping the 2,000 U.S. soldiers currently in Syria is key to ensuring the Islamic State does not reconstitute itself.

But as they huddled in the Situation Room, the president was vocal and vehement in insisting that the withdrawal be completed quickly if not immediately, according to five administration officials briefed on Tuesday’s White House meeting of Trump and his top aides. The officials weren’t authorized to discuss internal deliberations and requested anonymity.

Trump says he didn’t know about payment to Stormy Daniels

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP) — President Donald Trump said Thursday he didn’t know about the \$130,000 payment his personal attorney made to Stormy Daniels, issuing a firm denial in his first public comments about the adult-film actress who alleges she had an affair with him.

Asked aboard Air Force One whether he knew about the payment, Trump said flatly: “No.”

Trump also said he didn’t know why his longtime lawyer, Michael Cohen, had made the payment.

“You’ll have to ask Michael Cohen. Michael is my attorney. You’ll have to ask Michael,” he said. He added that he didn’t know where Cohen had gotten the money. Trump didn’t answer a question about whether he set up a fund that Cohen could tap.

Until now, Trump had avoided questions on Daniels, though the White House has consistently said Trump denies there was a relationship. Still, he has been dogged by the focus on the porn actress, who says she had a sexual encounter with him in 2006 and was paid to keep quiet as part of a nondisclosure agreement she signed days before the 2016 presidential election. Daniels is now seeking to invalidate that agreement.

Her attorney, Michael Avenatti said in a statement: “Our case just got that much better. And we very much look forward to testing the truthfulness of Mr. Trump’s feigned lack of knowledge concerning the \$130k payment as stated on Air Force One.”

Facebook: Most users may have had public data ‘scraped’

NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook’s acknowledgment that most of its 2.2 billion members have probably had their personal data scraped by “malicious actors” is the latest example of the social network’s failure to protect its users’ data.

Not to mention its seeming inability to even identify the problem until the company was already embroiled in scandal.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg told reporters Wednesday that Facebook is shutting down a feature that let people search for Facebook users by phone number or email address. Although that was useful for people who wanted to find others on Facebook, it turns out that unscrupulous types also figured out years ago that they could use it to identify individuals and collect data off their profiles.



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