

Trump comments upend U.S. approach to Huawei, trade talks

By PAUL WISEMAN AND ROB GILLIES
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States and China have taken pains this week to emphasize that their trade talks are entirely separate from the U.S. case against a top Chinese technology executive. But with a few words, President Donald Trump obliterated the distinction, saying he'd wade into the case if it would help produce a trade agreement with China.

China has already detained a former Canadian diplomat in what appears to be retaliation for Canada's arrest of Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of telecommunications giant Huawei. On Wednesday, Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland expressed concern that another Canadian may have also been taken into custody.

A Canadian court on Tuesday released Meng on

bail, confining her to Vancouver and its suburbs while she awaits possible extradition to the United States. The U.S. accuses Huawei, the biggest global supplier of network gear for phone and internet companies, of using a Hong Kong shell company to do business with Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions.

But on Tuesday, Trump raised the possibility that a U.S.-China trade deal might be reason enough for him to intervene.

"If I think it's good for what will be certainly the largest trade deal ever made — which is a very important thing — what's good for national security — I would certainly intervene if I thought it was necessary," Trump told Reuters in an interview.

The comment suggests Meng could be a political pawn in negotiations and makes things more awkward for Canada, which arrested her on America's behalf during a Dec. 1 layover at the



Jonathan Hayward/The Canadian Press via AP
Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, right, waves goodbye to visitors at her home in Vancouver on Wednesday.

Vancouver airport.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau bristled at Trump's assertion, saying: "Regardless of what goes on in other countries, Canada is, and will always remain, a country of the rule of law."

Freeland said it was "quite obvious" any foreign country requesting extradition should ensure "the process is not politicized."

In what appears to be

retaliation against Canada for arresting Meng, Chinese authorities on Monday detained a former Canadian diplomat, Michael Kovrig, in Beijing.

On Wednesday, Freeland said she was worried that another Canadian had been detained in China.

"We are aware of a Canadian who got in touch with us because he was being asked questions by Chinese author-

ities. We have not made been able to make contact with him since he let us know about this," Freeland told a news conference. "We are working very hard to ascertain his whereabouts, and we have raised this case with the Chinese authorities. We are in touch with his family."

Canada has also asked China for extra security at its embassy because of protests and anti-Canadian sentiment and has advised foreign service staff to take precautions, a senior Canadian official told reporters.

Meng's arrest came the same day that Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed over dinner in Buenos Aires to a 90-day ceasefire in a trade war that has shaken global financial markets and raised worries about the impact on the world economy.

The truce was meant to buy time for more substantive talks over U.S. allegations that China steals U.S. technology and forces Amer-

ican companies to hand over trade secrets in exchange for access to the Chinese market.

U.S. officials have insisted the sanctions case against Meng had nothing to do with the ongoing trade talks. Top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told "Fox News Sunday" that "there's a trade lane ... and there is the law enforcement lane. They are different."

"Both Canadian and American officials have emphasized that the Meng arrest is separate from the trade talks," said Gregory Yeager, special counsel at the Stroock law firm and a former Justice Department trial attorney.

"Trump's remarks could be interpreted as creating the appearance that the arrest also had political motivations. This could undermine the U.S.'s reputation as a country that follows the 'rule of law,' and could ultimately undermine both the Meng prosecution and the trade talks," Yeager said.

What happens with Brexit after May survives leadership vote

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Theresa May won a no-confidence vote by lawmakers from her party Wednesday. Fellow Conservatives who object to some terms of the Brexit deal May's government struck with the European Union initiated the challenge that would have ended her leadership of both the party and the country.

May said after the results were in that she plans to keep pursuing an agreement that Parliament will support before Britain's departure from the European Union, set for March 29. These are the next steps as she tries to win approval for her proposed Brexit deal:

Lobbying EU leaders for concessions

May plans to attend a

two-day summit starting Thursday in Brussels and try to convince remaining EU leaders to sweeten the divorce deal now on the table.

She needs to do so because strong opposition to the existing agreement exists in all of the U.K.'s political parties, including May's own. The Conservatives' 200-117 no-confidence vote illustrates the deep resistance she faces.

What kind of reception can May expect in Brussels?

Europe's key power brokers have said they are unwilling to renegotiate the legally binding agreement that has been agreed to by May's government and the bloc's other members.

However, EU leaders

indicated willingness this week to consider statements that might make it easier for May to persuade the reluctant Parliament to pass the plan.

The main sticking point, as it has been almost from the start of negotiations, is the post-Brexit border between Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K., and Ireland, which is an EU country. Critics in May's party don't like how the current deal proposes dealing with customs checks, taxes and trade issues the U.K. hasn't had to consider as an EU member.

How long does she have to win Parliament's backing?

May has said she intends to bring the proposed agreement to Parliament for a vote

by Jan. 21. A vote originally was scheduled for Tuesday night, but the prime minister acknowledged lawmakers would reject the deal if they considered it then.

Britain is scheduled to leave the EU on March 29, so there is significant time pressure for progress.

May could face another "no-confidence" vote

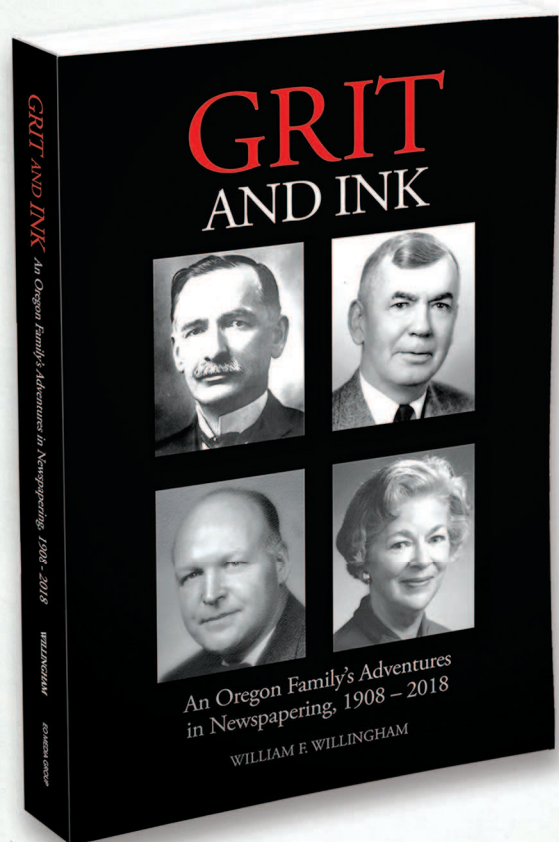
Her victory on Wednesday means Conservative Party members cannot try to oust May as their standard-bearer in the next year. However, the prime minister still could be the subject of a confidence vote

in Parliament's House of Commons.

Opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has indicated his party would trigger such a vote when it was likely to pass. Smaller parties have pressed Corbyn to challenge May sooner not later.

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