Ukraine pressure

Trump tells EU to levy India and China

President urges Brussels to impose 100% tariffs for pair's Russia oil purchases

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WASHINGTON
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Donald Trump has asked the EU to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on India and China as part of a joint effort to increase pressure on Russia to end its war in Ukraine, according to three officials familiar with the matter.

The US president made the extraordinary demand after dialling into a meeting on Tuesday between US and EU officials gathered in Washington to discuss ways to heighten the economic cost of the war for Russia. "We're ready to go, ready to go right now, but we're only going to do this if our European partners step up with us," one US official said.

A second US official said Washington was prepared to "mirror" any tariffs on China and India imposed by the EU, potentially leading to a further rise in US levies on imports from both countries.

Trump's proposal comes amid frustration in the White House at the difficulty of brokering a peace deal and Russia's aerial attacks on Ukraine.

"The president came on this morning, and his view is that the obvious approach here is, let's all put on dramatic tariffs and keep the tariffs on until the Chinese agree to stop buying the oil. There really aren't many other places that oil can go," the first US official said.

Trump later on Tuesday told reporters he expected to have a call with Russian President Vladimir Putin "this week or early next week".

The move by Trump comes after Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi cemented ties at a summit last week.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said Beijing was neither an instigator nor a party to the "crisis" in Ukraine and should not be made a scapegoat. "We . . . firmly oppose the imposition of so-called economic pressure on China," he said.

The US last month increased tariffs on Indian imports to 50 per cent due to the country's purchases of Russian oil. On Tuesday, Trump said trade talks with India would proceed and suggested they would have a "successful conclusion".

Washington has not specifically targeted China because of its purchases of Russian oil. In April, Trump sharply increased tariffs on Chinese imports but scaled them back in May after a severe market backlash.

EU officials, led by the bloc's sanctions chief David O'Sullivan, participated in the discussions in Washington, which featured senior US Treasury officials.

European capitals were discussing potential secondary sanctions against countries such as China and India for buying Russian oil and gas, officials told the FT, but many are nervous given the EU's trade relations with both states.

"It's a question of do the Europeans have the political will to bring the war to an end?" the first US official said. "We need our EU partners and ideally all of our partners with us. And we'll share the pain together."

Additional reporting by Paola Tamma in Brussels and Anastasia Stognei in Milan

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