

# Modi pressed to buy more US-made weapons

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**US President Donald Trump has pushed India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to buy more American-made weapons, as he called for the countries to rebalance their trade relationship.**

Trump emphasised India should be increasing its "procurement of American-made security equipment and moving towards a fair bilateral trading relationship", according to a White House statement issued after the call in a call late on Monday between the leaders, which the US called "productive".

Trump and Modi cultivated a close relationship during the US president's first term, and New Delhi has been a strategic partner in Washington's efforts to counter an increasingly assertive Beijing.

But Trump also called India a "very big abuser" on trade during his re-election campaign last year, and analysts pointed to areas of friction between the countries, such as their trade deficit, Indian imports of Russian oil and the flow of Indian immigrants to the US.

"The bilateral relationship is very likely to remain a strong one under Trump 2.0, yet transactional, in which President Trump will also require some concessions from India," said Rani Mullen, a senior visiting fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi.

The US is India's second-largest trading partner, narrowly trailing China,

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## India has leaned on the US to close a gap in military technology and preparedness with China

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and New Delhi recorded a \$35bn trade surplus with Washington between January and November 2024, according to the latest data from India's commerce ministry. Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on Brics countries, a grouping of major emerging economies that includes India.

In a social media post late on Monday, Modi called Trump a "dear friend" and said they were "committed to a mutually beneficial and trusted partnership"

in several areas, including security.

Trump later told reporters Modi would visit the White House "probably in February", which would make the Indian leader among the first foreign dignitaries to visit since the US president's inauguration.

India, long the world's largest arms importer, has been seeking to diversify its weapons suppliers beyond Russia. It has leaned on the US, along with other countries such as France, to close a gap in military technology and preparedness with regional rival China.

New Delhi needs to upgrade its military capabilities if it is to match those of nuclear-armed neighbour China, according to analysts, including in fighter jets, submarines, tanks, helicopters and even assault rifles.

Trump said he and Modi also discussed immigration, adding the Indian prime minister would "do what's right" in terms of accepting the return of illegal Indian nationals from the US. Indians made up the third-largest group of unauthorised immigrants in the US in 2022 after Mexico and El Salvador, according to the Pew Research Center.