

Trump imposes tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China



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Washington, February 2 (RHC)-- The United States has imposed stiff tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada and China, prompting swift retaliatory measures from the country's North American neighbors.

U.S. President Donald Trump signed three separate executive orders on Saturday, imposing 25 percent on goods from Canada and Mexico, and 10 percent on all imports from China. But energy imported from Canada, including oil, natural gas and electricity, would be taxed at a 10 percent rate.

Trump said the tariffs were necessary to "protect Americans" and promised to keep the duties in place until what he called a national emergency in the U.S. over the drug fentanyl and undocumented migration ends.

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum immediately ordered retaliatory tariffs and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country would put matching 25 percent tariffs on up to \$155 billion in U.S. imports.

There was no immediate reaction from China.

Al Jazeera's Kristen Saloomey, reporting from the U.S. city of Detroit, said Trump's moves have raised concerns on both sides of the border. "This is something that Canadians have been very worried about, and Americans here in Detroit, where I am, have expressed concern about rising prices and economists are warning that a trade war could develop as a result of these tariffs and cause prices to increase and possibly force Canada into a recession," she said.

Trump declared the national emergency under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the National Emergencies Act to back the tariffs, which allow the president sweeping powers to impose sanctions to address crises.

The new duties make good on Trump's repeated threats during the 2024 presidential campaign and since taking office, defying warnings from top economists that a new trade war with the top US trade partners would erode US and global growth, while raising prices for consumers and companies.

Tariff collections are set to begin at 12:01 am EST (05:01 GMT) on Tuesday, according to Trump's written order. But imports that were loaded onto a vessel or onto their final mode of transit before entering the U.S. prior to 12:01 am Saturday would be exempt from the duties.

A White House fact sheet said the tariffs would stay in place "until the crisis alleviated," but gave no details on what the three countries would need to do to win a reprieve.

U.S. officials, meanwhile, said that there would be no exclusions from the tariffs and if Canada, Mexico or China retaliated against U.S. exports, Trump would likely increase the U.S. duties.

They said that Canada, specifically, would no longer be allowed the "de minimis" U.S. duty exemption for small shipments under \$800. The officials said Canada, along with Mexico, has become a conduit for shipments of fentanyl and its precursor chemicals into the US, via small packages that are not often inspected by customs agents.

Trudeau, Canada's prime minister, said that Canadian duties on \$30 billion in trade in US alcohol and fruit would take effect Tuesday, when the US tariffs go into effect. He opened his address to Canadians with a message aimed at American consumers.

"It will have real consequences for you, the American people," he said, adding that it would result in higher prices on groceries and other goods. "The actions taken today by the White House split us apart instead of bringing us together," Trudeau said, warning in French that it could bring about "dark times" for many people. He encouraged Canadians to "choose Canadian products and services rather than American ones."

Sheinbaum, the Mexican president, responded to Trump's announcement in a post on X, saying she had instructed her economy secretary to implement a response that includes retaliatory tariffs and other measures in defence of Mexico's interests.

"We categorically reject the White House's slander that the Mexican government has alliances with criminal organizations, as well as any intention of meddling in our territory," Sheinbaum wrote.

"If the United States government and its agencies wanted to address the serious fentanyl consumption in their country, they could fight the sale of drugs on the streets of their major cities, which they don't do and the laundering of money that this illegal activity generates that has done so much harm to its population."

Al Jazeera's Julia Galiano, reporting from Mexico City, said the trade war would hit Mexico hard. "Let's remember that 80 percent of Mexico's exports go to the United States. The country is by far Mexico's largest trading partner. Experts are telling us that the effects are going to be felt essentially right away, initially with prices going up [and] secondly, with a rise in inflation," she said.

Republicans in the U.S., meanwhile, welcomed Trump's move, while industry groups and Democrats issued stark warnings about the impact on prices.

National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC) President Jake Colvin said Trump's move threatened to raise the costs of "everything from avocados to automobiles" and urged the U.S. Canada and Mexico to find a quick solution to avoid escalation.

"Our focus should be on working together with Canada and Mexico to gain a competitive advantage and facilitate American companies' ability to export to global markets," Colvin said in a statement.

Democrats were quick to say that any inflation going forward was the result of Trump, who is about to start his third week back as president. "You're worried about grocery prices. You'll see raising prices with his tariffs," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York posted on X.

"You're worried about tomato prices. Wait 'til Trump's Mexico tariffs raise your tomato prices. ... You're worried about car prices. Wait 'til Trump's Canada tariffs raise your car prices," he wrote in a series of posts.

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