



Pompeo Promises 'Significant Announcement' on US-China Trade Talks

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March 4, 2019

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expressing optimism that trade talks with China aimed at ending tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of products will be successful.

"It's never over till it's over, but they've made a lot of progress, and so I'm very hopeful that in the coming days and weeks, there'll be a significant announcement," said Pompeo on Monday in an [interview](#) in Des Moines, Iowa.

The top U.S. diplomat is in Iowa to discuss diplomatic efforts to promote American economic interests and American exports.

"President Trump has been determined to get Iowa farmers a fair shake, to stop the Chinese from stealing their intellectual property and denying them the ability to compete by selling products into China," said Pompeo in another [radio interview](#).

China's agricultural imports from the U.S. have slumped since Beijing imposed tariffs on American agricultural products last year. Among the biggest losses for American farmers: oilseeds and grains exports, which are top agricultural products that Iowa farmers send to China.

Slamming China's "protectionism, rule-breaking and state subsidies," Pompeo called on China to embrace "free-market principles and fair competition."

In his remarks to the Iowa Farm Bureau Monday evening, the chief American diplomat said: "China denies American companies access to its market through tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers, and deny us the ability to compete on a fair and reciprocal basis."

In Beijing, ahead of the so-called "Twin Sessions" -- the annual meetings of the national legislature and the top political advisory body -- Chinese officials defended Beijing's economic policies for facilitating the country's growth and opening up in recent years.

Zhang Yesui, a spokesperson for the second session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC), dismissed Washington's criticism as a "double-standard."

"Some U.S. government officials have been hyping up the so-called security risks associated with the products of certain Chinese companies," said Zhang, referring to the U.S. campaign to block Chinese telecommunication company Huawei over security concerns.

“This is political interference in economic activities. It violates the WTO rules and disrupts the international market order that is built on fair competition,” Zhang said.

Pompeo’s visit comes days after U.S. President Donald Trump demanded China instantly eliminate tariffs on American agricultural goods.

In a tweet on March 1, Trump said trade talks were progressing well and he had asked China to immediately end tariffs on U.S. agricultural products while delaying his own plan to impose 25 percent tariffs on Chinese goods. Trump had set a March 1 deadline to increase tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods from 10 percent to 25 percent.

Trump had forecast a summit meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping to finalize details in a bilateral trade agreement to tackle deeper issues, including greater transparency around subsidies and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) from China, addressing U.S. concerns over forced technology transfer, and intellectual property protection.

The Wall Street Journal reported a summit between Trump and Xi could occur around March 27.

The London-based Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said the possible deal "could be substantial enough to allow the U.S. to claim victory in the negotiations, allowing Mr. Trump to save face politically after a damaging fight over border security and wall funding."

"For China, any such agreement would be politically challenging, but would provide a welcome respite from mounting economic pressures," said EIU.

Nick Marro from the Economist Intelligence Unit argues while President Trump's decision to delay a tariff increase on Chinese products is an important step to prevent the escalation of a trade war, these moves were a concession to the Beijing government, who Marro says has yielded little in its negotiating stance.

"Although we expect both sides to come to a deal around purchases of U.S. commodities, this will not be enough to prevent structural issues from worsening economic ties further," he added.

"If the deal involves that President Xi agrees to purchase much of American commodities, and agreed to lowers certain tariffs," according to the Cato Institute's Director of Trade Policy Studies Daniel Ikenson, "there could be more progress, but if they just agreed to purchase these products and not address these major issues, I don't see the very large deal."

"I think the United States and China are going to continue to be in this sort of standoff for a number of years until there's an adequate resolution," Ikenson told VOA's Mandarin service.

Pompeo’s visit comes after China’s controversial attempts to influence public opinion in Iowa and sway support for Trump.

Last September, The Des Moines Register published an advertising insert paid for by China Daily, an official publication of the Chinese government.

The four-page section in Iowa’s largest newspaper featured articles including one outlining how the trade dispute is forcing Chinese importers to turn to South America instead of the U.S. for soybeans.

On Monday, Pompeo pushed back on China's "state-led economic practices," blasting "the prevalence of corruption" and "weak enforcement," saying "the Chinese people deserve better."