

US, China Put Brakes on Their Trade Dispute with Ceasefire

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina – The United States and China reached a 90-day ceasefire in a trade dispute that has rattled financial markets and threatened world economic growth. The breakthrough came after a dinner meeting between President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires.

Trump agreed to hold off on plans to raise tariffs Jan. 1 on \$200 billion in Chinese goods. The Chinese agreed to buy a “not yet agreed upon, but very substantial amount of agricultural, energy, industrial” and other products from the United States to reduce America’s huge trade deficit with China, the White House said. The truce, reached after a dinner of more than two hours Saturday, buys time for the two coun-



tries to work out their differences in a dispute over Beijing’s aggressive drive to supplant U.S. technological dominance. “It’s an incredible deal,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. “What I’ll be doing is

holding back on tariffs. China will be opening up, China will be getting rid of tariffs. China will be buying massive amounts of products from us.”

In a long-sought concession to the U.S., China

agreed to label fentanyl, the deadly synthetic opioid responsible for tens of thousands of American drug deaths annually, as a controlled substance. And Beijing agreed to reconsider a takeover by U.S. chip-maker Qualcomm that it had previously blocked.

The White House announcement framed a victory for Trump and his unflinching negotiating tactics, securing a commitment from China to engage in talks on key U.S. economic priorities, with little obvious concession by the U.S. Notably, however, the White House appears to be reversing course on its previous threats to tie trade discussions to security concerns, like China’s attempted territorial expansion in the South China Sea. (Fox News)

A High-Five from Putin and That Awkward Photograph- Saudi Prince’s G20 Summit

BUENOS AIRES – Russian President Vladimir Putin walked up to Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at a summit of G20 world leaders, high-fived him and then shook his hand heartily. Moments earlier the prince had been pictured on the far edge of the traditional “family portrait” photograph, ignored by other leaders. The two moments captured the dilemma facing world leaders at the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires this weekend: How to deal with

the crown prince, who is dogged by controversy over the murder of a Saudi journalist but is also defacto leader of a rich, oil-producing kingdom that is a major global investor. To be sure Putin’s exuberant greeting of the prince was seen as over the top and promptly went viral. But, while leaders appeared to ignore Prince Mohammed on stage during the “family photo,” many went on to have closed-door bilateral meetings with him during the two-day summit. (Reuters)

Trump Expects Next Meeting with Kim Jong-Un in Early 2019, Will Invite Him to US ‘At Some Point’

WASHINGTON – The US President says his relationship with the North Korean leader is so good he expects their next meeting to take place as soon as January or February and, at some point, Donald Trump even hopes to invite Kim Jong-un to the US. “We’re getting along very well,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on his return from Argentina. “We have a good relationship,” he added, expressing the hope that, when circumstances permit, he will invite Kim to the United

States. Despite Trump’s optimism, talks between the US and North Korea have somewhat stalled since the historic breakthrough summit in Singapore in June, in which the leaders agreed on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. While the US insists on allowing inspectors to verify Pyongyang’s commitment to the agreement, North Korea wants Washington to act in good faith and lift some of the sanctions.

“These are global sanctions put in place by the United Nations Security



Council which deny North Korea the capacity to improve their economy,” the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, said Sunday. “That’s not going to change.” Pompeo, who

is leading the team of US negotiators, traveled to Pyongyang in October, where he and the North Korean leader agreed to a second US-North Korea summit. (Russia Today)

Israeli Police Recommend Bribery Charges Against Netanyahu & Wife



JERUSALEM – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife, Sara should be indicted for bribery in a corrup-

tion scandal known as Case 4000, the Israel Police have recommended. A statement issued on Sunday says that

Netanyahu is suspected of accepting bribes in exchange for policy decisions that favored Shaul Elovitch, a media mogul that controlled Israel’s largest telecom firm, Bezeq, and the Walla News website.

It’s believed that Netanyahu fired Communications Ministry Director-General Avi Berger and hired his loyalist and ex-campaign manager Shlomo Filber in order to provide Elovitch and his companies special treatment. In exchange, Netanyahu and his wife

struck a deal with Elovitch, giving the Israeli prime minister favorable coverage on the Walla news site.

“Netanyahu and those close to him bluntly intervened, sometimes on a daily basis, with the content being published on the Walla news website, and sought to influence the appointment of senior employees (editors and reporters), while using their ties to Shaul and Iris Elovitch,” the police statement read. (Russia Today)

Leftist Leader Takes Reins in Mexico Vowing to Help Poor

MEXICO CITY – Leftist politician Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador assumed Mexico’s presidency with a promise – to profoundly transform Latin America’s second-biggest economy and to lead a government free of corruption. Seemingly tireless at age 65, Lopez Obrador breezed through a day of public appearances Saturday that included taking the oath of office and speaking to Congress and attending an inaugural celebration at Mexico City’s vast main square.

He received a spiritual cleansing by indigenous leaders as part of the festivities, then closed out the gathering with a folksy 90-minute speech to the thousands of jubilant fans jamming the Zocalo vowing to help the poor in a nation where almost half the population lives in poverty.

“We are going to govern for everyone, but we are going to give preference to the most impoverished and vulnerable,” Lopez Obrador said. “For the good of all, the poor come first.” (AP)

Yemen Sterilizes Sanaa Water Supplies as Cholera Outbreak Picks Up Again

SANAA – Authorities in the Houthis-held Yemeni capital Sanaa are sterilizing water supplies at wells, distribution networks and houses to help stem the world’s worst outbreak of cholera.

Nearly four years of war between a Saudi-led coalition and the Iranian-aligned Houthi group have crippled healthcare and sanitation systems in Yemen, where some 1.2 million suspected cholera cases have been reported since 2017, with 2,515 deaths.

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned in October that the outbreak is accelerating again with roughly 10,000 suspected cases now reported per week, double the average rate for the first eight months of 2018. (Reuters)

Macron Visits Riot-Damaged Arc De Triomphe, State of Emergency Muled

PARIS – President Emmanuel Macron rushed to the Arc de Triomphe on Sunday after one of France’s most revered monuments was vandalized by rioters, with the government considering a state of emergency after the worst bout of unrest for years.

Masked, black-clad groups ran amok across central Paris on Saturday, torching dozens of cars and buildings, looting shops, smashing windows and fighting police in the worst unrest the capital has seen since 1968, posing the most formidable challenge Emmanuel Macron has faced in his 18-month-old presidency. (Reuters)

‘Mad Dog’ Mattis Calls Putin a ‘Slow Learner’... Then Bemoans ‘Worsened’ US Relations with Russia

MOSCOW – Vladimir Putin’s simple-minded nature is to blame for the growing tensions between the US and Russia, Defense Secretary James Mattis has claimed, flexing his elite Marine Corps analytical skills.

The Pentagon chief on Sunday accused Russia’s president of being a “slow learner” whose irresponsible denseness is creating “animosity against his people” – incendiary comments that somehow clash with the view of his current boss, Donald Trump, as well as for-



mer US President Bill Clinton.

According to ‘Mad Dog’ Mattis, Putin’s alleged subpar intelligence has led to the deterioration of US-Russia relations, which have “worsened” since the start of the Trump

administration.

The defense secretary added that the Russian leader is “someone that we simply cannot trust” because of his purported fondness for “ripping up” international agreements.

In a separate interview with N-TV broadcaster, the retired politician also accused Ukraine of trying to ignite a direct confrontation between Russia and Germany. (Russia Today)

not be drawn into a war against Russia,” Gabriel told Tagesspiegel newspaper. He also denounced Ukraine’s call to shut international ports for Russian vessels based in Crimea, calling the suggestion “a new edition of gunboat diplomacy.”

In a separate interview with N-TV broadcaster, the retired politician also accused Ukraine of trying to ignite a direct confrontation between Russia and Germany. (Russia Today)

U.N. Condemns Spate of ‘Brutal’ Sexual Attacks in South Sudan

JUBA – The United Nations condemned on Sunday a wave of “brutal” sexual attacks on women and girls in the northern town of Bentiu in South Sudan which took place in what it described as a government controlled area of the region.

On Friday, the aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said that unknown gunmen have raped 125 women during a 10-day spree of violence in Bentiu, but local officials disputed the report.

South Sudan has suffered a wrenching five-year civil war and, despite a fragile peace accord signed two months ago by the government and rebel groups, remains riven with ethnic grievances and awash with weapons. Civilians from rival groups bear the brunt of the violence and cycle of revenge.

The U.N. mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) said approximately 125 women and girls have sought medical treatment after having been raped or sexually assaulted as they walked along roads near Nhialdu and Guit on their way to Bentiu and that victims reported the attacks as having been carried out by young men in civilian clothing or military uniforms. They were also beaten and robbed, it said.

“The violent assaults happened in a Government-controlled area,” David Shearer, the head of the U.N. mission, said in a statement. “UNMISS peacekeepers have immediately sent patrols to the area to provide a protective presence and our human rights team has launched an investigation to identify the perpetrators.” (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Nepal to “Facilitate” SAARC Summit in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD – Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said that Nepal would facilitate the 19th SAARC Summit in Pakistan.

During a meeting with the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Yousaf Raza Gillani, in Kathmandu, PM Oli said Nepal, as the current Chair of SAARC, would play a role to hold the coming SAARC Summit in Pakistan. Although the 18th

SAARC Summit decided to hold the next summit in Pakistan, a misunderstanding between India and Pakistan has delayed the proceedings. According to PM’s Advisor on Foreign Affairs, Rajan Bhattarai, former Prime Minister of Pakistan said the Pakistani people and political parties were committed to SAARC and ready to host the summit. (Monitoring desk)

Iran Says Missile Program Defensive after U.S. Test Allegation

DUBAI – Iran said on Sunday its missile program is defensive and not in breach of U.N. resolutions, the state news agency IRNA said, following a U.S. allegation that Tehran had carried out a new missile test.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday condemned what he described as Iran’s testing of a medium-range ballistic missile capable of carrying multiple warheads as a violation of the 2015 international agreement on the Iranian nuclear program.

“Iran’s missile program is defensive in nature... There is no Security Council resolution prohibiting the missile program and missile tests by Iran,” IRNA quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi as saying in response to Pompeo’s remarks.

Qasemi did not confirm or deny that Iran had

carried out a new missile test.

Under the U.N. resolution enshrining the 2015 nuclear deal with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, Iran is “called upon” to refrain for up to eight years from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons.

Iran has repeatedly said its missile program is purely defensive and denied its missiles are capable of being tipped with nuclear warheads.

Qasemi, addressing Pompeo, said: “It is... ironic that you cite a resolution that you have not only breached through your unilateral and unlawful withdrawal from the (nuclear) accord but that you also encourage others to breach or even threaten to punish and sanction them if they carry it (accord) out.” (Reuters)

Uzbekistan Suspends Import of Ukrainian Sugar, Dealing Blow to Exporters

TASHKENT – Uzbekistan prohibited the unloading and customs clearance of Ukrainian sugar, threatening the loss of one of the nation’s main sugar markets, the National Association of Sugar Producers of Ukraine reported on Nov. 30.

Ukraine exported 560,400 tons of sugar in 2017 – almost 40 percent of all sugar exports, or more than \$79 million.

“Over the past six months, the main importer of Ukrainian sugar was Uzbekistan, so we can say that now Ukraine is losing it’s main market,” said Ruslana Butylo, head of the analytical department at Ukrtsugar, the National Association of Sugar Producers of Ukraine.

The ban is part of a recent

trade conflict between two countries, both former Soviet republics.

According to Eurasianet, an independent news organization that covers the South Caucasus and Central Asia, the lawmakers in Uzbekistan’s parliament discussed earlier a ban on Ukrainian sugar and pharmaceuticals in retaliation to Kyiv’s threat to limit the imported number of cheap Uzbek-made cars, namely the Chevrolet and Ravon.

The Ukrainian government had been investigating, at the request of UkrAutoprom, the Ukrainian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association, on Oct. 3 to check if Uzbekistan was giving its carmakers an unfair advantage with subsidies or other forms of support. (Agencies)

Iran Launches Most Advanced Indigenous Destroyer

TEHRAN – Iran has launched its most advanced military vessel which has radar-evading stealth properties and can sustain voyages lasting five months without resupply.

The Sahand destroyer, inducted into the navy in the Persian Gulf Saturday, “is the result of daring and creative design relying on the local technical knowledge” of the Iranian experts, said Rear-Admiral Alireza Sheikhi.

The vessel has a flight deck for helicopters, torpedo launchers, anti-aircraft and anti-ship guns, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles and electronic warfare capabilities.

The Sahand is the third

of Mowj-class frigates built by Iran after the Jamaran and the Damavand, but its enhanced operational capabilities and size make it twice stronger in terms of offensive and defensive features.

According to deputy navy commander Rear-Admiral Touraj Hassani Moqaddam, the new destroyer is fitted with the domestically-built Kamand close-in weapon system which can fire anywhere from 4,000 to 7,000 shells per second. The Sahand, he said, will set off for South America with two other warships and special helicopters in the near future as part of Iran’s dispatch of ships to international waters. (Press TV)