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UK Trade Chief Heads to Washington to Push U.S. on Tariff Relief

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Britain's newly appointed Secretary of State for Business and Trade (trade secretary), Jonathan Reynolds, will travel to Washington, D.C., at the end of July to meet senior U.S. officials and press for the rollback of tariffs imposed during the Trump administration. The visit signals a renewed UK push to secure more favorable trade terms with its most important economic partner.

Reynolds plans to spend four to five days engaging with key figures in the White House, including the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the Secretary of Commerce, and senior advisors. The aim is to persuade Washington to reduce or eliminate the 10 percent “reciprocal” tariffs on British goods that were introduced earlier this year. These tariffs, part of a broader arrangement struck in May, were designed to mirror U.S. trade restrictions on Britain. While the deal covered certain sectors such as cars and aerospace, steel and aluminum tariffs remained at 25 percent, even rising to 50 percent temporarily during negotiations.

During his visit, Reynolds will also seek progress on outstanding steel and aluminum tariffs and safeguard the zero-tariff status on British pharmaceutical exports, which are worth around £9 billion a year. These commitments were outlined in the spring agreement between the UK and the U.S., but regulatory follow-through has yet to be completed.

Industry advocates from the steel, film, and pharmaceutical sectors have voiced concern that maintaining tariffs could harm investment and job growth. They argue that political volatility has created uncertainty, potentially disrupting supply chains and damaging investor confidence. Reynolds’s mission is designed to reduce risks and reassure businesses that the UK–U.S. economic partnership remains a priority.

Trade experts note that the visit comes at a delicate moment. While U.S. President Trump’s administration has expressed general openness to expanding ties with the UK, Washington’s broader trade strategy, including plans for reciprocal tariffs with multiple partners, means that any concessions will likely involve difficult bargains, such as increased access for U.S. agricultural exports.

Reynolds is expected to highlight how deeper tariff relief could benefit both nations, potentially easing rebalancing tensions with the European Union, a key focus for the UK since Brexit. The timing of the visit also coincides with planned trips by U.S. business leaders and a forthcoming summit between President Trump and Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Scottish soil.

In summary, Jonathan Reynolds's trip to Washington aims to transform May's preliminary tariff agreements into actionable commitments. As the two economies negotiate details, businesses on both sides of the Atlantic will be watching closely to see if political goodwill translates into lower trade barriers and firmer investment confidence.