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Trump Presses for Tougher EU Tariffs as Trade Deadline Nears

July 19, 2025

— Categories: *Breaking News*



President Donald Trump is pushing for significantly higher tariffs on European Union (EU) imports, as an August 1 deadline looms for a potential trade escalation. The move signals a renewed hardline stance on trade policy, with Washington demanding steeper duties on EU goods in the absence of a new agreement.

U.S. negotiators have reportedly increased their tariff expectations, shifting from an initial 10% target to a minimum of 15–20% on EU imports. Trump has firmly rejected offers from the EU to lower auto tariffs, indicating that existing 25% levies on cars could remain or even rise. Sources familiar with the discussions suggest the White House may introduce a new baseline of 30% tariffs if talks fail by August.

The U.S. has already generated roughly \$50 billion in revenue from tariffs on European steel and aluminum in the second quarter of this year. Despite concerns about inflation, consumer prices have remained relatively stable, suggesting the cost is being absorbed without severe economic disruption.

Brussels, meanwhile, has prepared a slate of countermeasures. European officials have outlined retaliatory tariffs on \$23 billion (€21 billion) worth of U.S. goods, which could expand to nearly \$78 billion (€72 billion) if no deal is reached. These duties would target industries such as aviation, bourbon, digital services, and online advertising.

German leaders have expressed concern about the growing trade tension. Chancellor Friedrich Merz has cast doubt on the feasibility of selective tariff exemptions, while Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil and Bundesbank chief Joachim Nagel warned of potential long-term harm to Germany's export-driven economy and broader global stability.

Despite these warnings, some European officials believe the 30% tariff threat may be a negotiating tactic. Analysts have described the approach as consistent with Trump's previous methods, escalating threats to extract concessions while leaving room for compromise before deadlines.

Market response has so far been limited. U.S. stock futures have dipped slightly, with traders eyeing potential supply chain delays more than immediate consumer impacts. In a sign of willingness to negotiate, EU leaders have temporarily postponed planned retaliatory measures, allowing additional time for dialogue.

With the August deadline fast approaching, the standoff reflects a stark divide in trade priorities. Trump's posture reinforces a nationalist, manufacturing-first approach to economic policy, while the EU seeks to defend its interests without inciting a broader trade war. The outcome may redefine transatlantic trade for years to come.