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India Stands Firm as Trump's Tariff Threats Fail to Shake India-Russia Ties

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Despite sharp warnings from the U.S. President Donald Trump, including a 25% tariff on Indian goods and potential penalties tied to its persistent purchase of Russian oil, India is doubling down on its strategic partnership with Russia. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval visited Moscow on August 5 to reinforce this enduring alliance.

India's government has described the U.S. actions as unjustified and unreasonable. Officials emphasized that Indian consumers will always be able to choose the most cost-effective energy options, and if Russian crude remains cheaper, India will continue importing it. Low oil prices from Moscow have helped stabilize fuel costs domestically.

The Kremlin, too, criticized Trump's threats. Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called them illegal, defending India's sovereign right to pursue trade relations independently of U.S. pressure. Reports confirm India's crude imports from Russia have surged from virtually nothing to nearly 35-40% of total intake, making it the country's second-largest source after China.

While the tariffs aim to penalize India's energy and defense ties with Russia, experts and government officials say bilateral defense cooperation with the United States remains insulated. The countries are expected to sign a 10-year Defense Framework by year-end, and ongoing partnerships span MQ-9 drone acquisition, Apache helicopters, and strategic technology collaboration under INDUS-X.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal reaffirmed that defense procurement remains guided by national security priorities, independent of trade disputes. Current tensions have not derailed discussions on existing procurement deals or joint military exercises such as Tiger Triumph.

Damage to defense cooperation is expected to be limited. India continues to pursue defense manufacturing under its Make in India policy while reinforcing strategic autonomy in procurement decisions. Analysts note that sanctions and tariffs may delay new contracts but are unlikely to reverse existing commitments.