

# *Trump Pledges to Double Tariffs on Foreign Steel and Aluminum to 50%*

President Trump made the announcement at a U.S. Steel factory outside Pittsburgh.



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**By Zolan Kanno-Youngs, Alan Rappeport, Ana Swanson and Lauren Hirsch**

Zolan Kanno-Youngs traveled on Air Force One to West Mifflin, Pa., Alan Rappeport reported from Washington, Ana Swanson from Simi Valley, Calif., and Lauren Hirsch from New York.

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President Trump said on Friday that he would double the tariffs he had levied on foreign steel and aluminum to 50 percent, a move that he claimed would further protect the industry.

The announcement came as Mr. Trump traveled to a U.S. Steel factory outside Pittsburgh to hail a “planned partnership” that he helped broker between U.S. Steel and Nippon Steel, a corporate merger that he opposed last year as a presidential candidate. Although the details of the U.S. Steel deal are still murky — and Mr. Trump later admitted he had not yet seen or signed off on it — the president used the moment to cast himself as a champion of the embattled industry.

Speaking to a crowd of steel workers, Mr. Trump claimed that foreign countries had been able to circumvent the 25 percent tariff he put in place this year. The higher tariffs would “even further secure the steel industry in the United States,” Mr. Trump said.

It is not clear how much doubling the tariff rate would actually bolster the domestic steel sector, but the move gave Mr. Trump the opportunity to wield tariffs at a time when his other import taxes have proved vulnerable to legal challenges.

In a post on Truth Social, Mr. Trump said that the tariffs would take effect on June 4 and that they would provide a “big jolt” to American steel and aluminum workers.

Mr. Trump has in recent weeks announced large tariffs only to quickly reverse himself and pause them. Analysts suggested on Friday that Mr. Trump could be seeking new ways to gain leverage over trading partners as the pace of negotiations has proved to be painfully slow.

This week, many of Mr. Trump’s tariffs have come under legal threat. A court ruled on Wednesday that Mr. Trump’s taxes on imports from China, Canada, Mexico and other nations were unlawful, although an appeals court paused that decision.

The levies on steel, aluminum and cars were issued through a separate law pertaining to national security, so they are not affected by those court cases. Mr. Trump also bristled at accusations this week that he had “chickened out” on tariffs by repeatedly backing down on threats made against major trading partners.

“Trump is clearly determined to use any available avenue to deploy tariffs as a tool to, as he sees it, protect and even revive American smokestack manufacturing,” said Eswar Prasad, a trade policy professor at Cornell University.

Nippon Steel, a Japanese company, had been interested in acquiring U.S. Steel in part to gain greater access to the American market.

On Friday, the president reassured employees of U.S. Steel that they would “continue to be controlled by the U.S.A.” He did not provide any details about whether Nippon is acquiring the American steel maker, as it originally proposed, or if a deal may take some other form.

His appearance in Pennsylvania was the latest twist in a two-year saga about the fate of U.S. Steel, an iconic American company. During the campaign last year, Mr. Trump, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Vice President Kamala Harris all expressed opposition to U.S. Steel’s being sold to a foreign company.

The fact that the company is based in the swing state of Pennsylvania and that the deal faced resistance from the powerful United Steelworkers union further complicated the transaction.



Ana Swanson

Times reporter covering the Trump tariffs

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It remains unclear if the deal is essentially being repackaged or fundamentally restructured.

Mr. Trump did not offer much clarity on Friday night. He told reporters on his way back to the White House that the deal would retain “control” of the company in the United States but declined to elaborate when asked. He also said the deal would provide \$17 billion in investment, a number that both clashed with his own previous figures and is higher than Nippon’s original bid for full control of the company.

“I have to approve the final deal with Nippon, and we haven’t seen that final deal yet,” he said. “But they’ve made a very big commitment. And it’s a very big investment.”

Neither company has publicly elaborated on Mr. Trump’s remarks, nor confirmed the ownership structure attached to the investment he described.

That may be because the companies do not know the details — or are hesitant to underline the fact that the parties are going through with an acquisition that Mr. Trump previously said he would block, said Stephen Heifetz, a partner at the law firm Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati.

“The problem, of course, is that the deal that the parties seemingly are willing to agree to is not really an investment — it’s an acquisition,” said Mr. Heifetz, who previously served as an official on the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States and worked at the Justice Department. “So that leaves folks in a muddle, because the president is saying — and seeming like it’s very important to him — it’s an investment.”

Neither company has said publicly that the agreement has cleared the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an interagency panel that vets transactions like this one. However, Mr. Trump's public support of the agreement essentially paves the way for its ultimate approval.

Last week, Mr. Trump announced what he called a "partnership" between the two steel makers, prompting Nippon Steel officials to believe Mr. Trump had endorsed their bid.

But on Thursday, Peter Navarro, a senior White House trade adviser, rejected the idea that Nippon would have ownership of the American steel maker.

"U.S. Steel owns the company," Mr. Navarro told reporters at the White House on Thursday. "Nippon Steel's going to have some involvement, but no control."

During the presidential campaign, Mr. Trump pledged to block the Japanese company's \$14 billion bid for the Pittsburgh-based industrial giant. The potential purchase incited bipartisan backlash. Union leaders expressed concern about job security and the future of American steel.

But when Mr. Trump came into office, his aides discussed potential options for a deal with Nippon Steel. In one option, the United States would acquire so-called golden shares in the transaction, which would grant even a minority shareholder veto power over significant corporate decisions. That could give the U.S. government some say over major decisions like prospective plant closures or large layoffs, even if the acquisition went through.

"This will be a planned partnership between United States Steel and Nippon Steel, which will create at least 70,000 jobs, and add \$14 Billion Dollars to the U.S. Economy," Mr. Trump wrote on social media last week.

Senator David McCormick, Republican of Pennsylvania, has indicated that

Nippon Steel would sign off on granting the United States the golden shares.

The approval of the deal had bipartisan support in Pennsylvania. Gov. Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, said at an event this week that he had worked with both Mr. Biden and Mr. Trump to find a way forward for the agreement. He lamented that steel jobs had been leaving the state in recent decades and praised the investment that Nippon Steel was preparing to make.

“I’ve been working really hard to make sure that we can protect our great legacy but grow for the future of steel making in Pennsylvania,” Mr. Shapiro said.

Despite Mr. Trump’s backing, officials continued to express concerns on Friday.

“Whatever the deal structure, our primary concern remains with the impact that this merger of U.S. Steel into a foreign competitor will have on national security, our members and the communities where we live and work,” said David McCall, president of the United Steelworkers union.

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