

Tit-for-tat tariffs timeline

The Trump administration last Friday announced tariffs worth US\$50 billion (S\$67 billion) on Chinese high-tech and industrial imports, prompting the declaration of retaliatory tariffs by China within hours. The first round of US tariffs, totalling US\$34 billion and matched by China, will take effect on July 6. A second round for the remaining amount is still under review. Here's a look at how this trade spat began.

January 2018

- First trade action against China comes with tariffs on imported solar panels and washing machines.

March 9

- US President Donald Trump announces a 25 per cent tax on steel imports and 10 per cent on aluminium imports. Tariffs cover a range of countries, including Canada and Germany, besides China.

April 2

- China hits back with tariffs on about US\$3 billion worth of American imports, including a 15 per cent tax on 120 American products such as fruits, nuts, wine and steel pipes; and a 25 per cent tax on eight other American goods, including recycled aluminium and pork.

April 3-4

- President Trump's trade team proposes a 25 per cent tax on over 1,000 Chinese products from the aerospace, machinery and medical industries – totalling about US\$50 billion worth of Chinese exports. The next day, Beijing announces plans for a 25 per cent tax on US products worth approximately US\$50 billion. The list includes aircraft, cars, soya beans and chemicals.

April 5

- The Trump administration threatens new tariffs worth US\$100 billion. China warns of "countermeasures".

April 16-17

- US bans Chinese tech company ZTE from doing business with American firms for seven years as it violated sanctions on Iran and North Korea. Later, the ban is reversed and a fine is imposed instead. China's Commerce Ministry announces a 179 per cent tax on American sorghum.

May

- China and US agree to not impose new tariffs on each other while talks continue. China says it plans to reduce import duties on American passenger vehicles from 25 per cent to 15 per cent.

May 22

- US imposes anti-dumping duties on imports of steel from Vietnam originating from China.

May 29

- The White House says it will move ahead with its 25 per cent tax on US\$50 billion worth of Chinese goods, and announces new limits on Chinese investment in high-tech industries.

June 15

- US announces it will impose a 25 per cent tariff targeting US\$50 billion worth of Chinese imports from "industrially significant" technologies from July 6. China announces retaliatory taxes, expanding the list of US products that would be subject to tariffs to 659. These include agricultural, seafood and energy products.

June 18

- Mr Trump says he has instructed the US Trade Representative's office to identify US\$200 billion in Chinese imports for additional tariffs of 10 per cent, and on another US\$200 billion after that if Beijing retaliates. China's Commerce Ministry labels the move "extreme pressure and blackmail" and says it will fight back.
- The US Senate passes a defence spending Bill that would restore penalties on ZTE, which has become a bargaining chip in the trade row. ZTE's fate now depends on whether the House of Representatives agrees with the Senate.

