

‘Stop production’: Small US firms battered by shifting tariffs

Washington, United States

When US President Donald Trump announced tariffs on almost all trading partners in April, Ben Knepler contacted the factory in Cambodia producing his company’s outdoor furniture. “Stop production,” he ordered.

The announcement involved a 10-percent levy on imports from most partners, set to rise further for many of them. For Cambodia, the planned duty was a staggering 49 percent.

“That night, we spoke to our factory,” Knepler told AFP. “We literally cannot afford to bring our own product into the US with that kind of tariff.”

The decision was even more painful for Knepler and his Pennsylvania-based company, True Places, given that he had previously shifted production of his outdoor chairs to Cambodia from China, following tariffs on Chinese imports imposed by Trump during his first presidency.

“We were facing 25-percent tariffs in China, and there were zero-percent tariffs in Cambodia,” Knepler recalled.

It took him a year to move the



Activists of different trade unions burn an effigy of US President Donald Trump to protest against the recent tariff hikes

massive equipment and molds to Cambodia only to see another steep levy.

With Trump’s “reciprocal” tariff hikes taking effect last Thursday, these Cambodia-made chairs face a lower -- though still significant -- 19 percent duty.

‘Wheel of misfortune’

Knepler’s experience echoes that of many US companies producing everything from yo-yos to clothing abroad, after years of offshoring American manufacturing.

To cope, businesses use vari-

ous strategies.

Some pass on the new costs as a surcharge to customers. Others halted imports when duties reached prohibitive levels, hoping Trump would strike bilateral trade deals that would make their businesses viable again.

Trump frames his tariffs as

paid for by other countries, touting tens of billions in revenue this year -- but firms contest this description.

“We make the tariff payments when the product comes into the US,” Knepler stressed. “Before we sell it, we’re the ones who pay that tariff.”

Now saddled with hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt he took on to relocate the company’s production to Cambodia, Knepler worries if his business will survive.

He likens the rapid policy changes to spinning a “wheel of misfortune,” resulting in a new tariff each time. Over four months this year, the planned tariff rate on Cambodian exports has gone from 0 to 49 percent, to 10 percent, to 36 percent, to 19 percent, he said.

“No one knows what it’s going to be tomorrow,” he added. “It’s impossible to have any kind of confidence in what the rate will be in three- or four-months’ time.”

Economists warn that tariffs could fuel inflation and drag on growth.

EY chief economist Gregory Daco noted that the duties effective Thursday raise the average

tariff rate to 17.6 percent from 2.8 percent at the start of the year -- the highest level since the early 1930s.

While Trump lauds the limited effects his duties have had on US prices so far, experts say tariffs take time to filter through to consumers.

Many of Trump’s sweeping levies also face legal challenges over his use of emergency economic powers.

Price hikes

The global tariffs are especially hard to avoid.

Barton O’Brien said he accelerated production and borrowed money to bring in as much inventory as possible before Trump took office.

On the election campaign trail, the Republican leader had floated a 60-percent tariff on imports from China, where O’Brien makes most of his products.

The Maryland-based veteran selling dog harnesses and other accessories rented a container to ship as many products as he could before Trump’s new tariffs would take effect. “I had dog life jackets in the bathroom,” he told AFP.

PIF Grows \$913bn Global Portfolio

- 19% assets growth
- \$171B sector investment

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF) closed 2024 with a 19% surge in assets under management (AuM), reaching \$913 billion, while expanding its global investment footprint and reinforcing its role as a driver of the Kingdom’s economic transformation.

Strong performance

According to its 2024 Annual Report, PIF posted a 25% increase in total revenue and maintained a strong cash bal-

ance. Since 2021, cumulative investments in priority sectors have exceeded \$171 billion, contributing \$243 billion to Saudi Arabia’s real non-oil GDP between 2021 and 2024.

Chief Financial Officer Yasir A. AlSalman said the results were underpinned by solid financial health and robust capital deployment of \$56.8 billion in 2024 alone.

Economic diversification

Acting Chief of Staff and Secretary General to the Board Maram Al Johani said PIF now accounts for 10% of the nation’s non-oil economy. By year-end, it held stakes in 225 portfolio companies, having created and established 103 of them.

The fund also marked a transition from digital transformation to digital leadership,

completing 58 digital projects, launching 15 new applications, and automating more than 477 processes.

Global recognition

PIF’s international portfolio expanded through strategic partnerships and investments in cutting-edge technology. In 2024, it raised \$9.83 billion in public debt and \$7 billion in private debt, with Moody’s upgrading its rating to Aa3 and Fitch affirming an A+ rating, both with stable outlooks.

The fund achieved a 96% score on Global SWF’s 2024 Governance, Sustainability and Resilience Scoreboard and, in 2025, tied for first place globally with a score of 100%. Brand Finance ranked PIF the most valuable and fastest-growing brand among sovereign wealth funds, with an A+ rating.

Trump says wants three-way meeting with Putin, Zelensky

- Trump is due to sit down with Putin in Anchorage on Friday

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said Wednesday he was planning a second meeting with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin soon after Friday’s Alaska summit -- this time with Ukraine leader Volodymyr Zelensky included.

Trump is due to sit down with Putin in Anchorage on Friday, the first meeting between the Russian leader and a sitting US president since 2021.

“If the first one goes okay, we’ll have a quick second one,” he told reporters.

“I would like to do it almost immediately, and we’ll have a quick second meeting between President Putin and President Zelensky and myself, if they’d like to have me there.”

The high-stakes talks come with Trump seeking to broker an end to Russia’s nearly three-and-a-half year war in Ukraine, and Zelensky and his European allies have urged the Republican to push for a ceasefire.

A stepped-up Russian offensive, and the fact Zelensky has not been invited to the Anchorage meeting Friday, have heightened fears that Trump and Putin could strike a deal that forces painful concessions on Ukraine.

Trump said Russia would face “very severe consequences” if Putin did not agree to end the war after Friday’s meeting,



Bahrain Firms Eye Saudi Security Boom

- Largest Intersec Saudi yet
- Giga projects drive safety demand

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

Bahrain’s security, safety, and fire protection industry players are being urged to explore new opportunities as Saudi Arabia prepares to host its largest to date Intersec Saudi Arabia exhibition next month.

The event, set for 29 September to 1 October at the Riyadh

International Convention and Exhibition Centre, will be held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of Interior, and in association with the General Directorate of Civil Defense. Organisers expect more than 27,000 visitors and 370 plus exhibitors, making this the biggest edition yet.

With Saudi Arabia’s multi billion dollar giga projects, including NEOM, Red Sea Global, North Pole Riyadh, and Qiddiya, pushing demand for advanced safety and security solutions, Intersec Saudi Arabia is being positioned as a vital gateway for GCC businesses.

Bilal Al Barmawi, CEO and Founder of 1st Arabia Trade Shows & Conferences, said the show offers a unique platform for critical infrastructure buyers, giga project leaders, and private sector decision makers to meet and forge partnerships.

The Future Security Summit, powered by ASIS International Dhahran Chapter, will spotlight AI driven surveillance, predictive policing, mega event protection, and critical infrastructure security. Abdullah S. Alshemaly, the chapter’s chairman, said public and private sectors are rapidly scaling investments in surveillance, cyber defence, and infrastructure protection.