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## **THERESA MAY TURNS COMBATIVE AHEAD OF BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS**

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Deutsche Welle (27 April 2017)

Days after waxing lyrical about the "special relationship" between the UK and the EU, the British premier has hardened her tone. The change came after Angela Merkel said the UK was suffering illusions over its future.

British Prime Minister Theresa May on Thursday accused European Union member states of lining up to oppose Britain ahead of the release of the EU's negotiating position on Brexit.

"We've seen from Chancellor Merkel today, we've heard her comments today. We've seen that actually there will be times when these negotiations are going to get tough," May was quoted as saying by the BBC while speaking at a campaign rally in the Labour stronghold of Leeds ahead of the snap general election she called for June.

"Our opponents are already seeking to disrupt those negotiations - at the same time as 27 other European countries line up to oppose us," she said.

"That approach can only mean one thing - uncertainty and instability, bringing grave risk to our growing economy with higher taxes, fewer jobs, more waste and more debt,"

May's combative comments came just days after dining with EU Brexit negotiators and saying the UK had a "commitment to achieving a deep and special partnership with the European Union."

British illusions

May was responding to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's warning to the UK on Thursday against "illusions" over the exit process.

Merkel stressed in parliament that "a third-party state will not have the same rights or even superior rights to a member state," referring to the relationship the EU has with non-EU countries such as Switzerland and Norway.

"This may sound self-evident, but I have to say this clearly because some in Britain seem to have illusions on this point," she said. "That would be a waste of time."

EU presents unified front

EU ministers met in Luxembourg on Thursday to underscore their unity ahead of Saturday's meeting to approve their negotiation position.

"It seems that at the moment we are completely united on everything," said Vice Premier Louis Grech of Malta, the country that holds the rotating EU presidency. "Naturally we have to protect the EU's interests."

He said a prime objective was "to ensure that we will conduct the negotiations in a spirit of unity and trust between the 27."

The EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, said that "we are united."

Saturday's EU's guidelines will inform a tight negotiating mandate for Barnier which should be ready by May 22.

## BREXIT: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

What is Article 50?

Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon gives any existing member of the European Union the right to quit unilaterally and outlines the procedure for doing so. It gives the state concerned two years to negotiate a deal for its exit. Once Article 50 is triggered, it cannot be stopped, except by the unanimous consent of all member states.

60 billion euro bill

The EU is expected to push on issues such as the treatment of EU expats, the bill of remaining costs to be paid by Britain and border issues in Ireland.

Some reports claim the EU could hold Britain liable for costs until at least a year after it leaves, at a possible cost of 60 billion euros (US\$65 billion).

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson responded angrily to those claims.

"If you're saying that they want the money before they get any substantive talks, then that is obviously not going to happen," he told the BBC.

Northern Ireland

Ireland was expected to push for automatic membership of Northern Ireland to the EU if the two ever reunified.

German daily "Frankfurter Allgemeine" reported on Thursday that rental payments from the EU medicines agency in London could also become a sticking point in negotiations. The lease agreement of the EU authority was reportedly signed until 2039, according to a document from the European Parliament, and could cost 347.6 million euros. Various EU members are seeking to be the new home of the institution.

Negotiations will likely start after Britain's June 8 election, in which May is seeking to crush a weakened Labour party.