TRUMP SCUPPERS TRADE DEAL WITH UK UNDER MAY'S BREXIT

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US president Donald Trump has said a future bilateral trade deal with the UK is unlikely should Britain leave the European Union under terms only proposed on Thursday by prime minister Theresa May.

In remarks that will likely further weaken May's already tenuous grip on her own government, Trump told The Sun, a British newspaper, in an interview published Friday (13 July) that her proposed 'soft' post-Brexit relations with the European Union would scupper a US trade deal.

"If they do a deal like that, we would be dealing with the European Union instead of dealing with the UK, so it will probably kill the deal," he told The Sun.

The publication of the article coincided with Trump's first official state visit to the UK, hosted by May, following his testy two-day Nato summit in Brussels where he made inaccurate statements on US spending for Europe's defence.

The US president is known for his brash disdain of free trade deals and multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organization. The latest move against May appears to be part of a pattern to escalate tensions with close allies.

He also told the paper that Boris Johnson, who resigned on Monday (9 July) as foreign secretary in protest of May's Brexit white paper, would make "a great prime minister" and that May ignored his advice on Brexit.

"I actually told Theresa May how to do it, but she didn't listen to me," he said.

May had aimed to leverage the prize of a future trade deal with the United States in an effort gain support for her post-Brexit plans.

For her part May, in a Facebook post published before Trump's arrival in the UK and his Sun interview, insisted that "we are having good discussions with countries we would aim to sign trade deals with, including the US, as I will discuss with President Trump when he arrives in the UK on Thursday."

With that prospect now in greater doubt, her 104-page proposal tabled earlier this week appears increasingly shaky.

Aside from Johnson, the plan also led to the resignation of David Davis as Brexit secretary, also on Monday, in a chaotic week for the UK government.

Her pro-Brexit critics within her Conservative party say it fails to wrestle away the EU's reach, undermining Brexit's independence and sovereignty claims.

Instead, May's proposal seeks an association agreement with the EU, with a free trade area for goods.

It also put forward ideas on a "combined customs territory" and opened up the possibility of giving the European Court of Justice some jurisdiction, both of which have angered Conservative backbench MPs.

Kaynak/Source: