Washington trade delegation encouraging, officials say

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China welcomes the upcoming visit of senior US officials to Beijing to talk about trade and also reaffirms its stance of solving disputes under a bilateral or multilateral framework, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said on Wednesday.  
"It is not surprising for China and the US, the two largest economies, to have economic disputes. These problems can be solved via bilateral consultations or within a commonly recognized multilateral framework. However, they can never be solved by unilateral means," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a daily news briefing.  
Trump said Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer will lead a delegation in a few days. The move is seen a signal of easing bilateral trade tensions. It will be Mnuchin's first trip to China as US Treasury secretary.  
"I think we've got a very good chance of making a deal," Trump told the media during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit.  
"China is very serious, and we are very serious," Trump said, adding that the tariffs announced "will continue unless we make a trade deal".  
Experts said China still needs to be prepared with both soft and hard solutions to deal with the Trump administration's business policies, as the bilateral trade relations are still far from uneventful.  
"Due to the escalating trade dispute, the anger of US farmers and companies, especially those from high-tech manufacturing and service sectors, has put Republican candidates under pressure as midterm congressional elections approach," said Tu Xinquan, director of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.  
Tu said a trade war could cause job losses, price increases and downward pressure on stock markets, as well as damage the strong US economic momentum. The Trump administration, therefore, is taking measures to avoid losing voters, especially in core constituencies of his political party.  
"To ensure its rights, China can make use of economic dialogue and other high-level negotiation means, pragmatically initiating discussion to reach substantial results," said Long Guoqiang, vice-president of the Development Research Center of the State Council.  
On the other hand, Long said, China must study and prepare measures to fight back if the US continues damaging bilateral business ties with new forms of tactics.  
The US has threatened to impose tariffs on $150 billion worth of imports from China following a Section 301 investigation into China's intellectual property policies and practices. China has vowed to fight back and has proposed tariffs on $50 billion worth of imports from the US, including cars, soybeans and airplanes. Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 deals with technology and intellectual property rights.  
China also fired back against US Section 232 tariffs imposed on steel and aluminum imports by enacting new tariffs on 128 US items, including fruit, wine and pork products. Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 involves the effect of imports on national security.

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