

US, China suspend reciprocal port fees as part of wider trade deal



There was no indication when the pause in port fees would take effect or what would happen to the fees already paid by ship operators in the two weeks since the US and China imposed the reciprocal levies on Oct. 14. Photo credit: Apu Gomes / Getty Images.

[Keith Wallis, Asia Special Correspondent](#) | Oct 30, 2025, 11:58 AM EDT

The US and China have agreed to pause tit-for-tat port fees for one year as part of wider trade-related measures announced Thursday after talks between presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in South Korea meant to deescalate tensions between the two superpowers.

China's Commerce Ministry confirmed that port levies on US-built, -controlled or -registered ships calling at Chinese ports would be suspended, while a similar measure on Chinese-built or -controlled ships will be lifted by the US.

But there was no indication when the pause would take effect or what would happen to the port fees already paid by ship operators in the two weeks since the US and

China imposed the reciprocal levies on Oct. 14.

“Following the US suspension, China will also suspend its countermeasures against the US for one year,” the Commerce Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry also confirmed that Chinese export controls imposed earlier this month on rare earths, used in automobiles, airplanes, mobile phones and other equipment, would also be suspended for a year.

The US and China also agreed to expand agricultural trade, with China again ready to buy US soybeans.

As part of the broad agreement, the US will “cancel the 10% so-called ‘fentanyl tariffs’ and suspend, for an additional year, the 24% reciprocal tariffs levied on Chinese goods,” the Commerce Ministry added. This will reduce the overall US tariffs on Chinese goods to 47%.

The ministry said all the measures were agreed to during economic and trade talks last weekend in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, between delegations led by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng.

But details were only released Thursday to coincide with the Trump-Xi meeting in Gyeongju, about 43 miles from Busan, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

Commenting on the suspension of reciprocal port fees, Lars Jensen, CEO of consultant Vespucci Maritime and a *Journal of Commerce* contributor, said ocean carriers are likely to adopt a cautious response to the fee suspensions.

“Given this is a time-limited suspension it would likely see shipping lines maintain a deployment stance whereby they, to some degree, still abide by the restrictions and certainly keep a plan for vessel-reshuffling handy,” Jensen said in a LinkedIn post Thursday.

“Overall, this does point to some de-escalation in the trade war between the US and China, but there is not necessarily a long-term certainty of the trade environment given that some of these agreements are one-year only,” he added.

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