

Trump threatens new tariffs as U.S.-China trade tensions spike again

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday moved to impose a 10% tariff on a remaining \$300 billion list of Chinese imports starting Sept. 1, after U.S. and Chinese negotiators failed to kickstart trade talks between the world's two largest economies.

The levies - which would hit a wide swath of consumer goods from cell phones and laptop computers to toys and footwear - ratchet up tensions in a war of tit-for-tat tariffs that have disrupted global supply chains and roiled financial markets for more than a year.

U.S. stocks fell after the news and oil prices plummeted, and further fallout was expected. The IMF has warned that tariffs already in place will shave 0.2% off global economic output in 2020.

The benchmark S&P 500, which had been in solidly positive territory on Thursday afternoon, lost significant ground after Trump tweeted about the tariffs, and was last down 0.6% on the day. Benchmark U.S. Treasury yields also fell.

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"Trade talks are continuing, and during the talks the U.S. will start, on September 1st, putting a small additional Tariff of 10% on the remaining 300 Billion Dollars of goods and products coming from China into our Country. This does not include the 250 Billion Dollars already Tariffed at 25%," Trump tweeted.

Trump also faulted China for not making good on promises to buy more American agricultural products and criticized China's President Xi Jinping for failing to do more to stem sales of the synthetic opioid fentanyl.

The president's tweets followed a briefing by Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on their talks in Shanghai, their first face-to-face meeting with Chinese officials since Trump and Xi agreed to a trade ceasefire at a G20 summit in June.

The talks ended on Wednesday with little sign of progress, although both countries described the negotiations as constructive. Another round of meetings between the negotiators has been scheduled for September.

Trump had been pressing Xi to crack down on a flood of fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances from China, which U.S. officials say is the main source of a drug blamed for most of more than 28,000 synthetic opioid-related overdose deaths in the United States in 2017.

Xi promised Trump at a summit in Argentina in December that Beijing would take action. China had pledged that from May 1 it would expand the list of narcotics subject to state control to include the more than 1,400 known fentanyl analogues, which have a slightly different chemical makeup but are addictive and potentially deadly, as well as any new ones developed in the future.

Talks between the United States and China collapsed in May after U.S. officials accused China of pulling back from earlier commitments. Washington sharply hiked tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods and Beijing retaliated, escalating the trade dispute. Trump subsequently threatened to impose 25% sanctions on the remaining \$300 billion in Chinese imports, prompting warnings from Walmart and other major U.S. retailers of a sharp spike in consumer prices. Thursday's tweets indicated those goods would face a lower tariff rate than initially threatened.

While the United States bemoans the lack of larger Chinese agricultural purchases, Beijing has been pressing Washington to relax restrictions on sales to Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei as it had promised.



FILE PHOTO: Farmer Dave Walton holds soybeans in Wilton, Iowa, U.S. May 22, 2019. Picture taken May 22, 2019. REUTERS/Kia Johnson



A worker walks passed boxes on a roller conveyor at NewAir's warehouse in Cypress

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Editor's Choice



A sign marks Taiwan-based Foxconn's facility in the Racine County town of Mt. Pleasant, Wisconsin, U.S., April 28, 2019. REUTERS/Brian Snyder



FILE PHOTO: Former Vice President Joe Biden speaks on the second night of the second 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Detroit



U.S. Senator Cory Booker smiles on a CNN set on the second night of the second 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Detroit



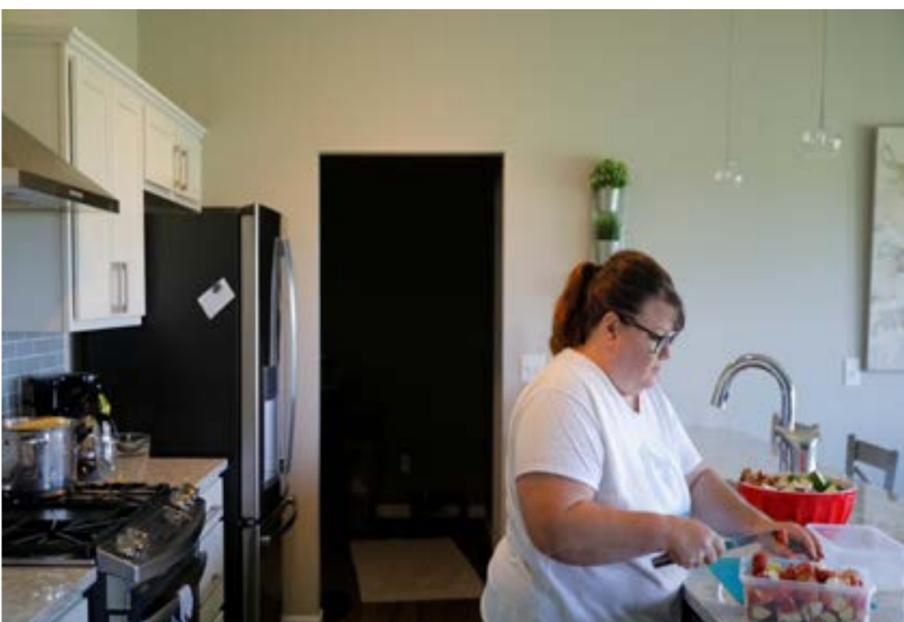
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U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand hugs her son Henry after the second night of the second 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Detroit



Kim Mahoney prepares food for a cookout with friends at her home in Mt. Pleasant



Democratic presidential candidate entrepreneur Andrew Yang speaks on the second night of the second 2020 Democratic U.S. presidential debate in Detroit

Type With Your Mind

Facebook: "We've Achieved A First In Brain-Computer Research"



Facebook Reality Labs built this early wearable brain-computer interface device. (Photo/ Facebook)

Overview

Facebook makes progress on its ambitions to create a wearable to decode speech directly from your brain.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Two years ago, Facebook announced plans to create a non-invasive wearable system that could type 100 words per minute by decoding phrases and words that a user just thinks.

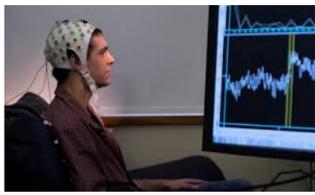
The company has now published an update on its ambitions to build augmented-reality (AR) glasses that would allow people to communicate without using a smartphone.

Facebook thinks a machine that decodes words in the brain's speech center could offer the speed of voice and the privacy of text.

"The promise of AR lies in its ability to seamlessly connect people to the world that surrounds them – and to each other," Facebook researchers said in a blog.

"Rather than looking down at a phone screen or breaking out a laptop, we can maintain eye contact and retrieve useful information and context without ever missing a beat. It's a tantalizing vision, but one that will require an enterprising spirit, hefty amounts of determination,

and an open mind."



The company believes it is a viable technology, assuming major advances can be made in the field of brain-computer interface (BCI) research, which today necessitates invasive techniques using implanted electrodes in the brain.

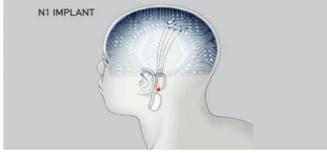
Facebook Reality Labs' is investigating the potential for BCI and funded researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, who've detailed in Nature Communications a BCI that can detect when a person hears or says something and then decodes the phrase.

In this experiment, participants listened to questions and responded aloud with answers while the researchers used a

system to decode the utterances from the brain in real time.

"After training, participants performed a task in which, during each trial, they listened to a question and responded aloud with an answer of their choice. Using only neural signals, we detect when participants are listening or speaking and predict the identity of each detected utterance using phone-level Viterbi decoding," the researchers explain.

The participants were volunteers with normal speech who were undergoing brain surgery to treat epilepsy. They were asked questions like "How is your room currently?" For this question they had five valid answers to choose from, including "Bright", "Dark", "Hot", "Cold", and "Fine".



Facebook notes that the main advancement in this paper is that the researchers were able to "decode a small set of full, spoken words and phrases from brain activity in real time – a first in the field of BCI research."

The researchers are aiming to decode speech at a rate of 100 words per minute with a 1,000-word vocabulary and a word error rate of less than 17%.

"Facebook says it's still a "long way" from achieving the same results with non-invasive technology, but it believes the work underway will help it develop decoding algorithms and figure out the specifications for a non-invasive wearable.

One non-invasive technique it's exploring with researchers in another project is using near-infrared light to detect changes in neurons in the brain.

"Like other cells in your body, neurons consume oxygen when they're active. So if we can detect shifts in oxygen levels within the brain, we can indirectly measure brain activity," Facebook said.

The company doesn't think this tech-

nique will allow it to decode thought phrases, but sees potential for recognizing key words like 'home', 'select', and 'delete'. (Courtesy <https://www.zdnet.com>)

Related

Brain-computer interfaces are developing faster than the policy debate around them

It's time to talk about what's possible — and what shouldn't be



Two years after the company announced its mind-reading initiative, Facebook has an update to share. The company sponsored an experiment conducted by researchers at the University of California San Francisco in which they built an interface for decoding spoken dialogue from brain signals. The results were published today in Nature Communication.

The work itself is fascinating, as you might expect from the subject matter. Brain-computer interfaces aren't new, but the existing ones aren't particularly efficient — particularly the ones that don't involve drilling into your skull. Facebook's approach relies on high-density electrocorticography, aka ECoG, which implants sensors on the brain and uses them to record brain activity.



And its most recent research apparently showed promise, Adi Robertson reports: *If participants heard someone ask "Which musical instrument do you like listening to," for example, they'd respond with one of several options like "violin" or "drums" while their brain*

activity was recorded. The system would guess when they were asking a question and when they were answering it, then guess the content of both speech events. The predictions were shaped by prior context — so once the system determined which question subjects were hearing, it would narrow the set of likely answers. The system could produce results with 61 to 76 percent accuracy, compared with the 7 to 20 percent accuracy expected by chance.

"Here we show the value of decoding both sides of a conversation — both the questions someone hears and what they say in response," said lead author and UCSF neurosurgery professor Edward Chang, in a statement. But Chang noted that this system only recognizes a very limited set of words so far; participants were only asked nine questions with 24 total answer options. The study's subjects — who were being prepped for epilepsy surgery — used highly invasive implants. And they were speaking answers aloud, not simply thinking them.



If successful, the work will have important clinical applications — it could help patients to communicate who have lost the ability to speak, for example. Facebook hopes the technology has a broader use — enabling what former Facebook crazy-project chief Regina Dugan once called a "brain click." Allow people to click through dialog boxes with their minds, she told us in 2017, and you create lots of interesting new possibilities for augmented and virtual reality. That goal remains very far away. But that seems like a good time to ask whether any of this work should, you know, be done in the first place. (Courtesy theverge.com)

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Amazon Warning To Customers: Some Supplements Could Be Fake

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Procter & Gamble brand.



"We are aware that some counterfeit Align product was sold on Amazon via third parties," Mollie Wheeler, a spokes-person for Procter & Gamble, said in an email.

"Amazon has confirmed they have stopped third party sales of the Align products in question and Amazon is only selling Align product received directly from P&G manufacturing facilities."

In a statement, an Amazon spokes-person highlighted several initiatives the company has devised to detect counterfeiters, like Brand Registry and Project Zero. Brands typically need to elect to participate in these programs, and the spokesperson declined to clarify whether Procter & Gamble or Align were already enrolled.

"We investigate every claim of potential counterfeit thoroughly, and often in partnership with brands, and in the rare instance where a bad actor gets through, we take swift action, including removing the item for sale, permanently banning bad actors, pursuing legal action, and working with law enforcement when appropriate," the statement reads.

"We have taken these actions against the bad actors in question and proactively notified and refunded customers." Neither Amazon nor Procter & Gamble would say who first detected the fake pills. Amazon also didn't respond to a question about whether it would test the counterfeit probiotics, leaving Bressler and other customers to wonder if they may have ingested something dangerous. The FDA has found that supplements

sometimes contain prescription pharmaceuticals like steroids or antidepressants, which can be harmful if a person takes them without being aware of it.



CVS recently announced plans to independently test every nutritional supplement it carries in its stores. That Amazon isn't doing the same might sound careless, but the reality is that the company has already taken far more action than it's obligated to under the law.

Even if the counterfeit Align pills Amazon sold turned out to be harmful, Bressler and other buyers would likely have little legal recourse against the company. When consumers have tried to sue online marketplaces like Amazon and eBay for selling dangerous goods in the past, courts have ruled they aren't responsible for products offered by third-party vendors—they serve merely as intermediaries between consumers and sellers.

In many of these cases, the companies have defended themselves using Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Passed in 1996, it shields them from nearly all liability for what sellers or users post on their sites. In one 2014 case, for example, a judge found that because of Section 230, eBay isn't liable even when it sells items that have been recalled. "Marketplaces aren't responsible for passing along recalls, even if they know the recalls have been issued, and even if they would have the capacity to share them," says Eric Goldman, a professor at Santa Clara University School of Law who has written extensively about intermediary liability. (Items that have been recalled, however, are prohibited under eBay's Terms of Service.)

Retailers, on the other hand, can be held

directly responsible for selling things like questionable dietary supplements. Three years ago, the Department of Justice ordered GNC to pay a \$2 million fine for selling products with harmful hidden ingredients, and the chain agreed to better police the goods on its shelves moving forward.

Amazon is both a retailer and a third-party marketplace. It buys some products directly from manufacturers and sells them at a markup, and it allows independent merchants to offer their goods directly to consumers, the latter of which accounts for 58 percent of gross merchandise sales on the platform. But the line between those two parts of its business are not always clear. Amazon exerts a significant amount of control over sellers, including dictating how their goods appear in search results. It also often warehouses and ships their products for them. And unlike on eBay, Etsy, or other online marketplaces, a single Amazon product listing can feature goods from dozens of independent sellers, making it difficult for consumers to understand from whom they're purchasing a product. "Amazon has obviously kept pushing the needle further and further toward taking responsibility for marketplace goods," says Goldman.

The US 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals ruled earlier this month that these kinds of differences do, in fact, make Amazon liable for harmful products sold by third-party sellers in some circumstances. The judges noted that because third-party vendors can only communicate with consumers directly through Amazon, they can "conceal themselves from the customer, leaving customers injured by defective products with no direct recourse." The case involved a woman who purchased a dog collar from a third-party vendor on Amazon in 2014. Several weeks later, while she was walking her dog, it snapped, leaving the woman permanently blind in one eye. Goldman notes that the ruling is based on Pennsylvania law and doesn't yet set a precedent for the rest of the country. Amazon is also asking the court to re-

view it again.

Making Amazon legally liable for everything on its site wouldn't be a silver bullet. The immunity granted under Section 230 is what, in part, made it possible for online marketplaces to thrive in the first place. If platforms became totally liable, that would make it incredibly difficult for, say, Etsy to allow independent artists to sell their work on its site. Amazon has banned some products it has deemed to be dangerous, such as hoverboards, but there are an endless number of other categories in which seemingly benign products may pose risks.

And in situations where Amazon can't be held legally responsible, it can be almost impossible to track down the entities who are. The third-party vendor who sold the knockoff Align pills, or the company that manufactured them, may very likely be difficult to find, especially if they're overseas. In the dog collar case, The Furry Gang, the third-party vendor that sold the defective collar, completely disappeared.



The US government is taking more notice of the growing problem of counterfeits and how online shopping in many ways has allowed knockoffs to flourish. On Thursday, lawmakers in the House of Representatives held a hearing on counterfeits, where people from a variety of industries spoke about the threat to their businesses. "As one of the largest and most influential ecommerce companies in the world, Amazon has an important role to play in ensuring that counterfeit goods stay out of consumers' hands," said Robert C. Barchiesi of the International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition in written testimony. "And we look forward to their continued cooperation toward that end." (Courtesy <https://www.wired.com>)



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