

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MEXICAN PRESIDENT CANCELS TRUMP MEETING AS SPARKS FLY OVER WALL, TRADE

U.S. leader raised pressure on Mexico to pay for border barrier

By José de Córdoba and Peter Nicholas
January 26, 2017

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto canceled a planned meeting with President Donald Trump next week after the U.S. president increased pressure on Mexico to pay for a wall he wants built on the border.

"If Mexico is unwilling to pay for the badly needed wall, then it would be better to cancel the upcoming meeting," Mr. Trump wrote on his personal Twitter feed on Thursday morning.

Mr. Trump on Wednesday ordered government officials to begin planning a "physical wall" on the border with Mexico, following through on a central campaign promise to crack down on illegal immigration.

Mr. Peña Nieto afterward reiterated that his country wouldn't pay for the wall, as Mr. Trump has long demanded.

In a show of brinkmanship, Mr. Trump suggested that Mexico has more to lose if relations with the U.S. sour. He tweeted that the U.S. has been hurt in trade dealings with Mexico stemming from the North American Free Trade Agreement signed in the early 1990s. He wrote that Nafta is a "one-sided" deal that has wiped out jobs in the U.S.

U.S. trade officials say the goods-and-service trade deficit with Mexico was more than \$49 billion in 2015.

Mr. Peña Nieto said on Twitter on Thursday that his administration notified the White House that he won't meet with Mr. Trump on Tuesday, as originally planned.

Mr. Peña Nieto had said he would consult Mexican officials about his next steps. The meeting with Mr. Trump had been scheduled to take place on Tuesday.

A leading Mexican historian, Enrique Krauze, wrote on Twitter before the cancellation that following Mr. Trump's latest tweet Mr. Peña Nieto had no choice.

"Now there is no doubt: Facing this threat, the president should not go to Washington," he wrote in Spanish.

Former Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda said it was impossible to make an agreement with Mr. Trump given the U.S. president's habit of impetuous tweeting.

"You can't [make an agreement] with Trump," said Mr. Castañeda. "They [Mexico] should have decided yesterday morning to cancel the trip to Washington. They didn't, so Trump got ahead of them."

"It's another blow below the belt," said Mr. Castañeda of Mr. Trump's tweet. "There is no other choice but for Peña to say he is not going."

Mr. Castañeda said Mexico should get used to negotiating with the U.S. in a situation where the peso will continue to deteriorate. He said the best strategy for Mexico may be to be patient, since Mr. Trump is getting involved in so many controversies in the U.S. that he may be weaker and easier to deal with in a few months.