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# U.S. and Mexico Sign Trucking Deal

By BINYAMIN APPELBAUM

WASHINGTON — Mexican truckers will be able to carry goods deep into the United States, and vice versa, under a deal signed Wednesday in Mexico City to keep a 17-year-old promise.

As part of the deal, Mexico will eliminate tariffs on \$2.3 billion of American goods and agricultural products as soon as the first Mexican truck obtains a permit and is allowed to enter the United States. As a preliminary step, the tariffs will be reduced 50 percent by the end of this week.

The United States had refused to honor a condition of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement that allowed Mexican trucks to carry shipments across the border to a final destination. Regulations instead required those trucks to unload shortly after crossing the border. After more than a decade of waiting and negotiating, Mexico retaliated by imposing tariffs in 2009.

In March, President Obama and the Mexican president, Felipe Calderón, agreed on a preliminary framework for compromise. Under the terms of the final deal, signed by their transportation secretaries, both sides agreed to drop their barriers for a trial period of three years.

The deal furthers the Obama administration's goal of expanding foreign trade to support domestic growth, but it was signed quietly, with little advance notice. The White House declined to comment, referring questions to the Transportation Department, which described it as "a win for trade."

**“We will create jobs and opportunity for our people and support economic development in both nations,” the transportation secretary, Ray LaHood, said in a statement.**

**The reaction was much louder outside the administration.**

**Business groups immediately hailed the deal, which will reduce the cost of moving goods across the border. Under current rules, a single shipment between the two countries often requires three trucks, including a short trip on a class of trucks that specializes in shuttling across the border.**

**“If we’re going to boost U.S. exports and create jobs here at home, we must hold on to our major export markets, such as Mexico,” said Thomas J. Donohue, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce. “Today’s news will help American businesses to do just that.”**

**Opponents said they would seek to stop the deal from being carried out.**

**Three congressmen, two Democrats and a Republican, said Wednesday that they were introducing legislation to block the financing the government needs to supervise Mexican trucks.**

**“As we debate deep and harsh cuts to programs that help middle-class families, it is outrageous that taxpayers are being told to foot the bill for the Mexican trucking industry to comply with American safety standards,” said Representative Peter DeFazio, a Democrat from Oregon.**

**A trade group for drivers who own their trucks, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, filed a petition on Wednesday with the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit requesting a review of the deal’s legality.**

**“This program will jeopardize the livelihoods of tens of thousands of U.S.-based small-business truckers and professional truck drivers and undermine the standard of living for the rest of the driver community,” said Todd Spencer, the group’s executive vice president.**

**The free trade agreement among Canada, Mexico and the United States, known as Nafta, made clear**

that trucks could cross the border. But in 1995 the Clinton administration closed the southern gates, citing concerns about safety.

Mexico won a 2001 ruling allowing it to impose retaliatory tariffs, but it chose to keep talking with the Bush administration, resulting in a 2007 agreement on a similar pilot program.

Two years later, Congress cut off the financing, and Mexico responded with tariffs.

Under the new deal, Mexican truckers can begin to apply for permits on Thursday. American officials estimate that the first trucks could roll across the border next month.

Like foreign airlines, Mexican truckers will be allowed to carry goods to and from destinations in the United States but not within the country. They must comply with American safety standards, and are subject to additional safeguards including electronic monitoring to ensure that they take regular breaks from driving. They also must pass drug screening and demonstrate an ability to speak English.

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

***Correction: July 8, 2011***

*A capsule summary on Thursday about an agreement between the United States and Mexico to let Mexican truckers deliver goods north of the border misstated the action Mexico will take in return. As the article correctly reported, it will lift tariffs on \$2.3 billion in U.S. goods; it will not lift \$2.3 billion in tariffs.*



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