

US, Chinese presidents hold two-day discussion in California

Joseph Santolan
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US President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping met Friday in southern California for the first of two days of informal talks. This is the first meeting between the two leaders since Xi was appointed head of the Chinese state in March.

The initial meeting between Obama and Xi had originally been scheduled for September. Rapidly escalating US-China tensions and the desire in Washington to ratchet up the pressure on Xi over allegations of Chinese cyber-warfare and Beijing's relations with North Korea led to arrangements being made for an earlier June 7–8 summit.

There is clear concern within sections of the US foreign policy establishment that the drive towards conflict with Beijing is nearing a possible point of no return. The Obama administration's "pivot to Asia"—the calculated tightening of a noose around China through US basing deals, military exercises, shows of force, and diplomatic machinations—has turned the Asia-Pacific into a simmering cauldron of regional conflicts.

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, speaking about the Obama-Xi summit at the Asia Forum on Tuesday, said: "We are in a situation that we have a common set of problems. If we don't solve them jointly, the whole world will be divided in every part between people who have been pressed to join one model or another. That will be a disaster for the two countries and for the world."

Far from preparing to ease tensions with China, on the eve of the summit, Obama made clear he will maintain US economic and strategic pressure. He publicly declared that Beijing would have to comply with an "economic order where nations are playing by the same rules"—coded language for the Chinese leadership accepting US currency manipulation and

further opening up its economy to US corporations.

The Obama administration has made clear that the first item on its agenda for discussion with Xi was the Pentagon's allegations of systematic hacking by the Chinese government and People's Liberation Army (PLA) of US government and military facilities, as well as of American corporations. This topic was chosen by the White House months in advance as a pretext to press Beijing for major economic and strategic concessions.

Washington has not produced any evidence substantiating its allegations of hacking by the Chinese government. Nevertheless, an unnamed White House official told United International Press on Tuesday that Obama would demand Xi take the blame for cyber attacks, because "no matter who is responsible, countries have to take responsibility for what emanates from inside their borders."

Obama's unsubstantiated accusations of Chinese cyber-espionage reek of hypocrisy. The world of cyber-espionage, targeted malware attacks, and online surveillance has its center in Washington. US authorities have repeatedly carried out cyber-attacks against countries that failed to follow its line, including helping design and deploy the Stuxnet computer worm to attack Iran's nuclear facilities.

What is more, revelations over the past weeks have shown that the US government has wiretapped the Associated Press, collected the phone records of tens millions of Americans, and tapped directly into the central servers of Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, Paltalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube and Apple to collect personal user data. Unsubstantiated US allegations of cybercrimes against China pale before this onslaught.

On the same day as Obama's first meeting with Xi, the *Guardian* published a leaked top secret presidential

directive, dated October of last year, in which Obama tasked senior national security and intelligence officials with creating “a list of potential overseas targets for US cyber-attacks.”

These attacks were intended to advance “US national objectives around the world.” The directive stated: “The secretary of defense, the DNI [Director of National Intelligence], and the director of the CIA ... shall prepare for approval by the president through the National Security Advisor a plan that identifies potential systems, processes and infrastructure against which the United States should establish and maintain OCEO [Offensive Cyber Effects Operations] capabilities.”

These were to be pre-emptive attacks against foreign countries. The launching of a domestic cyber-attack would require the authorization of the president, except in the case of an “emergency.”

Another front on which Obama seeks to pressure Xi is its relations with North Korea. Washington has relied upon the predictable bluster of North Korea as a pretext for escalating its “pivot to Asia.”

Following a playbook set months in advance, Washington deliberately provoked both Pyongyang and Beijing by conducting practice bombing runs with nuclear-capable B-52 and B-2 bombers in March. When North Korea responded with threats to launch a missile, Washington seized upon this to increase its military presence in the region, expand its anti-ballistic missile shield system, and press Beijing to break economic and political ties with Pyongyang. China has long relied upon North Korea as a buffer state between itself and South Korea, a key US ally in the region.

With Washington seizing upon the volatile North Korean regime’s rhetoric as a pretext to escalate its military presence in East Asia, sections of the leadership in Beijing have moved to distance themselves from Pyongyang. They cut off financial ties with North Korea’s largest foreign exchange bank and leaked contingency plans for the replacement of Kim Jong-Un to the German press.

Fearing that Beijing would bow to pressure from Washington, Pyongyang made arrangements with Seoul on Thursday to resume talks between the two countries and to reopen the hotline which was shut down during the March stand-off.

At the California summit, the Obama administration

did not miss an opportunity to put military pressure on China. In a calculated threat against Beijing, the Pentagon will be staging joint exercises with Japan in southern California four days after the summit with Xi. These exercises, involving live-fire drills and mine operations, include a series of amphibious assaults on San Clemente Island, which are chosen to resemble the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, over which Japan and China are embroiled in a long-standing naval and diplomatic stand-off.

The Chinese government asked that Washington call off the exercises, but the Obama administration pointedly refused. This decision reflects the highly provocative role being played by US imperialism throughout the region, encouraging Japan and other states to provoke territorial disputes with China.



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