Trump and Pompeo's "big lie"

Andre Damon
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In a modern-day version of the "big lie," the Trump administration is claiming that the COVID-19 pandemic is the product of the deliberate actions of the Chinese government.

On Sunday, President Donald Trump, in a "town hall" with Fox News, accused China of taking actions specifically intended to infect millions of Europeans and Americans.

After repeating the false claim that the novel coronavirus originated in a research laboratory in Wuhan, which he said China tried to cover up, Trump declared: "They didn't stop people going into the USA and all over the world... They said, hey look, this is going to have a huge impact on China, and we might as well let the rest of the world" become infected.

"They allowed this to go into our country, they allowed it to go into other countries," Trump said.

Such claims have been asserted repeatedly in recent days by top administration officials. On Sunday morning, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that there is "enormous evidence" that the virus originated in a Wuhan laboratory, adding, "Remember, China has a history of infecting the world."

In a separate interview Sunday, White House advisor Peter Navarro declared that China "seeded the world with what became the pandemic." He added, "I did write a book in 2006 called *The Coming China Wars*. On page 150, I predicted that the Chinese Communist Party would create a viral pandemic that would kill millions of people worldwide. It is now beyond my wildest nightmare what China has inflicted on the world."

These are brazen and unsubstantiated lies. Neither Trump, Pompeo, Navarro or anyone else has provided a shred of evidence to substantiate their claims.

The method recalls that of Nazi Germany, which collapsed 75 years ago this month. Hitler, who committed suicide on April 30, 1945, amid the rubble of the Third Reich, used it to justify the invasions of Poland and Czechoslovakia and other crimes.

The aim of the "big lie" is to intimidate through its sheer brazenness. According to Wikipedia, it "is a propaganda technique and logical fallacy. The expression was coined by Adolf Hitler, when he dictated his 1925 book *Mein Kampf*, about the use of a lie so 'colossal' that no one would believe that someone 'could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously.'"

Trump's utilization of this method comes at the very point where the American government is abandoning any systematic effort to slow the spread of the pandemic, effectively allowing large sections of the population to become infected.

The Trump administration is seeking to provide itself with an escape hatch. Whatever happens, it is China's fault. Knowing that its program will lead to a rapid and substantial growth of fatalities, the White House is hoping that when the butcher's bill of its disastrous policies comes due, it will be able to direct social tensions outward against China.

These allegations have a definite logic. If the Chinese government deliberately allowed and encouraged the coronavirus to infect the United States and Europe, this would be an act of biological warfare that goes far beyond the terrorist attacks of September 11. It would mean that China had carried out an act of war against the United States.

With unbridled recklessness, in order to justify its own criminal indifference to the lives of millions of people, the Trump administration is setting up a situation that can make military confrontation with China unavoidable.

These claims are undermined even by the findings of Trump's own intelligence agencies. The *New York Times* noted in an article published April 30, "Most intelligence agencies remain skeptical that conclusive

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evidence of a link to a lab can be found, and scientists who have studied the genetics of the coronavirus say that the overwhelming probability is that it leapt from animal to human in a nonlaboratory setting, as was the case with H.I.V., Ebola and SARS."

The administration's lies, however, are facilitated by the media and the political establishment as a whole, which do not expose them as fabrications but rather present them as legitimate positions. Whatever differences they may have, the anti-China campaign serves definite geo-strategic interests and domestic political imperatives supported by the entire ruling class.

In a Sunday editorial, the Democratic Party-aligned *Washington Post* condemned "China's effort to avoid accountability for the novel coronavirus pandemic through a global propaganda campaign." It declared, "The response to such belligerence cannot be appeasement." Last month, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden released an ad attacking Trump for "rolling over" to the Chinese government in relation to the coronavirus.

All variants of the anti-China narrative—the theory that China deliberately created the virus as a bio-weapon, the claim that the virus escaped from a laboratory and the allegations that China concealed knowledge of the disease from the world—are contradicted by publicly available information.

The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission publicly reported a cluster of pneumonia cases on December 31, 2019. China identified the virus that causes COVID-19 on January 7, 2020, and Chinese scientists warned that the disease could be capable of human-to-human transmission.

But it was not until nearly eight weeks after the first public statements by Chinese health officials that any systematic testing for COVID-19 began in the United States. The US had conducted only 1,000 COVID-19 tests by March 4, two months after the first warnings by Chinese officials. China, South Korea and other Asian countries had carried out millions of tests by early February.

Even as the virus was ripping through the United States, Trump, the media and Congress systematically downplayed the significance of the disease. As late as February 28, Trump was still claiming that the coronavirus "is going to disappear" like "a miracle." He condemned those saying that COVID-19 was rapidly spreading throughout the country, declaring, "This is their new hoax."

The Trump administration, acting as the representative of the financial oligarchy, did nothing to protect the population from the pandemic. After utilizing the crisis to orchestrate a massive handout to Wall Street, the ruling class has launched a back-to-work campaign that will cost tens or hundreds of thousands of lives.

The "big lie" against China is both an excuse for its own criminal negligence and an attempt to cover for the criminal policies it is now implementing.

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