

US ramps up COVID-19 propaganda war against China

Peter Symonds

6 May 2020

Confronting widespread public anger over its criminal negligence in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration is intensifying its campaign of unsubstantiated allegations and lies to shift the blame onto China.

As reported by CNN, Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow and other top officials have in recent weeks spoken to many foreign allies in an effort to enlist them in the campaign of denunciations directed against China for allegedly concealing the dangers of the virus.

Trump himself has reportedly spoken with dozens of foreign leaders in a desperate effort to gain their backing for the US vilification of China and its preparations to take retaliatory action against Beijing.

Measures under discussion in the White House include additional tariffs on Chinese products, a further crackdown on its telecommunications corporations and the stripping of its sovereign immunity in order to pave the way for punitive legal action in US courts.

At the same time, the US has ramped up the propaganda war on its two main fronts—firstly, claiming that China was not initially transparent enough about the severity of the coronavirus, and secondly, the brazen lie that the COVID-19 originated in China's Wuhan Institute of Virology, not in a wet market in Wuhan.

A report prepared by the US Department of Homeland Security, details of which were leaked to the US media this week, claims that the Chinese government intentionally hid the dangers posed by the virus while stockpiling imports and reducing exports of medical supplies.

The report declared: “China likely cut its exports of medical supplies prior to its January WHO (World Health Organisation) notification that COVID-19 is a contagion.” It also claimed that “China intentionally concealed its trade activity by publicly denying it has ever imposed an export ban on masks and other medical supplies.”

The Trump administration and its state apparatus are clearly clutching at straws. As the report itself

acknowledged, its findings are only assessed at “moderate confidence.” The document, which has not been made public, did not conclude that there was anything nefarious in the Chinese government’s actions, even if the allegation was true.

It is on the public record that Chinese authorities acted promptly in informing the WHO and health bodies internationally, including in the US, about a new potentially infectious and lethal virus whose characteristics they were rapidly seeking to identify.

The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission reported a cluster of pneumonia cases on December 31, 2019. China informed the US Centres for Disease Control on January 3 and on January 7 identified the virus that causes COVID-19. Chinese health authorities updated the WHO and warned of the dangers of human-to-human transmission of the disease.

The claims about China’s alleged lack of transparency are a blatant attempt to divert attention from the Trump administration, which repeatedly dismissed the danger of the virus, and failed to ramp up testing or take much needed action to prevent transmissions for weeks. No efforts were made to secure the necessary protective gear or increase the availability of vital intensive care beds and ventilators which has led to a soaring death toll in the United States.

In recent days, Trump and Pompeo have repeated the big lie that the virus originated in a Wuhan laboratory. This is despite a large body of scientific evidence that COVID-19 was not man-made or engineered in a laboratory, nor was it captured in the wild and accidentally or deliberately released from a scientific facility.

On Sunday, Pompeo brazenly declared that there was “overwhelming evidence” that COVID-19 came from the Wuhan Institute of Virology. At the same time, he warned: “President Trump is very clear, we’re gonna hold those responsible accountable and we’ll do so on a timeline that is our own.”

On the same day, Trump claimed to have seen evidence that the virus originated in a Chinese laboratory and declared that his administration was putting together a report about

the outbreak that will be “very conclusive.” He declared: “My opinion is they made a mistake. They tried to cover it, they tried to put it out. It’s like a fire.”

Neither Trump nor Pompeo has provided a shred of evidence to support this conspiracy theory which originated in the extreme-right milieu in the United States. The report being concocted in the White House will set the stage for a rapid escalation of the confrontation with China. It is necessary to recall the notorious US dossier presented to the UN to justify the illegal invasion of Iraq on the basis of lies about weapons of mass destruction.

Likewise, calls for an independent international inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 being championed by the Australian government on behalf of the Trump administration echo the incessant US demands in 2002 for weapons inspectors to be allowed into Iraq. Washington’s calls for US health officials to be allowed into China are nothing more than a fishing expedition aimed at bolstering their lies.

Even the US intelligence community, in a statement released last week, assessed that the coronavirus was not man-made and had not been genetically modified. The statement indicated that US intelligence was still trying to dredge up “evidence” that it might have been accidentally released from a laboratory.

However, the top-level intelligence-sharing Five-Eyes network involving close US allies—Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand—has gone further, declaring that it was “highly unlikely” that the virus was accidentally released from a laboratory and affirming that it probably originated in a Chinese market.

An unnamed Western diplomat with knowledge of the Five-Eyes intelligence told CNN: “We think it’s highly unlikely it was an accident. It is highly likely it was naturally occurring and that the human infection was from natural human and animal interaction.”

Some of the most damning statements have come from top US virology scientists who have dismissed the claims of the Trump administration.

In an interview with *National Geographic* published on Monday, Dr. Anthony Fauci explained: “The best evidence shows the virus behind the pandemic was not made in a lab in China. Everything about the stepwise evolution over time strongly indicates that [this virus] evolved in nature and then jumped species.”

Fauci, who is director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a prominent member of Trump’s coronavirus task force, added that he did not believe the theory that someone discovered coronavirus in the wild, brought it to a lab and then accidentally released it.

The coordinator of the coronavirus task force, Dr. Deborah

Birx, has also dismissed the claims of Trump and Pompeo. She told CBS News on Sunday that evidence was lacking to prove the coronavirus originated in an accident at the Wuhan laboratory.

China has hit back at the mounting US attacks on its response to the pandemic. On Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang accused “American politicians” of telling barefaced lies. “They have only one objective: to try to shirk responsibility for their own epidemic and prevention and control measures and divert public attention,” he said.

It is certainly true that the US propaganda war against China is aimed at diverting from and covering-up their own responsibility for the death of tens of thousands in the United States. At the same time, however, making Beijing a scapegoat is part of the confrontation that began under President Obama and has accelerated under Trump to undermine China which is regarded in Washington as the chief threat to US global dominance. The fear in American strategic circles is that China will emerge from the pandemic strengthened as compared to the US.

According to Reuters, a report prepared last month by the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) warned that Beijing faces a wave of anti-China sentiment led by the US in the aftermath of the pandemic and called for preparations to be made. In a worst-case scenario, it envisaged the possibility of an armed confrontation between the two global powers. The think tank is affiliated with China’s Ministry of State Security and the report was distributed to top Chinese leaders including President Xi Jinping.

Far from the pandemic encouraging international cooperation to stem its spread and save lives, the deep crisis of capitalism that it has exposed is accelerating geo-political tensions and the war drive of US imperialism as it seeks to shore up its strategic interests.



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