

Trump calls for a delay in summit with Chinese president

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In another sign that the US-Israeli war on Iran is not working out as he planned, US President Trump has called for a delay in his planned summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing at the end of March. “Because of the war I want to be here, I have to be here, I feel. And so we’ve requested that we delay it a month or so,” Trump told the media at the White House on Monday.

The summit was scheduled after Trump’s meeting with Xi in South Korea last October produced nothing more than a temporary truce in the escalating economic war that the US president had initiated. Just prior to that meeting, Trump provocatively expanded bans on the export of advanced semi-conductors to China, to which Beijing responded with crippling restrictions on rare earth exports to the US. The truce temporarily averted the economic warfare spinning out of control.

In the intervening months, the Trump administration has conducted flagrantly illegal military operations, firstly against Venezuela and now Iran—two countries with which China has had close economic and strategic ties. Prior to those attacks, both countries had been hit hard by sanctions, above all those unilaterally imposed by US imperialism, which China refused to recognise. It had gained access to discounted oil imports from both Venezuela and Iran.

The abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3, the reduction of the country to a US neo-colony and Washington’s control of its oil industry effectively cut off its exports of discounted oil to China. Many considerations undoubtedly went into the timing of the Trump administration’s decision to attack Iran on February 28 but the upcoming summit with the Chinese president was obviously a significant one.

Having notched up triumphs over Venezuela and

Iran, the gangsters in the White House felt the US would be in a strong position to make China an offer it could not refuse. But the plans have quickly gone awry. The criminal assassination of top Iranian leaders has not brought the country to its knees and no US puppet regime has been installed in Iran. Moreover, what Trump apparently did not foresee was that Iran would retaliate by closing the narrow Strait of Hormuz, through which some 20 percent of global daily seaborne oil passes.

As global oil prices have soared, compounding the economic and political crises for the White House, Trump on Saturday called on a number of US allies in Europe and Asia to dispatch naval forces to open up the Strait of Hormuz. The failure of Britain, France, Germany, Japan and other countries to offer immediate assistance only intensified the difficulties facing Trump in a war which he had claimed repeatedly is all but over, but nevertheless continues unabatedly in its third week.

Prior to last weekend, the White House gave no indication that it was going to propose a delay in the Trump-Xi summit. In fact, meetings took place in Paris on Sunday and Monday led by US Treasury Secretary ?Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng over possible trade agreements to be signed when the two leaders met. Despite being described as “very good” by Bessent, the talks wrapped up without resolution of the key issues of critical minerals and semi-conductors.

In an interview with the *Financial Times* on Sunday, Trump gave the first hint saying he “may delay the summit with Xi,” but also made the suggestion that Beijing should send warships to open up the Strait of Hormuz. “I think China should help too because China gets 90 percent of its oil from the straits.” The figure

itself is a gross overstatement—around 45-50 percent of China’s oil imports pass through the strait.

Appearing to link the summit to the deployment of Chinese warships to the Persian Gulf is deliberately provocative. For more than a fortnight Israeli and American warplanes and missiles have been bombarding military and industrial sites in Iran, assassinating Iranian leaders and killing civilians, including schoolchildren. Though not a formal ally, China signed a 25-year, \$400 billion strategy partnership in 2021 to invest in Iranian infrastructure and industry, particularly energy. And now Washington is declaring that Beijing should, under the guise of opening the Strait of Hormuz, assist the US in its efforts to subordinate Iran and the wider Middle East to its interests.

Bessent quickly walked back Trump’s suggestion telling the media that the US call for a delay in the summit was not because of “a false narrative” that it was “because the president demanded that China police the strait of Hormuz.” On Tuesday, Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Lin Jian simply noted that “the US side has publicly clarified these false reports by the media” and blandly declared that talks were continuing over the timing of Trump’s visit.

In line with its overall stance towards the US-led war on Iran, the official Chinese response to the delay and the US request for naval support has been decidedly muted. The state-owned media, however, has given an indication of the top-level discussion behind closed doors. Commenting on the call for Chinese warships, the hawkish *Global Times* declared: “Is this really about ‘sharing responsibility’—or is it about sharing the risk of a war that Washington started and can’t finish?”

Far from supporting Iran, Beijing has postured as “neutral”—in effect, equating the US and Israel’s barbaric acts of aggression with Iranian retaliatory strikes on Gulf States that host military bases used by the US to bombard Iran. It has repeatedly called for a ceasefire, deescalation throughout the region and a return to a negotiating table that the US has now twice used to mask its preparations for war.

Beijing is clearly more concerned about cutting a rotten deal with the United States that preserves Chinese economic and strategic interests than even timidly condemning the naked aggression of US

imperialism. Speaking to the media on March 8 during China’s annual meeting of the National People’s Congress, Foreign Minister Wang Yi made no suggestion that Trump’s trip to China would not go ahead.

While offering platitudes—the war on Iran “should never have happened” and “the world cannot return to the law of the jungle”—Wang painted a bright future for relations with the United States. He said that 2026 was a “big year for China-US relations” and that the two sides should “treat each other with sincerity and good faith.”

When and if the Xi-Trump summit will proceed remains unclear. No date has been set. Trump’s suggestion of a delay of a “month or so” is premised on a quick US victory in the war on Iran. But as the days drag on, that outcome is less and less likely.



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