
'We'll cut off the whole relationship' – Trump throws some signature shade at China in new interview

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President Donald Trump has savaged the Chinese government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. His threat to “cut off the whole relationship” with China is consistent with a new, hard line being pushed by his administration.

"I'm very disappointed in China," Trump said during an interview with Fox Business Network on Thursday. *"We asked to go over and they said no,"* he continued, referring to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's February offer of assistance to the virus-stricken city of Wuhan.

"They didn't want our help. And I figured that was OK because they must know what they are doing. So it was either stupidity, incompetence or deliberate."

When asked what action he'd take against China, Trump replied: *"There are many things we could do. We could cut off the whole relationship."* Citing the US' trade deficit with China, Trump said that severing diplomatic ties with Beijing would *"save \$500 billion."*

The Republican party is banking on blaming China for the coronavirus outbreak. According to a [strategy memo](#) circulated last month, GOP campaigns across the US should *"attack China,"* and paint their Democratic rivals as *"soft"* on the East Asian superpower. As such, Trump's messaging is perfectly on brand, and reminiscent of his frequent attacks on China during his 2016 campaign.

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However, two days before the president spoke on Fox, Chinese importers purchased nearly 250,000 tons of US soybeans, under the terms of a Phase One trade deal signed in January. Per the deal, China pledged to buy at least \$200 billion in US goods over the next two years, in exchange for a relaxation of tariffs on Chinese exports to the US. When the deal was signed, Trump [touted](#) these purchase commitments as *"a solid win for our farmers and*

manufacturers.”

With Chinese officials reportedly considering scrapping the deal and negotiating a new one, Trump reiterated on Thursday that he would not renegotiate the agreement.

The relationship, while rocky, still stands for the time being.

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But Trump's latest statement is just one of many signs that tensions between Washington and Beijing may not simmer down for some time yet. A bill introduced by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham this week would demand China comply with US and international investigations into the origin of the coronavirus, and would authorize sanctions if Beijing refused. That's on top of a number of lawsuits against China filed by Republican lawmakers and attorneys general.

Additionally, the Trump administration this week cut investment ties between federal retirement funds and Chinese equities, calling US involvement in Chinese stocks a national security risk.

On the diplomatic front, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has insisted that the US has “*significant evidence*” the virus originated in a Wuhan laboratory. Pompeo has not provided the “*enormous evidence*” he claims to possess, but Trump is at least entertaining the theory.

"We have a lot of information, and it's not good. Whether it came from the lab or came from the bats, it all came from China, and they should have stopped it. They could have stopped it, at the source," he said during the Fox interview.

China, for its part, has rejected the hardline rhetoric coming from Washington. Responding to the Republican lawsuits, the Global Times [warned](#) on Thursday that Beijing will retaliate with “*countermeasures that could make them feel the pain.*”
