

Blaming China, Trump says COVID-19 “attack” worse than Pearl Harbor and 9/11

By Nick Beams
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US President Trump has escalated his propaganda war against China over the COVID-19 pandemic at the White House yesterday afternoon in remarks the logic of which is a military conflict.

Trump said the pandemic was the “worst attack” in US history. “This is worse than Pearl Harbor. This is the worse than the World Trade Center. There’s never been an attack like this. And it should never have happened. It could have been stopped at the source. It could have been stopped in China.”

There is a definite meaning to this outburst. The bombing of Pearl Harbor, labelled as a “sneak attack,” led to the entry of the US into World War II and the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center to war on Afghanistan, followed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003 based on the lie it had “weapons of mass destruction.”

The continued use of the word “attack” by Trump feeds into the bogus claims by extreme right-wing and fascist forces, both within and outside his administration, that the coronavirus was either created in or escaped from a virology laboratory in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

Trump’s Secretary of State Mike Pompeo continues to push the Big Lie that the virus originated in a virology lab, despite the research by scientists that it was not manmade but evolved from animals and then mutated and spread to humans in a wet market in Wuhan.

Another variant of the claim that the pandemic is the result of an “attack” by China is the assertion in a report by the US Department of Homeland Security, details of which were leaked this week, that the Chinese government intentionally hid the dangers posed by the virus while stockpiling its own medical supplies.

The continuing escalation of the propaganda war

against China has two purposes—to deflect criticism of the Trump administration and its policy of “malign neglect” after it was informed by China of the virus and its dangers on January 3, and to condition the American public for possible military action against China, potentially leading to a full-scale war, in pursuit of its geopolitical objectives.

The war rhetoric is being intensified because the administration knows that its return-to-work policy is going to result in tens of thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands, more deaths in the US in the coming days, weeks and months.

On Sunday night, amid the drive to “open up” the economy, Trump stated that he now expected US deaths to rise from his previous estimate of around 60,000 to 100,000.

“I used to say 65,000, and now I’m saying 80 or 90. And it goes up rapidly.” Later he said the death toll could be “anywhere from 75, 80 to 100,000 people.”

The latest threat against China comes amid a stepping up of war rhetoric this week. On Monday, the former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a political ally of Trump, said it was necessary for people to “sacrifice” their lives by going back to work, and this was necessary to “stand up for the American way of life.”

In a reference to World War I and World War II, he said the American people had gone through “significant death before” and survived it. When asked if they would accept the loss of 3,000 lives a day, as estimated in a report by the Centers for Disease Control, Christie said, “They’re gonna have to.”

In another invocation of war, Trump said on Tuesday that the American people were “warriors.”

The great cause for which the population is being called on to “sacrifice” is the profit interests of Wall Street and the corporate oligarchy.

They are demanding a return to work, no matter how many deaths it causes, so that the process of extracting surplus value from the working class can be resumed, with even greater intensity than in the past, in order to pump value into the trillions of digitally created dollars that now form the basis of the US stock market and the entire financial system.

The invocation of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 was made after Trump reversed his decision on Tuesday to wind up the coronavirus task force because of the “tremendous progress we have made as a country.”

Fearing this revealed too openly the drive of the administration and that he needed some cover for its death policies, Trump said the task force was “appreciated by the public” and it would continue indefinitely “with its focus on safety and opening our country again.”

But significantly he noted that we “may add or subtract people to it, as appropriate.” This is a thinly-veiled threat that anyone voicing criticism of the back-to-work drive on safety grounds or who continues to oppose the lie that it originated in a Wuhan lab will be removed.

The administration is also using the pandemic to intensify its attack on China in pursuit of its geopolitical objective of maintaining US imperialism’s dominance.

This offensive began long before COVID-19 appeared on the scene. At the end of 2017, a US National Security assessment declared that the focus of policy was no longer the “war on terror” but the era of “great power” conflict.

In line with this assessment, in May 2018, the Trump administration unveiled its series of demands on China that it scrap plans for industrial and technological development, deeming them to be a threat both to the economic and military position of the US, and demanded it adopt a subservient position within a US-dominated geoeconomic and geopolitical order.

This led to an escalating trade war in 2018-19 in which a partial truce was reached in January this year with the signing of a “phase one” trade deal.

Since then, however, the economic warfare against China has increased, not lessened. Yesterday the *Wall Street Journal* reported that an analysis of the administration’s policies showed “nearly every cabinet level official either has adopted adversarial positions or

jettisoned past cooperative programs with Beijing.”

The administration is also considering ways of invoking tariffs and other sanctions against China in order to punish it economically in line with the claim that it is responsible for the coronavirus pandemic. Coupled with the drive to have major US corporations pull back their global operations and relocate them within the North American continent, this is another indication of the deepening war drive.

There have also been proposals that the US should repudiate payments of the interest on Chinese holdings of US Treasury bonds, if not the entire debt, currently standing at more than \$1 trillion, because rather than the US paying China money, it should be recompensing the US for the damage it has caused.

South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsay Graham is one advocate for such measures. Trump has so far rejected the suggestion on the grounds it would weaken the position of the dollar as the global currency. But the fact that it has even been raised points to the extent and depth of the frenzied anti-China drive within US ruling circles.

Sections of the Republican Party are advocating that Trump make the focus of his reelection bid an anti-China campaign, which would certainly be matched if not exceeded by the Democrats.

Trump’s latest remarks serve to delineate even more clearly the situation facing American workers: A class war launched against them on behalf of Wall Street, threatening their very right to life itself, together with the danger of a war against China, potentially with nuclear consequences, as crisis-ridden US imperialism strives to maintain its global dominance by all means it considers necessary.

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