

Trump delivers anti-China tirade to United Nations

By Bill Van Auken
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US President Donald Trump's recorded speech delivered to the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly Tuesday consisted of a hysterical anti-Chinese rant combined with a lying coverup of the disastrous US response to the COVID-19 pandemic and boasting about the prowess of the American military and its ability to blow up the world.

The unprecedented character of the session, which is being held almost entirely virtually, with world heads of state having sent in recorded remarks rather than making speeches from the assembly's green marble rostrum, is a graphic expression of the impact of the global pandemic, with nearly one million deaths recorded worldwide.

The assembly marked the 75th anniversary of the UN, which was formed after the end of the Second World War and its slaughter of more than 70 million human beings with the pledge of saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

The body's organic incapacity to make good on this promise under the existing capitalist order has been made abundantly clear over the course of its three-quarters-of-a-century existence. It directly participated in the US war that claimed the lives of two million Koreans, was incapable of preventing Washington's war against Vietnam that killed three million and has facilitated three decades of uninterrupted US wars in the Middle East that have killed millions more, while creating the greatest refugee crisis since World War II.

Trump's speech and US actions in recent days have confirmed once again that the ravages of the coronavirus have done nothing to curb the drive toward imperialist war, but on the contrary have only accelerated it.

While the allotted time for speeches from heads of state to the General Assembly is 15 minutes—and most traditionally substantially exceed this limit—Trump's speech clocked in at barely seven minutes. Nonetheless,

he managed to mention China no less than 12 times, beginning in his first few words with the description of the global pandemic as the "China virus."

He went on to demand twice in his brief address that China be "held accountable," while blaming the country for lying about the coronavirus, subverting the World Health Organization, polluting the environment, over-fishing and destroying "vast swaths of coral reef."

With the recorded US death toll from COVID-19 having passed the 200,000 mark, Trump absurdly claimed that his administration had carried out "the most aggressive mobilization since the Second World War" to combat the virus, even as he was telling a campaign rally the day before that it affects "nobody."

He stated that the US was a "leader in human rights," as protests against police murders continue to erupt across the country. And he asserted that "American prosperity is the bedrock of freedom and security all over the world." For billions across the planet, "American prosperity," by which Trump means the rise of the stock market and the fortunes of the billionaire oligarchy, has come at the cost of brutal oppression, hunger and war.

Trump boasted of the massive resources that have been diverted from pressing social needs in the US to Washington's war machine, stating: "We spent \$2.5 trillion over the last four years on our military. We have the most powerful military anywhere in the world, and it's not even close."

He went on to bluster that "Our weapons are at an advanced level like we've never had before—like frankly, we've never even thought of having before. And I only pray to God that we never have to use them."

The implicit threat of military aggression in Trump's remarks were an expression of the policies being pursued by US imperialism from the South China Sea to the Persian Gulf and the Caribbean.

On the eve of the General Assembly's opening, the

Trump administration announced a new set of sanctions against Iran, a further escalation of its “maximum pressure” campaign that is tantamount to a state of war and has devastated the Iranian economy.

Washington has maintained the pretense that it is unilaterally enforcing the “snapback” of United Nations sanctions that were in effect before the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and the major powers—known as the JCPOA, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—in particular an embargo against conventional arms sales to Tehran. The current 15 member nations of the UN Security Council, with the sole exception of the Dominican Republic, refused to recognize any legal standing for the US to reimpose the sanctions, after it unilaterally abrogated the nuclear agreement in 2018.

At a press conference on Monday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo proclaimed that “Our actions today are a warning that should be heard worldwide,” adding that anyone who “violated” the UN arms embargo that will be lifted next month under the terms of the nuclear accord will “risk sanctions.”

New sanctions were announced against two dozen Iranian officials and entities allegedly associated with the country’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs as well as conventional weapons purchases. Additional sanctions were also thrown in against the government of President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, a country also groaning under a US “maximum pressure” sanctions regime, on the pretext that Venezuela is somehow involved in arms transfers with Iran.

Even as the new sanctions were being unveiled, the Pentagon announced the deployment of the USS Nimitz carrier strike group into the Persian Gulf. The US aircraft carrier, accompanied by two guided-missile cruisers and a guided-missile destroyer, sailed through the strategic Strait of Hormuz last Friday. It marked the first such deployment of a carrier strike group since last November and followed Trump’s threat that any Iranian attack on US forces or interests would be met with a response “1,000 times greater in magnitude.”

In his recorded speech to the UN General Assembly, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani drew a connection between US aggression against Iran and the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. “The footage broadcast to the world concerning the treatment of an African American by the US police is reminiscent of our own experience,” he said “We instantly recognize the feet kneeling on the neck as the feet of arrogance on the neck of independent nations. For decades, the valiant Iranian

nation has paid a similar high price for its quest for freedom and liberation from domination and despotism.”

US aggression against Iran and Venezuela are aimed at rolling back China’s influence in both the energy-rich and strategically vital Middle East, as well as in Latin America, long regarded by US imperialism as its own “backyard.”

This is not merely a policy of the Trump administration, but rather the drive by the whole of the US ruling capitalist oligarchy to offset the decline of US capitalism’s global economic hegemony through a resort to militarism. Trump’s ostensible chief political opponent, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, has repeatedly criticized the Republican president for being too “soft” on both Russia and China.

Trump’s saber-rattling in his recorded speech to the UN must be taken with deadly seriousness. The threat of war is intensified by the need of the capitalist ruling class to divert outward the immense social tensions building up under conditions of the continuing pandemic, mass unemployment and deepening deprivation for tens of millions. An “October surprise” in the form of a new US war aimed at rallying support for Trump or creating the conditions for martial law in the US is a real threat.

The fight against the threat of war cannot be waged within the confines of the electoral contest between the two major capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.

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