

The many times Trump has praised China's handling of the coronavirus pandemic

By [Jennifer Hansler](#), Curt Merrill and Isaac Yee, CNN

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Editor's Note: Editor's Note: This story was published on April 21, 2020. It was updated on May 19 after President Donald Trump wrote to the World Health Organization threatening to permanently withdraw US funding.

(CNN) — President Donald Trump is escalating his threats [against the World Health Organization](#), telling the agency he will permanently pull US funding if it does not "commit to major substantive improvements in the next 30 days."

Trump challenged the WHO to "demonstrate independence from China " in the letter that he posted on Twitter late



In April, Trump repeatedly [criticized the WHO](#) for being "China-centric" and failing to "objectively assess the situation on the ground and to call out China's lack of transparency" as the coronavirus death toll increases globally.

Trump's [heightened rhetoric](#) comes as he and his administration are facing scrutiny over their own handling of the pandemic, with early missteps that included downplaying the threat the virus posed and delays and shortages in coronavirus testing.



Related Article: Trump and Biden launch battle over China that could define 2020 election

Although Trump has recently expressed some displeasure with China, his tough comments of late are a far cry from his past statements on the nation and its leader, Xi Jinping, whom he praised for his transparency and management of the outbreak.

Trump's stance contrasted with those of other senior members of the administration, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who have called out Beijing for its failures to share key information at the outset of the pandemic, hindering the global response and costing lives.

CNN identified at least 37 separate instances where Trump praised China since January, including one as recent as April 1. Here is a timeline of those remarks:

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January 22

CNBC interview

Joe Kerman: Before we get started -- with- we're going talk about the economy and a lot of other things. The CDC has identified a case of coronavirus -- in Washington state. The Wuhan strain of this. If you remember SARS, that affected GDP. Travel-related effects. Do you -- have you been briefed by the CDC?

Trump: I have

Kerman: Are there worries about a pandemic at this point?

Trump: No. Not at all. And we're -- we have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine



maybe the transparency isn't everything that it's going to be. Do you trust that we're going to know everything we need to know from China?

Trump: I do. I do. I have a great relationship with President Xi. We just signed probably the biggest deal ever made. It certainly has the potential to be the biggest deal ever made. And -- it was a very interesting period of time. But we got it done, and -- no, I do. I think the relationship is very, very good.

January 24



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

China has been working very hard to contain the Coronavirus. The United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well. In particular, on behalf of the American People, I want to thank President Xi!

127K 5:18 PM - Jan 24, 2020

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Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

We are in very close communication with China concerning the virus. Very few cases reported in USA, but strongly on watch. We have offered China and President Xi any help that is necessary. Our experts are extraordinary!

119K 10:56 AM - Jan 27, 2020

32.2K people are talking about this



January 29

politics

Washington, DC

LIVE TV



"I think our relationship has never been better. We're very much involved with them, right now, on the virus that's going around. We're working very closely. I spoke to President Xi. We're working very closely with China. And, honestly, I think, as tough as this negotiation was, I think our relationship with China now might be the best it's been in a long, long time."

January 29



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Just received a briefing on the Coronavirus in China from all of our GREAT agencies, who are also working closely with China. We will continue to monitor the ongoing developments. We have the best experts anywhere in the world, and they are on top of it 24/7!



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71.6K 8:06 PM - Jan 29, 2020

26.9K people are talking about this

January 30

Political rally in Des Moines, Iowa

"In fact, maybe, we've never had a better relationship and we're working with them very closely on the coronavirus. We're working with them very, very closely. We only have five people, hopefully, everything's going to be great. They have somewhat of a problem, but hopefully it's all going to be great. But we're working with China. It's just out of hand."



January 30

United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement celebration speech in Warren, Michigan

"We've taken in billions and billions of dollars from China. Billions and billions of dollars from China. And then they agreed to sign the agreement. Now we're working very strongly with China on the coronavirus -- that's a new thing that a lot of people are talking about. Hopefully it won't be as bad as some people think it could be. But we're working very closely with them and with a lot of other people and a lot of other countries. And we think we have it very well under control. We have very little problem in this country at this moment -- five. And those people are all recuperating successfully. But we're working very closely with China and other countries, and we think it's going to have a very good ending for it. So that I can assure you."

January 30

Fox News interview

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48 hours and we are in great shape. China is not in great shape right now, unfortunately. But they're working very hard. We'll see what happens. But we're working very closely with China and other countries.

January 30



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Working closely with China and others on Coronavirus outbreak. Only 5 people in U.S., all in good recovery.

134K 6:04 PM - Jan 30, 2020



February 2

Interview with Fox News

Sean Hannity: Coronavirus. Disney's closed.

Trump: Yeah

Hannity: Movie theaters are closed. Hospitals are being built. I think we're now up to our eighth case in the United States. Um, how concerned are you?

Trump: Well, we pretty much shut it down coming in from China. We have a tremendous relationship with China, which is a very positive thing. Getting along with China, getting along with Russia getting along with these countries --

Hannity: Have you offered the Chinese President help with the coronavirus?

Trump: Oh yeah, no we're offering them tremendous help. We have the best in the world for that. We've done a tremendous job in many other instances also on that even recently. No, no, we've offered China help, but we can't have thousands of people coming in who

may have this problem, the coronavirus. So we're gonna see what

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State of the Union Address

“Protecting Americans' health also means fighting infectious diseases. We are coordinating with the Chinese government and working closely together on the coronavirus outbreak in China. My administration will take all necessary steps to safeguard our citizens from this threat.”

February 7



Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Feb 7, 2020

Just had a long and very good conversation by phone with President Xi of China. He is strong, sharp and powerfully focused on leading the counterattack on the Coronavirus.



LIVE TV



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

....he will be successful, especially as the weather starts to warm & the virus hopefully becomes weaker, and then gone. Great discipline is taking place in China, as President Xi strongly leads what will be a very successful operation. We are working closely with China to help!

52.6K 6:31 AM - Feb 7, 2020

14K people are talking about this

February 7

Press gaggle before boarding Marine One (at the White House)

Q: Are you concerned that China is covering up the full extent of coronavirus?

Trump: No. China is working very hard. Late last night, I had a very good talk with President Xi, and we talked about -- mostly about the coronavirus. They're working really hard, and I think they are doing a very professional job. They're in touch with World -- the World -- World

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economy?

Trump: I think that China will do a very good job.

February 7

Remarks at the North Carolina Opportunity Now Summit in Charlotte, NC

"I just spoke to President Xi last night, and, you know, we're working on the -- the problem, the virus. It's a -- it's a very tough situation. But I think he's going to handle it. I think he's handled it really well. We're helping wherever we can. But we have a great relationship. It's incredible."



Address to the Governors' Business Session at the White House

"And I think they're doing a good job on that, on the virus. I had a long talk with President Xi -- for the people in this room -- two nights ago, and he feels very confident. He feels very confident. And he feels that, again, as I mentioned, by April or during the month of April, the heat, generally speaking, kills this kind of virus. So that would be a good thing."

February 10

Political rally in Manchester, NH

"Last month, we signed a groundbreaking trade agreement with China that will defeat so many of our opponents. The money that's pouring in, people don't even believe it. And by the way, the virus, they're working hard. Looks like by April, you know, in theory, when it gets a little warmer, it miraculously goes away. I hope that's true. But we're doing great in our country. China, I spoke with President Xi, and they're working very, very hard. And I think it's going to all work out fine. Rough stuff, I tell you, rough, rough stuff. But I think it's going to work out good. We only have 11 cases, and they're all getting better."

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coronavirus.

Trump: I did.

Regan: Some concerns that their economy is really going to tank because of this and that that could have a spillover effect here. What's your sense of their transparency right now, whether they're being more accommodating in terms of telling us what's going on and how it affects our economy?

Trump: Well, I think China is very, you know, professionally run in the sense that they have everything under control. I really believe they are going to have it under control fairly soon. You know in April, supposedly, it dies with the hotter weather. And that's a beautiful date to look forward to. But China I can tell you is working very hard. We're working with them. You know, we just sent some of our best people over there. World Health Organization and a lot of them are composed



helping them out. We're in very good shape. We have 22 cases and most of them are getting better very rapidly. I think they'll all be better.

February 13

Geraldo Rivera Interview

Geraldo Rivera: Mr. President, are you worried that the stock market and the big economic boom are in peril because of this coronavirus spreading epidemic and you know China's closing for business, they're not buying cars from Europe right now. They're -- everything -- everybody's in a panic. You've got those poor people stranded on that cruise ship in Japan. Are you worried about this virus affecting, I mean, obviously you're worried about the virus and people getting sick but what about the economy as you know is another victim of the

Trump: Well, we're working on it very closely. I spoke to President Xi two days ago. They're working on it very professionally. It's a problem, we think and we hope, based on all signs that the problem goes away in April because -- which is not too far down the road, because heat kills this virus, we think. Now we're going to find out, Geraldo, but we think, and they are having difficulty in China but they're working very,

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Rivera: Did the Chinese tell the truth about this?

Trump: Well, you never know. I think they want to put the best face on it. So you know, I mean, if somebody -- if you were running it, you'd probably -- you wouldn't want to run out to the world and go crazy and start saying whatever it is because you don't want to create a panic. But, no, I think they've handled it professionally and I think they're extremely capable and I think President Xi is extremely capable and I hope that it's going to be resolved. Again, the April date is very important. But you know this is a big thing. The April date is very, very important because if that's the case, if heat does, in fact, kill that's when it starts getting hot and this virus reacts very poorly to heat and dies. So we'll see what happens.



LIVE TV



“And I spoke with President Xi of China, and he's working very hard on this. It's a tremendous problem. But they're very capable and they'll -- they'll get to it. There's a theory that, in April, when it gets warm -- historically, that has been able to kill the virus. So we don't know yet; we're not sure yet. But that's around the corner, so that'll be a great thing in China and other places.”

February 18

Press gaggle at Joint Base Andrews

Q: Mr. President, are you still satisfied with how President Xi is handling the coronavirus?

Trump: I think President Xi is working very hard. As you know, I spoke with him recently. He's working really hard. It's a tough problem. I think he's going to do -- look, I've seen them build hospitals in a short period of time. I really believe he wants to get that done, and he wants to get it done fast. Yes, I think he's doing it very professionally. We're also working with him and helping him, as of the last few days, as you know.

Q: Some people don't seem to trust the data coming out of China.

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February 25

Press conference in New Delhi

“But in the meantime, we're working with China very much on the virus. We feel that's something. And I have to tell -- I spoke to President Xi the other day. He is so committed to solving that problem. He is -- he is working very hard. He is very capable. The country is very capable. And it snuck up on him, but I think he's going to do well.”

February 26

White House coronavirus briefing

CNN politics

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We had a great talk. He's working very hard, I have to say. He's working very, very hard. And if you can count on the reports coming out of China, that spread has gone down quite a bit. The infection seems to have gone down over the last two days. As opposed to getting larger, it's actually gotten smaller. In one instance where we think we can be — it's somewhat reliable, it seems to have gotten quite a bit smaller.”

...

Q: Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to get to China. At the beginning of this outbreak, the Chinese Communist Party covered it up. That has been — that has been the general consensus of everyone. How can you now legitimately trust President Xi and the Chinese —

Trump: Xi.

Q: — Communist regime? President Xi. And the Chinese Communist regime —

Trump: Took me awhile to figure that one out.

Q: — to be forthcoming and forthright with this pandemic?

Trump: Well, I can tell you this: I speak to him; I had a talk with him recently. And he is working so hard on this problem. He is working so

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advice. we actually have — through world health, we have them over there also. And we have a lot of our people making up that group that went over there.

No, he's working very hard. It would be very easy for me to say, you know — it doesn't matter what I say, really. I can tell you, he is working — I had a long talk with him the other night. He is working really, really hard. He wants it to go away from China and go away fast, and he wants to get back to business as usual.

...

Q: Are you working with China right now?

Trump: Yes.

Q: And specifically, in what areas? Also, do you worry about the —



it's the biggest in history. The relationship with China is a very good one. And I can tell you that, again, President Xi is working really hard. He wants this problem solved. As hard as you can work.

February 27



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Congratulations and thank you to our great Vice President & all of the many professionals doing such a fine job at CDC & all other agencies on the Coronavirus situation. Only a very small number in U.S., & China numbers look to be going down. All countries working well together!

95.9K 10:39 PM - Feb 27, 2020

32.3K people are talking about this

February 29

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Trump: Some measures. We've been in very close contact with China, including myself with President Xi. He very much wanted this to happen. He wanted this to get out and finished and be done. He worked — he's been working very, very hard, I can tell you that. And they're making a lot of progress in China. You probably saw Starbucks are now opened again. You probably saw that — as I mentioned, Tim just came out and he said Apple is back to normal in terms of production in their facilities in China. They've made a lot of progress.

...

Q: Thanks. Thank you very much, President. I'm just wondering what's the communication with China look like right now. And does the experience and lessons coming from China will help the US dealing with the current situation?



— a very big one. And we've been working very closely. They've been talking to our people, we've been talking to their people, having to do with the virus.

No, our relationship with China is very good. Maybe it's closer because of what's happened here, because it was — you know, in a certain way, this can bring the world closer, if you want to know. It can really do that.

March 3

Coronavirus briefing at the NIH

“We made an early decision based on a little bit of luck, I suspect, but that was the original decision on China itself. And China, in all fairness to them, they never blamed us. It was, you know, a tough decision for them, but they fully understood. They were very reasonable about it.”

March 4

Fox interview

“And we're getting along very well with China. We're dealing with

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March 6

Remarks during a tour of the CDC Headquarters in Atlanta

"We're working together with China. We're working together with everybody." ...

"I mean, if we could find something that's beneficial, we want to give it to China like they're going to want to give it to us. China is working very closely with us."

March 13

White House coronavirus briefing



the virus in the United States. And do you see the data China has been sharing with the United States has been helpful?

Trump: I think it has been helpful. We've been working very much with China. I've spoken, as you know, with President Xi. They went through hell, and their numbers are starting to look very good. They're really — they're really looking very good. We're very happy about that. We are sharing data, yes. In fact, we're sharing quite a bit of data, including the fact that some of our pharmaceutical companies are working over there right now with large groups of people.

...

Q: My question is to Mr. President: Are you happy from the Chinese response? What correctly really told you — what really happened those days?

Trump: And as far as President Xi — likewise, he's a friend of mine. I believe that we are dealing in good faith. And we just worked to, as you know, and as I just said — we just worked an incredible deal. A big deal. One of the biggest deals ever made of any kind. Big even by the standards of some of the people here — the deal with China. But I think that they want to get to the bottom of things also.

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Trump: Right. That's true.

Q: — since January.

Trump: That's true.

Q: And the US shuttered its border to travelers from China on February the 2nd. Also, Wuhan has been in lockdown since January the 24th, and this all happened almost two months ago. Why did you say if you could have known earlier? And also, you have been calling coronavirus —

Trump: Well, I have to say this: We have — and I can speak for myself, but I have a very good relationship with China and with President Xi. I have great respect for President Xi. I consider him to be a friend of mine. It's unfortunate that this got out of control. It came from China. It got out of control. Some people are upset. I know — I know President Xi. He loves China. He respects the United States. And I



March 21

White House coronavirus briefing

Q: Since this story keeps popping up, when did you first learn that this was going to be a problem?

Trump: Well, you know, when I learned, I started doing the closings. So, you know, probably around that time. We didn't learn much. I think you're going to ask a little bit about China responsibility. I do think that — again, I have great respect for China. I like China. I think the people of China are incredible. I have a tremendous relationship with President Xi.

I wish they could have told us earlier about what was going on inside. We didn't know about it until it started coming out publicly, but I wish they could have told us earlier about it because we could have come up with a solution.

Tony Fauci and all of the people — the talent that we have — would have loved to have had three or four months of additional time, if you knew what this was going to be happening. They didn't have that time. They read about in the newspapers like everybody else. China

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that they were having a problem. Because they were having a big problem and they knew it, and I wish they could have given us an advanced warning. Because we could have done — we could have had a lot of things — as an example, some of the things that we're talking about, where we order them as quickly as we can. If we had a two- or three-month difference in time, it would have been much better.

Yeah, please.

Q: Can I follow up on that?

Trump: Yeah.

Q: Because, as you were saying, China was extremely secretive about this. Several of your advisors have been warning — have been critical of China. Secretary Pompeo was talking about it yesterday and he



Q: — for quite some time. So, why then, on January 24, did you tweet that “China has been working very hard to contain the coronavirus,” that “the United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well.”

Trump: Because it's true.

Q: Why were you saying that, though?

Trump: Because it's true. China has worked very hard. China has lost thousands and thousands of people.

Q: But you said they weren't transparent, right?

Trump: No, they weren't transparent. They were transparent at that time, but when we saw what happened, they could have been transparent much earlier than they were.

March 22

White House coronavirus briefing

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask about China and President Xi. When was the last time you had a conversation with him?

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President Xi and as much as I respect the country and admire the country — I have great admiration for the country, what they've done in a short period of time. ... But they should have told us about this. And I did ask him whether or not we could send some people, and they didn't want that — out of pride. I think, really, out of pride. They don't want — they don't want us sending people into China, to help them. You know, China is a strong country. They have — they have their scientists and they have their doctors — very smart. A lot of people. And, you know, but I did discuss that about sending our people in. And, they didn't really respond. We went again; they didn't respond. If they went in, they would have been able to tell us — give us a much earlier indication.



Sean Hannity: We know this now as a fact. It's indisputable. They hid it. They lied about it. Mike Pompeo said China is still not being forthcoming, even went further. He also said Russia's not being forthcoming and Iran. We know the conspiracy theory that they've been pushing in -- in China against the United States. I know you -- you've said it different times you get along with President Xi. You have this new -- first part of this trade deal, \$220 billion in two years. What do you -- what are you going to say about him and withholding information and -- and moving forward, why did they lie to us?

Trump: Well, let's go back. First of all, you mentioned Russia, Russia's looking like they're having quite a bit of a problem and people weren't bringing that up with the whole thing with the virus. Iran, we know about that. That's been really, really bad. And we've offered -- offered them assistance. We have the greatest in the world. We have the greatest people at this kind of thing in the world. And with China, they said that some of our soldiers caused the problems. We're saying what soldiers? What are you talking about? It wasn't by him, I don't believe. But nevertheless, it got out there and I started calling it the Chinese virus. And everybody picked it up. And you know, the net

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