

China Warns U.S. Will ‘Pay a Price’ for Boycotting Olympics

(Bloomberg) — China has threatened the U.S. with retaliation against its decision to declare a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympics, warning that ties between the world’s two largest economies may suffer.

“The U.S. is standing opposed to athletes and sports lovers across the world,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Tuesday at a regular press briefing in Beijing. “The Olympics are not a stage for political stances or political manipulation.”

“The U.S. will pay a price for its wrong practices,” he said, without specifying what actions China might take. The U.S. will host the Summer Games in Los Angeles in 2028, though it’s unlikely Beijing would wait that long to respond. Zhao added that China had lodged its complaint with American diplomats.

Washington’s decision not to send officials to the event is largely symbolic considering the COVID-related restrictions they would face in the Asian nation, which has taken a zero-tolerance approach to fighting the pandemic. Still, Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to attend the Olympics, which start Feb. 4.

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White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki cited China’s “ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, and other human rights abuses” as the reasons the U.S. won’t send representatives. China calls allegations about abuses in its far western region “the lie of the century.”

The Canadian and Australian governments are also mulling whether to attend the event. New Zealand said Tuesday it told China in October its officials would not attend, citing a range of factors “mostly to do with COVID.”

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