

# US could cut ties with China over coronavirus, 'save \$500 billion': Trump

The US president has said he does not want to speak to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping and threatened to sever ties with Beijing, as the standoff between the two countries continues.



US President Donald Trump has said he might cut ties with China over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, indicating further deterioration of his relationship with the world's second-largest economy.

Trump has long accused China of concealing the true scale of the outbreak, which first appeared in China's Hubei province in December 2019. The novel coronavirus has killed over 300,000 people worldwide.

In an interview with Fox Business broadcast on Thursday, Trump was asked about how the US might respond to China. "There are many things we could do. We could do things. We could cut off the whole relationship," he said.

"Now, if you did, what would happen? You'd save \$500 billion if you cut off the

whole relationship,” Trump said when interviewed on Wednesday, referring to the annual US imports from China which he refers to as lost money.

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Tensions have been simmering for months between Washington and Beijing over the origins of the coronavirus. China has insisted it has been open and transparent in its approach. “They could have stopped it. They could have stopped it in China where it came from. But it didn’t happen that way,” Trump said.

The US president has repeatedly touted his relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, but on Thursday he said he was in no mood for talks with his counterpart.

“I have a very good relationship (with Xi), but I just — right now I don’t want to speak to him,” Trump said. “I’m very disappointed in China. I will tell you that right now.”

## **US-China trade deal**

Trump also said the pandemic also cast a pall over the US-China trade deal which he had previously hailed as a major achievement.

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“So, I make a great trade deal and now I say this doesn’t feel the same to me. The ink was barely dry, and the plague came over. And it doesn’t feel the same to me,” he said.

In a trade deal signed in January, Beijing had pledged to buy at least \$250 billion in additional US goods and services over two years, while Washington had agreed to roll back tariffs on Chinese goods in stages.

adi/stb (Reuters, AFP)

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