

# Trump, the generals & a phone call to China

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## CLASS WAR COMMENTARY



The Pentagon has been calling the shots in Washington for a long time now.

Gen. Mark Milley is no hero.

He is chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, top general in the Pentagon's monstrous war machine, a global enforcer for Wall Street. Donald Trump gave him that job.

He is, as Gen. Smedley Butler described himself in the 1930s, a "high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. ... a gangster for capitalism."

Now, however, Trump and the right wing of the U.S. ruling class want Gen. Milley's head. They say he should not only resign but be tried for treason.

The hue and cry has spread beyond the usual suspects — Trump and the GOP, Fox, OAN, Newsmax, the National Review and neo-Nazis like Tucker Carlson.

Retired Col. Alexander Vindman says Milley "broke the chain of command" and should be fired. Vindman lost his job at the National Security Council last year for testifying against Trump. He was escorted out of the White House.

USA Today, which endorsed Biden in 2020, has also called on the general to step down.

### **'He talked to the Chinese'**

What is Milley's "cardinal sin" in the eyes of his detractors? "He talked to the Chinese." And they say he did so without consulting Trump or his acting Defense Secretary, retired Special Forces Col. Christopher Miller.

Milley didn't talk to Chinese civilian officials. He phoned his counterpart, Gen. Li Zuocheng, Chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military. Calls between U.S. generals and those of other countries happen often. In fact, since U.S. presidents are pretty much Pentagon figureheads, that is where most real

communication takes place.

But this time Milley did something deemed extraordinary: In a 45-minute conversation, he promised to notify the Chinese general in advance of any planned U.S. military strike.

He made the call on Jan. 8, two days after Trump supporters tried to seize the U.S. Capitol. He had also phoned Gen. Li a few days before the 2020 presidential election.

According to the new book “Peril” by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, Milley feared that Trump would start a war with China in a desperate bid to stay in the White House.

For months the president had been making the insane claim that China manufactured the COVID-19 virus as an act of biological warfare. The Chinese military was on heightened alert.

Milley had also warned Trump forcefully against attacking Iran.

Now if I were Gen. Li, I would not trust any assurances from the Pentagon. But the Trump gang and others in Washington say Milley’s effort to avert a possible military conflagration was “aiding and abetting the enemy.”

USA Today Editor David Mastio wrote, “Such a call would have inevitably cost the lives of American troops tasked with following the orders of the lawful commander in chief. Milley’s effort to thwart the potential demands of an unhinged president became a betrayal of the men and women he commands.”

Milley also told his commanders to notify him of any “unusual” orders from the president. And he promised Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that he would thwart any attempt by the White House to launch a nuclear strike. This supposedly

interfered with the president's "constitutional right" to start a nuclear war.

Milley's critics claim the general violated Article II of the U.S. Constitution, which makes the president commander in chief of the armed forces. They say he challenged civilian control of the military, a cornerstone of U.S. "democracy."

### **Milley and MacArthur**

Some have likened Milley's actions to those of Gen. Douglas MacArthur during the genocidal U.S. war against Korea. That was a bit different. MacArthur wanted to launch a nuclear attack on China. He publicly criticized President Truman for not allowing him to do so. Truman fired him.

Bourgeois historians hold up Truman's act as a sterling assertion of civilian control over the military. But as brilliant U.S. Marxist theoretician Sam Marcy pointed out in his 1980 book "[Generals Over the White House](#)," Truman consulted with the Joint Chiefs of Staff before firing MacArthur. He got their permission to fire him.

In 1977, 26 years after Truman fired MacArthur, Gen. John Singlaub commanded U.S. occupation forces in South Korea. When President Jimmy Carter said he would reduce U.S. forces there, Singlaub criticized him publicly. The general was reassigned. But Carter backed down from his troop withdrawal plans. The Pentagon has been calling the shots in Washington for a long time now.

### **George Floyd rebellion brought down Trump**

The Trump gang are no defenders of the Constitution. They organized an attempted coup against the right of Black people to vote. They wanted the Army to drown last year's Black Lives Matter protests in blood.

That Milley refused is a testament to the power of the people's struggle. He and the other Joint Chiefs surely feared Black and Brown soldiers would rebel and refuse

orders, tearing the armed forces apart from within. That's what happened inside the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. Milley even apologized for standing with Trump on his June 1 walk to St. John's Church while federal agents were attacking protesters in Lafayette Park.

### **Who has the 'right' to start nuclear war**

The Constitution says only Congress has the right to declare war. How is it constitutional for the president to have the power to launch a nuclear war? Yet both Republicans and Democrats have accepted that illegal arrangement since 1945.

For that matter, Congress has not declared war since Dec. 11, 1941. Since the end of World War II, the Pentagon has bombed and/or invaded Korea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Haiti, Libya and Syria. If the generals, including Milley, were defenders of the Constitution, they would have refused to wage these illegal wars.

### **Who 'lost' China ... Korea ... Cuba ... Vietnam ... Iran ... Afghanistan**

The rightwing campaign against Milley must be seen in the context of the global crisis facing the U.S. ruling class, both geopolitical and economic. Major setbacks for the U.S. imperialist ruling class have always set off turmoil in the political and military establishment.

After the victory of the great Chinese Revolution in 1949, President Truman was accused of "losing" China. The ensuing political frenzy led to the rise of Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the "Red Scare." The U.S. defeat in Korea led McCarthy to launch an attack on the military high command itself, leading to his political demise.

The victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the failure of U.S. attempts to overthrow it set off a battle between the Pentagon, the CIA and the White House. It likely led to the Kennedy assassination. The U.S. defeat in Vietnam was followed by

a political crisis that led to President Richard Nixon's resignation. The 1979 Iranian Revolution and the deliberately provoked hostage crisis that followed brought down Jimmy Carter and led to Ronald Reagan's election.

The right wing anti-Milley campaign comes against the background of the U.S. retreat from Afghanistan. The Pentagon's failure there epitomizes the failure of the 20-year "war on terror" to reverse the world situation in Washington and Wall Street's favor politically, militarily or economically. Unlike the previous defeats of the U.S. war machine, it comes at a time of extreme capitalist economic contraction.

### **Shut down the war machine**

What should be the attitude of those who fight for the working class and oppressed, who fight for the end of endless wars and the entire racist, imperialist system?

The issue for us is not who has the power to start a nuclear war. No one should have that power. Not the president, not the generals. China is not our enemy. Neither is Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, Cuba or Venezuela. Our enemies are here, in Washington and in the boardrooms.

Shut down the nuclear arsenal. Disarm the ICBMs, the nuclear submarines, all of it. Close down the military bases, mothball the war fleets, ground the nuclear bombers. Bring the troops and ships home from East Asia, West Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and anywhere else. Stop the flow of arms to the Israeli occupation regime. Stop economic sanctions and CIA "regime change" operations. Get the Pentagon off our backs. Use that money for the people.

