

How the Pentagon waged an anti-vax propaganda war against China

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A nurse holds up a used vial of Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine at a sports complex used as a vaccination area in Marikina City, Metro Manila, Philippines 2 March 2021.

During the Trump administration, China's COVID-19 vaccine, Sinovac, was freely distributed to the Philippines and over 40 other nations across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, marking a significant global health initiative.

A June 14 [Reuters exposé](#) reports that in response, the Pentagon unleashed an anti-vax campaign against China. The campaign, centered in the Philippines, aimed to discredit Chinese vaccines and aid through fake social media accounts impersonating Filipinos, leading the anti-vax propaganda effort.

According to Reuters, the Pentagon's anti-vax campaign involved the use of fake social media accounts posing as Filipinos. These accounts disseminated anti-vaccine propaganda and cast doubt on the safety of Chinese medical supplies, including masks, test kits, and the Sinovac vaccine.

At least 300 of these fake accounts were identified on X, formerly Twitter, spreading the slogan #Chinaangvirus, which translates to "China is the virus" in Tagalog. The accounts posted messages such as "COVID came from China and the VACCINE also came from China, don't trust China!"

The operation expanded beyond Southeast Asia, targeting Central Asia and the Middle East. The Pentagon used fake social media accounts aimed at Muslims to suggest that Chinese vaccines contained pork gelatin and were thus forbidden under Islamic law. This effort was part of a broader U.S. military strategy to undermine China's influence by exploiting local sensitivities and spreading fear about the vaccines. The anti-vaccine campaign was continued by the Biden administration until mid-2021.

The Pentagon's anti-China propaganda campaign was driven by concerns that China's COVID-19 diplomacy, including offers of vaccines and medical supplies, was increasing Beijing's influence in countries like the Philippines. China's diplomatic efforts, including providing vaccines as a "global public good," were seen as a threat

to U.S. geopolitical interests.

The Pentagon was also defending the profit-making of Moderna and Pfizer.

Reuters reports that the campaign's fallout included heightened vaccine hesitancy in the Philippines, where vaccination rates were among the lowest in Southeast Asia.

