

# Chinese security ministry points to real aim of recent US visits

Nick Beams  
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The Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS) has made a highly unusual intervention into political affairs by attacking the underlying aims of four recent visits to Beijing by US government officials.

It came a week after the departure of Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, following earlier visits by the US special envoy for climate, John Kerry, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

In a statement issued on its official WeChat social media account, the MSS said: “Recently, a number of US officials visited China one after another, saying that the Biden administration has no intention to curb China’s development or seek decoupling from China.”

It went on to make clear that the ministry is not under any illusions about the continuation of the US drive against China on both the economic and military fronts. The MSS cited Washington’s recent approvals of arms sales and military financing to Taiwan, moves which are in line with the increasing abandonment by the US of the one China policy which recognises Taiwan as part of China.

Characterising the present diplomatic initiatives by the US towards China as “old wine new bottles,” the MSS statement said: “China will never relax its vigilance because of a few ‘beautiful words’ from the United States.”

It is not possible to ascertain whether the MSS initiated the statements and obtained approval from President Xi Jinping or whether it was the other way around.

Whatever its origins, the statement was intended to make clear that despite statements from Premier Li Qiang, expressing hope that the US would work with China and take steps to develop the bilateral relationship, Beijing is well aware of the underlying US

objectives.

Significantly, the MSS statement went beyond military considerations and referred to the economy saying the US had “openly badmouthed the Chinese economy.”

In a press conference with journalists during her visit, Raimondo said the Chinese economy was “uninvestible.” That followed earlier comments by Biden that because of its growing problems China was a “ticking time bomb.”

The MSS said that both the Trump and Biden administrations had relentlessly escalated decoupling and containment of China.

This is being carried out through the imposition of controls on the export of the highest-grade computer chips and other advanced technology to China on the grounds that this constitutes a threat to US national security.

The US maintains that the controls cover only a narrow range of technologies. But innumerable reports, both by government agencies and strategic think tanks, underline that in US ruling circles the acquisition by China of the technologies needed for the next stage of economic advance, such as artificial intelligence, apart from any military implications, is regarded as a threat to the US.

Raimondo herself made this clear in remarks at a conference in July when she said export controls were “at the red hot centre of how we protect our democracies.”

Even before she left China, Raimondo left no doubt that for all the talk of opening up channels of communication and dialogue with Beijing, the US was not going to make any concessions or compromises in what amounts to escalating economic warfare.

The aim of any talks was not to open the way for

negotiation but simply to let China know how US laws operated and avoid any “miscalculation,” Raimondo said. That was a reference to the fear in Washington that China may retaliate by cutting off supply chains before the US has developed other sources.

Raimondo underscored the central aim of US policy on her return to the US.

Speaking last Sunday, she claimed export controls were not about gaining economic advantage but were aimed at national security.

“We are not going to sell the most sophisticated chips to China that they want for their military capacity,” Raimondo said.

The US, she continued, would continue to sell billions of dollars of chips to China “because the vast majority of chips that are made are not the leading edge, cutting edge that I’m talking about.”

There is no hard and fast line between military-use chips and those used for economic development and the US bans are aimed precisely at preventing the development of the new technologies that the Xi regime considers necessary for the next stage of economic advancement.

Over recent months there has been a significant slowdown in the Chinese economy. There has also been considerable conjecture over why the government has not resorted to economic stimulus measures of the kind it has employed in the past, particularly for the real estate sector which accounts for about a quarter of the Chinese economy directly and indirectly.

The reason is a recognition in ruling circles that such measures will not bring about the same economic development they once did and, moreover, that they will simply add to the accumulation of debt and create the conditions for a financial crisis.

Accordingly, the central economic strategy is the development of high tech in key areas of the economy, but it is exactly this sort of the development that the US is seeking to block, fearing it will undermine its already waning economic supremacy on a global scale.

Outlining China’s economic strategy, an unnamed government official told the *Financial Times* the priority was controlling risks and not trying to boost home sales. They indicated that the growth model had to be adjusted away from property and infrastructure development to consumer services and high-tech manufacturing.

However, this shift requires access to the most advanced chips, which the US is seeking to block.

In its statement, the MSS not only pointed to the real aim of the US visits but fired something of a warning shot.

Following the meeting between Biden and Xi last year at the G20 meeting in Bali, another face-to-face meeting has been mooted for November during the Asia Pacific Cooperation forum in San Francisco. But that may not take place.

“To truly achieve ‘From Bali to San Francisco,’ the United States needs to show sufficient sincerity,” the MSS statement said.



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