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United States

U.S. top general secretly called China over fears Trump could spark war - report

Reuters

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WASHINGTON, Sept 14 (Reuters) - The top U.S. general secretly called his Chinese counterpart twice over concerns then-President Donald Trump could spark a war with China as his potential election loss loomed and in its aftermath, the Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

U.S. General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called General Li Zuocheng of the People's Liberation Army on Oct. 30, 2020 - four days before the election - and again on Jan. 8, two days after Trump supporters led a deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol, the newspaper reported.

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said.

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The report was based on "Peril," a new book by journalists Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, which they said relied on interviews with 200 sources and is due to be released next week.

Trump, in a statement, cast doubt in the story, calling it "fabricated." He said if the story was true Milley should be tried for treason. "For the record, I never even thought of attacking China," Trump said.

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Milley's office declined to comment.





Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Army General Mark Milley holds a news briefing at Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, U.S., August 18, 2021. REUTERS/Yuri Gripas/File Photo

Republican Senator Marco Rubio called on President Joe Biden, a Democrat, to immediately fire Milley.

"I do not need to tell of you the dangers posed by senior military officers leaking classified information on U.S. military operations, but I will underscore that such subversion undermines the President's ability to negotiate and leverage one of this nation's instruments of national power in his interactions with foreign nations," Rubio said in a letter to Biden.

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Asked about the Washington Post report, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre declined to comment and referred questions to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense Department.

Trump, a Republican, named Milley to the top military post in 2018 but began criticizing him, as well as other appointees and former staffers, after losing the presidential election to Biden in November 2020.

The Washington Post reported that Milley was motivated to contact Beijing the second time in part due to a Jan. 8 call with U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who had asked the general what safeguards were in place to prevent an "unstable president" from launching a nuclear strike.

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"He's crazy. You know he's crazy," Pelosi told Milley, the newspaper reported, citing a transcript of the call.

According to the cited call transcript, the general replied, "I agree with you on everything."

Reporting by Phil Stewart and Susan Heavey; Editing by Bill Berkrot, Howard Goller and Grant McCool

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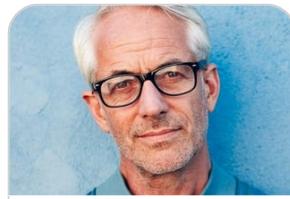
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