



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on April 15, 2026

Trump Treads Lightly on China Amid Suspensions of Weapons Flow to Iran

Is China providing Iran with weapons to use against the United States? President Donald Trump suspects so. And a number of reports also suggest this is happening.

Trump discussed the issue Wednesday during an interview with Fox News' Maria Bartiromo. "I had heard that China is giving weapons to — I mean, you're seeing it all over the place — to Iran," the president [said](#). "I wrote [Chinese President Xi Jinping] a letter asking him not to do that. And he wrote me a letter saying that, essentially, he's not doing that."



Dilok Klaisataporn/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Trump's comment is a bit curious. First, what does he mean by "essentially"? The phrasing suggests a caveat.

CNN Report

CNN published an [article](#) Saturday claiming that anonymous sources familiar with U.S. intelligence assessments told the outlet that China was planning to ship air defense systems weapons to Iran, specifically, "shoulder-fired anti-air missile systems known as MANPADs." And they're supposedly doing it in a way designed to conceal Chinese involvement. The sources said China is "working to route the shipments through third countries to mask their true origin."

China denied the report. An embassy spokesperson told CNN that "China has never provided weapons to any party to the conflict," adding that the "information in question is untrue." The spokesperson also called the reports "baseless allegations" and "sensationalism."

Another puzzling part of Trump's comment to Bartiromo is the "you're seeing it all over the place" part. Was he confirming reports suggesting that Chinese weapons may have been found in the Middle East?

The CNN article suggests Iran may have already used weapons from another country to shoot down American jets. It mentions comments Trump made during an April 6 press conference when he said that "the F-15 fighter jet shot down over Iran last week was hit by a 'handheld shoulder missile, [a] heat-seeking missile,' and Tehran said it had used a 'new' air defense system to hit the jet without providing more details."

More Corroboration

As we [reported](#) last week, the U.S. Defense Department said on its front website Indo-Pacific Defense FORUM that it's looking into whether Iranian missiles that have struck Israel were Chinese. The FORUM [reported](#) that "U.S. experts are determining whether fragments from Iranian missiles recently launched at Israel and toward several Gulf states indicate that the weapons were manufactured with Chinese technology and components."



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And on Wednesday, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) that Iran used a Chinese spy satellite to target American military bases in the Middle East. The *Times* claims to have gotten a glimpse at leaked documents that “show Iranian commanders used the satellite to track key American military installations, capturing high-resolution imagery before and after missile and drone strikes,” [per](#) reports.

The Chinese have also reportedly marketed online and sold intelligence on U.S. military assets in the Middle East. And it’s allegedly camouflaging those sales the same way it’s concealing the transfer of weapons to Iran. In this case, “private” Chinese tech firms are providing the intel. But there is no such thing as a fully private company in China. Tech firms, as all other companies, are under the control of the Chinese Communist Party due to the fascist-style model of quasi-private ownership there.

When it comes to war and vying for power among global superpowers, media misinformation and disinformation are a core element. It’s nearly impossible to fully discern the legitimacy of news articles and intent of the “sources” talking to the media. But a number of undeniable facts render the narrative that China is helping Iran very possibly true.

Chinese/Iranian Alliance

Iran is a Chinese ally — and it has been so since the 1930s, albeit the intensity of their alliance has ebbed and flowed. China is also Iran’s main oil importer, buying 90 percent of Iranian oil exports. Moreover, the two nations have cooperated on and forged a slew of agreements. For years, they’ve conducted joint military drills. And together with Russia, which has openly aided Iran during the war, these three nations have signed pacts in economic, technological, and even military areas, including but not limited to the 2021 Iran-China 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the 2026 Iran-China-Russia Trilateral Strategic Pact, and the 2025 Iran-Russia 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty.

The U.S. government recently [noted](#):

China’s relationship with Iran has evolved over decades from limited cooperation to a broad strategic partnership encompassing economic, diplomatic, and security dimensions, much of which runs directly counter to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. China views Iran as a partner in balancing U.S. influence in the Middle East and seeking to erode the U.S.-led global order, and as a key supplier of discounted energy resources.

Trump’s View of China

The Pentagon views China as America’s most serious long-term strategic rival and military challenge. Nevertheless, the American strategy for dealing with China appears to be far more diplomatic and cautious than the approach carried out against Iran. Trump is set to meet with the Chinese president next month. He told Bartiromo Xi is “somebody I get along with very well,” something he has said repeatedly.

On Wednesday, the president [said](#) on his social media platform that he was opening the Strait of Hormuz for China. The post suggests he wants to keep relations between the two power nations calm: “China is very happy that I am permanently opening the Strait of Hormuz. I am doing it for them, also – And the World. ... They have agreed not to send weapons to Iran. President Xi will give me a big, fat, hug when I get there in a few weeks. We are working together smartly, and very well! Doesn’t that beat



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fighting??? BUT REMEMBER, we are very good at fighting, if we have to – far better than anyone else!!!”

Yes, it certainly beats fighting. Sensible Americans agree. Why didn’t the president take the same approach with Iran?



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