

Chinese consulate in Houston ordered to close by US

written by iaseexam.com | 23/07/2020



The US has ordered China to close its consulate in Houston, Texas, by Friday – a move described as “political provocation” by Beijing. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the decision was taken because China was “stealing” intellectual property.

[China’s foreign ministry condemned the move](#) on Twitter, saying its embassy in Washington had received death threats.

Key Highlights

- Tensions have been rising between the US and China for some time. President Donald Trump’s administration has clashed repeatedly with Beijing over trade and the coronavirus pandemic, as well as China’s imposition of a controversial new security law on Hong Kong.
- The US Department of Justice accused China of sponsoring hackers who had been targeting labs developing COVID-19 vaccines. Two Chinese nationals, who allegedly spied on US research companies and got help from state agents for other thefts, have been charged.
- Mr Pompeo said the Chinese Communist Party was stealing “not just American intellectual property... but European intellectual property too... costing hundreds of thousands of jobs”.
- The consulate is one of five in the US, not counting the embassy in Washington DC. It is unclear why this one was singled out.
- In a separate statement, the State Department accused China of engaging “in massive illegal spying and influence operations”, interfering in “domestic politics” as well as having “coerced our business leaders, threatened families of Chinese Americans residing in China, and more”.
- The closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston comes soon after news emerged of the unsealing of a US indictment against two men accused of spying on US vaccine development

on behalf of China's security services. It is not clear if the two episodes are linked. But it is clear that the Trump administration is determined to step up its very public calling out of Beijing.

- In the midst of a presidential re-election campaign and with the US economy and society battered by the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr Trump has determined that there is political advantage in playing the China card.
- It is hard to see how Beijing can avoid some equivalent response. The danger now is of a spiralling tit-for-tat battle, driven in part by US domestic considerations, which can only make the complex and developing tensions between the US and China even worse.

SOURCE: *BBC News*