

'WAR ON TERROR'

Big Tech made billions: report

AFP, Washington

Tech giants made billions through contracts with the US military and other government agencies during the so-called "war on terror", according to a report released ahead of the 20th anniversary of 9/11.

The "Big Tech Sells War" report, published Thursday by three US campaign groups, documented an explosion of government contracts with Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Twitter since 2004.

The tech companies' contracts were "primarily with agencies central to the War on Terror," said the report.

"From 2004 to today, Big Tech corporations have seen a huge climb in federal demand for their services, particularly from the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security," it said.

The demand from US military and intelligence agencies for cloud computing and GPS software has surged since 2001 as the defense industry has grown increasingly digitized.

The Department of Defense alone has spent \$43.8 billion on Big Tech contracts since 2004, said the report, a collaboration between the Action Center on Race and the Economy and social justice groups LittleSis and MPower Change.

Four of the five top-spending agencies on Big Tech contracts were "central to foreign policy or were established as a direct result of the Global War on Terror", it said.

"Amazon and Microsoft in particular pulled ahead in recent years, with Amazon signing nearly five times and Microsoft signing eight times as many federal contracts and subcontracts in 2019 compared to 2015," the report said.

AFP has reached out to the five Big Tech companies for comment, but has yet to receive a response.

The report pulled its data from Tech Inquiry, an online tool that allows users to explore US government contracts.

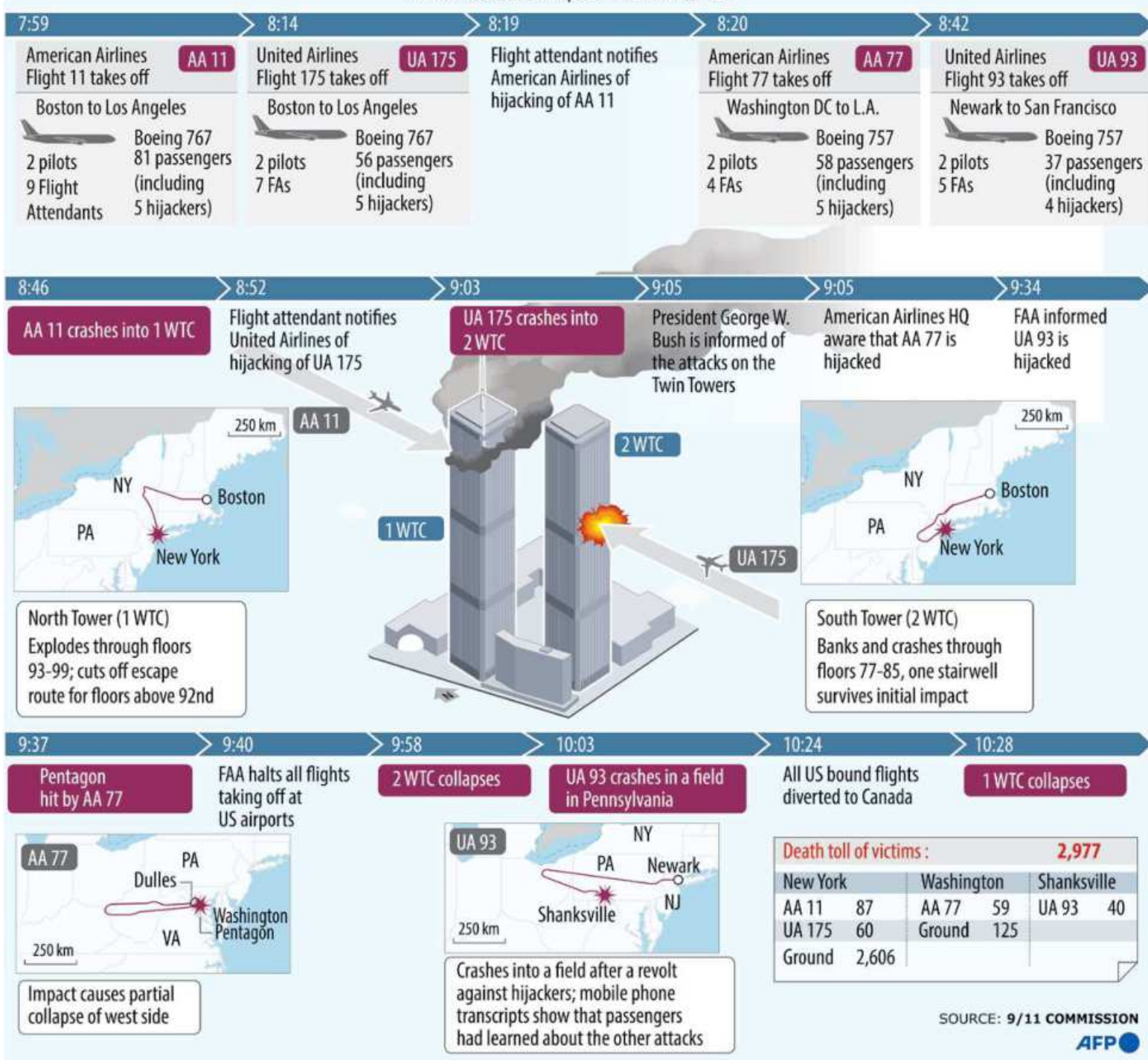
The tool only includes contracts for which information is publicly available, so the figures given in the report are "very likely an underrepresentation", the report said.

Its authors meanwhile criticized a "revolving door" phenomenon between Big Tech and US security agencies with former senior government officials going on to take major roles at technology companies.

The report cited former State Department official Jared Cohen, now at Google, as an example, as well as Amazon's Steve Pandelides -- formerly of the FBI -- and Microsoft's Joseph D. Rozek, who helped found the Department for Homeland Security, as examples.

2001 SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS IN THE US: TIMELINE

149 minutes to the collapse of both twin towers



MI5 chief warns of new terror threats

AFP, London

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has "emboldened" extremists, the head of Britain's domestic intelligence MI5 said yesterday, warning of the likelihood of new atrocities.

Speaking ahead of the 20th anniversary of 9/11, Ken McCallum said MI5 had disrupted six "late-stage" plots even during coronavirus lockdowns over the past 18 months, and 31 in the past four years.

"That number includes mainly Islamist attack plots but also a growing number of attack plots from right-wing terrorists," he told BBC radio.

"Of course there are likely to be terrorist attacks on UK soil on my watch," McCallum said that after al-Qaeda's plane hijackings of September 11, 2001, the threat had evolved with the so-called Islamic State group inspiring followers into extremism online.

He added there was "no doubt that events in Afghanistan will have heartened and emboldened some of those extremists".

The MI5 director-general also reflected on how, 20 years ago, he watched on an office television with colleagues as the second plane hit the World Trade Center in New York.

"Someone else said 'I guess we all know what we're going to be doing for the next 10 years of our lives', and so it proved."

MORE NEWS

Nord Stream 2 pipeline 'fully completed'

Energy giant Gazprom yesterday announced that construction of the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, set to double natural gas supplies from Russia to Germany by bypassing Ukraine, had been completed. Nord Stream 2 has divided European capitals and raised tensions between the bloc and Washington. A key controversy is that it diverts supplies from an existing route through Ukraine and is expected to deprive Europe's ally of annual transit from Russia. Running from Russia's Baltic coast to northeastern Germany, the underwater, 1,200-kilometre pipeline follows the same route as Nord Stream 1, which was completed over a decade ago.

'Quad' leaders to meet in Washington this month

Leaders from the US, Australia, Japan and India are this month expected to hold the first in-person talks of their "Quad" grouping, seen as a counter to China's growing influence, Japanese media said yesterday. The diplomatic group held online leaders' talks in March, and ministers from the four countries have also held in-person discussions. Japan's Kyodo news agency and Yomiuri Shimbun both reported leaders from the four nations were now expected to meet in Washington on September 24, citing unnamed Japanese and US diplomatic sources. Quad is seen as a bid to counterbalance China's growing economic and military reach in the Asia-Pacific region.



Finally, Lebanon gets cabinet

Lebanon yesterday ended a 13-month wait for a new government with the unveiling of a lineup that faces the daunting task of rescuing the country from economic meltdown. Billionaire Najib Mikati, Lebanon's prime minister for the third time, made an emotional statement from the presidency vowing to leave no stone unturned in efforts to save the country from bankruptcy. Mikati unveiled his list of ministers mostly in-line with previous governments. The newcomers include many technocrats but each minister was endorsed by one or several of the factions that have dominated Lebanese politics since the 1975-1990 civil war. On the streets of Beirut, the announcement of a new cabinet seemed to do little to lift the spirits of a population broken by one of the steepest economic declines the world has seen in decades.

Bolsonaro backs off attacks on Brazil's institutions

President Jair Bolsonaro on Thursday backed off his heated attacks on Brazil's federal institutions, insisting that his recent jabs at the Supreme Court just came "in the heat of the moment." Bolsonaro has repeatedly hit out at the high court, which has ordered investigations of him and his inner circle, notably over accusations of systematically spreading fake news from within the government and questioning the electoral process of the country ahead of 2022 polls.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

US-China ties to decide 'destiny of the world'

Says Xi as he holds talks with Biden to avoid conflict

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping talked for the first time in seven months Thursday, with both leaders urging a path away from conflict but holding ground on fierce competition between the superpowers.

In the 90-minute call, Biden warned against misunderstandings that could lead to confrontation between Washington and Beijing, the White House said, while Xi called for a new direction in a relationship beset by "serious difficulties".

US-China relations went into a nosedive under Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, who launched a trade war between the world's number one and two economies and harangued the Chinese government for its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden's administration, while urging multilateralism and an end to Trump's "America first" ideology, has kept trade tariffs in place and remains tough on other contentious areas of the relationship with Beijing, such as cybersecurity and human rights.

During the call, Biden's message was that the United States wants to ensure "we don't have any situation in the future where we veer into unintended conflict," a senior US administration official told reporters.

In Beijing, state broadcaster CCTV reported that the phone call was "candid, in-depth" with Xi noting the "serious difficulties" caused by recent US policy towards China, which has seen the countries joust over trade, tech, human rights and the origins of the coronavirus.

"Whether China and the US can properly handle their relations... is critical for the future and destiny of the world. And this is a question of the century that both countries must answer," state broadcaster CCTV said citing Xi.

The White House signaled the diplomatic impasse is unsustainable and potentially dangerous, requiring intervention by the leaders in

Thursday's call.

"We welcome stiff competition but we don't want that competition to veer into conflict," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told reporters.

The goal of the call was to set out "guardrails" so that the relationship can be "managed responsibly."

Lower level attempts to engage with China have not gone well, especially at an angry March exchange between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and top Chinese officials when they met in Anchorage, Alaska. Faced with the impasse, "President Biden understood the importance of engaging President Xi directly," the official said.

Thursday's call focused on "broad and strategic" issues, with no concrete decisions expected on outstanding issues or setting up a first Biden-Xi

summit, the official said. The list of disagreements between Washington and Beijing is long and growing. Beyond trade, with the White House official complaining of "China's unfair and coercive trade practices," there is deepening tension over China's claims to Taiwan and numerous islands in the South China Sea.

Washington is also angered by what it says is China's refusal to cooperate with an international probe into the origins of the Covid-19 virus, which first emerged in China before sweeping worldwide.

There are areas where the two powers also find themselves having to cooperate or at least coordinate, including on North Korea's nuclear weapons program and the climate crisis.

The White House said that Biden and Xi discussed the Covid pandemic and climate, among other global topics. But Thursday's call was "not about finding some sort of breakthrough agreements," the official said. It was "about keeping the channels of communication open" between the two powers.

"Our goal is, is to really reach a steady state of affairs between the United States and China," the official said.



CLASHES BETWEEN TROOPS, ANTI-JUNTA FORCES

At least 10 killed in restive Myanmar

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar troops killed several members of a local "defence force" in a day of clashes, the junta said yesterday, with local residents and media reporting at least 10 dead.

The country has been in turmoil since a February coup and a military crackdown on dissent that has killed more than 1,000 people, according to a local monitoring group.

Junta troops were attacked with "small arms and homemade guns" as they entered Myin Thar village in the western Magway region on Thursday, army spokesman Zaw Min Tun told state-backed People Media.

The soldiers, who were searching for members of a local "Peoples' Defence Force" had killed a number of fighters, he said, without giving an exact figure.

Soldiers set fire to several houses after the clash, residents said. Local media reported between 10 and 15 locals had been killed.

On Tuesday around a dozen military-owned communications towers were destroyed, the same day a shadow government working to reverse the coup called for a "people's defensive war against the junta." The "National Unity Government" is made up of dissident lawmakers in hiding or exile, many of them from ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's party.



SEPTEMBER 11

1922 - A British mandate was proclaimed in Palestine. It came into effect at the end of the month, despite Arab protests.

2001 - Four hijacked planes crashed into New York's twin World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon in Washington and a field in Pennsylvania killing 2,973 people. The coordinated attack was planned and executed by al-Qaeda.

2012 - US Consulate attacked in Benghazi, Libya with American staff member dying in the clashes.

SOURCE: REUTERS



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Vaccines may not end Covid-19 pandemic

WHO says jabs will help prevent serious illness, but may not produce herd immunity

AFP, Copenhagen

The head of the WHO Europe was pessimistic yesterday about vaccines' ability to put an end to the Covid pandemic, as new variants dash hopes of reaching herd immunity.

Faced with the possibility that the virus may be around for many years, health officials must now "anticipate how to gradually adapt our vaccination strategy," in particular on the question of additional doses, Hans Kluge told reporters. In May, the WHO director had said "the pandemic will be over once we reach 70 per cent minimum coverage in vaccination."

Asked by AFP if that figure was still a target or whether more people would need to be vaccinated, Kluge acknowledged that the situation had changed due to new, more transmissible variants, such as Delta.

"I think it brings us to the point that the aim of a vaccination is first and foremost to prevent more serious disease, and that's mortality," he said.

Epidemiologists now suggest that it is unrealistic that herd immunity can be reached solely with the use of vaccines, though they remain crucial to contain the pandemic.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tenders have published through e-GP Portal.

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package, No. & Date of Publishing	Package Description	Online Tender Last Selling & Closing Date and Time.
1	Tender ID: 602972 Package# MFD/SUFAL/2021-22/GD-01 Publishing Date: September 08, 2021 Time: 14.00 pm.	Supply of Polypropylene bags for Nursery.	Last Selling Date: September 27, 2021 at 16.00 pm. Closing Date and Time: September 28, 2021 at 14:00 pm.
2	Tender ID: 605515 Package# MFD/SUFAL/2021-22/GD-02 Publishing Date: September 08, 2021 Time: 15.00 pm.	Supply of Loamy Soil and Cow dung for Nursery.	Last Selling Date: September 27, 2021 at 16.00 pm. Closing Date and Time: September 28, 2021 at 14:30 pm.

The interested Persons/firms may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender Registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd, +8809609112233,+880176225528,+8801762625529).

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