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Chinese official accuses Washington of 'Cold War' mentality

Officials at China's Communist Party Congress lashed out against the United States last night, accusing Washington of a "Cold War" mentality for claiming that Beijing was involved in cyber espionage.

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In a sign of the ongoing tensions between the two superpowers, Commerce Minister Chen Deming attempted to rubbish allegations that US-based Chinese firms were a potential "Trojan Horse" for Politburo spies.

He was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 18th Party Congress in Beijing, which is ushering in a new generation of Chinese leaders for the next decade. On Saturday the Congress also heard that the Chinese economy was no longer slowing down.

The US House of Representatives's Intelligence Committee warned last month that equipment made by two Chinese electronics giants, Huawei and ZTE, posed a potential security risk because it could be used to eavesdrop on US telecoms networks. As evidence for its concerns, the report pointed out that both companies had Communist Party apparatchiks involved in their management.

Responding, Mr Chen said: "Can you imagine if China started asking U.S. companies coming to China what their relationship was with the Democratic or Republican parties? It would be a mess. If you see me as a Trojan horse, how should I view you?"

America is partly concerned about the relationship between Huawei and its founder, Ren Zhengfei, a former People's Liberation Army officer. He insists the firm is purely commercial, and denies maintaining any links with the country's armed forces.

All Chinese state-owned enterprises and a growing number of private Chinese firms have a Communist Party secretary at the top of their management structure. In most cases, the top management are themselves party members. However, neither Huawei nor ZTE is state-owned.

Mr Chen's broadside came as the Congress was told that China's booming economy was back on track once again, with officials claiming that the recent slowdown in growth had now halted. Gross domestic product was now predicted to exceed 7.5 per cent in 2012, said Zhang Ping, head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

The figures will reassure the country's top policymakers that a long slide in economic growth may be over, and ease fears about diminishing public confidence in the party as they prepare to anoint the Communist Party first secretary, Xi Jinping, as their new president.

Government officials are under pressure to introduce sweeping reforms to stop corruption and even out the gap between rich and poor, which has grown massively in the last decade.