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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; International Economics and Trade; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; China; Russia; United States

AFTER THREE YEARS U.S., CHINA MILITARY TALKS RESUME IN HAWAII

In early April, a contingent of U.S. and PRC military officials, known as the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement working group, met in Honolulu for the first time in three years to improve communications and avoid unwanted conflict. Although no details were made public, one priority topic for the Pentagon is aggressive aerial maneuvers by PLA warplanes close to U.S. and allied aircraft operating in international airspace off China's coast. "We've observed a reduction in unsafe behavior between us and PLA aircraft and vessels over the last several months," said one U.S. military official. The meetings were among the bilateral exchanges Beijing suspended after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's August 2022 visit to Taiwan. Presidents Biden and Xi agreed to resume the talks at their summit in California in November, and discussed them again in a phone call on April 2nd. (*Washington Times*, April 5, 2024)

SECURITY LAPSES LED TO DEADLY SUICIDE ATTACK ON CHINESE ENGINEERS IN PAKISTAN

The committee investigating a suicide attack last month in Bisham, Pakistan, which killed five PRC nationals and their Pakistani driver, has identified multiple security lapses. On March 26th, a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the bus, which was neither bulletproof nor bombproof. The investigators also discovered that the company "that was required to provide bullet and bombproof vehicles to transport Chinese workers failed to meet its contractual obligations." Moreover, local police should have been told about the convoy at least seven days in advance but were not. The committee said its investigation was hampered by a lack of unity of command in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor task force. (*Dawn*, April 8, 2024)

CHINA'S BANKS REJECT PAYMENTS FROM RUSSIAN ELECTRONICS IMPORTERS

Some major Chinese banks have stopped processing payments from Russian importers for components used in products like laptops, servers, and storage devices. Others are using third parties to handle Russian transactions or carrying out extra due diligence to avoid U.S. secondary sanctions. The problem began in December, when Russian traders had difficulties making payments. Last month, Russian firms began receiving letters from their Chinese partners stating that their payments were not being processed. "We are under pressure from secondary sanctions and are working to mitigate their consequences as much as possible," the IT company Fplus told the Russian newspaper *Kommersant*. "Some Chinese banks may consider their risks unacceptably high or compliance too complicated or costly," said Pavel Bazhanov, a Russian lawyer who provides support for Russian businesses in China. (*Newsweek*, April 12, 2024)

CHINA IS "FLOODING THE UK WITH FAKE ROYAL MAIL STAMPS": ROYAL MAIL

China-based suppliers on Amazon, eBay, and on scam websites imitating the Royal Mail site are offering up to a million counterfeit Royal Mail stamps for as little as 4p each. UK Post Office minister Kevin Hollinrake said: "The Royal Mail must do everything possible to prevent counterfeits entering our circulation and must establish where they are coming from and how they are entering our marketplace." Stamps bought directly from the Post Office are unaffected. A spokesman for the PRC Embassy in London called the accusations "absurd." (*Telegraph*, April 10, 2024)

U.S. AND CHINA HOLD TALKS TO DEPORT MORE CHINESE NATIONALS

The U.S. and China are holding talks aimed at increasing the number of PRC nationals deported from the U.S. Beijing has long been uncooperative with U.S. efforts to deport Chinese citizens, a position that has become increasingly problematic as the number of migrants from China illegally crossing from Mexico has skyrocketed from about 2000 in 2022 to more than 24,000 in 2023. China's refusal to accept deportations "may be changing," according to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who also met his counterpart, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong, in Vienna in February. (*NBC*, April 5, 2024)