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Related Categories: Cybersecurity and Cyberwarfare; Democracy and Governance; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; Military Innovation; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Science and Technology; China; Europe; Philippines; Taiwan

XI MEETS WITH FORMER TAIWANESE PRESIDENT

Taiwan's former President, Ma Ying-jeou, has travelled to China again to meet with Xi Jinping. Xi, who called him "Mr. Ma Ying-jeou" rather than "former president," told his visitor that outside interference could not stop the "family reunion" between the two sides. "If there is a war between the two sides, it will be unbearable for the Chinese people," Ma said. After the meeting, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said it had hoped that Ma would have publicly conveyed Taiwan's insistence on maintaining its sovereignty and democratic system, and urged Beijing to resolve its differences with Taipei through peaceful dialogue. (NBC, April 10, 2024)

CHINA SCRAMBLES FIGHTER JETS TO SHADOW U.S. NAVY PLANE

On April 17, the PLA scrambled fighter jets to "monitor and warn" a U.S. Navy P-8A *Poseidon* maritime patrol aircraft that was flying over the Taiwan Strait. Although they take place in international airspace, China regularly questions Washington's "close-in reconnaissance" along China's coastline. "By operating within the Taiwan Strait in accordance with international law, the United States upholds the navigational rights and freedoms of all nations," read a statement from the Navy's Seventh Fleet. "The U.S. military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows." So far this year, the U.S. has conducted two Taiwan Strait transits, while 11 took place last year, and 10 did in 2022. The P-8A is designed for anti-submarine warfare and can carry conventional weapons, including laser-guided anti-ship missiles. (Newsweek, April 17, 2024)

MANILA: CHINA RECRUITING MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE MILITARY FOR ESPIONAGE

Since December, Chinese firms have been recruiting active and former members of the Philippine military for espionage. Philippine information department cybersecurity undersecretary Jeffrey Ian Dy said that, to avert suspicion, the companies disguise themselves as U.S. or European firms offering part-time jobs as "online analysts" to Filipinos linked to the military. "It will require more interagency investigation because in cybercrimes it's very difficult to determine the footprint of these people if they want to hide themselves," Dy said. He urged military personnel to be cautious of firms offering "hundreds of dollars per hour." (The Defense Post, April 9, 2024)

PRC SPIES TARGET DUTCH INDUSTRIES: AMSTERDAM

Over the last year, Chinese spies have broadened the scope, intensity and technical level of their cyber campaigns targeting the semiconductor, aerospace and maritime industries, the Dutch military intelligence agency MIVD said in its annual report. To strengthen China's armed forces, Beijing is collecting western knowledge and technical capabilities. "China wants to be independent from western knowledge and technology [and] build a military that can match any other," the report reads. "To do so, it needs advanced technology it doesn't yet fully possess. It tries to get this abroad, using legal means such as research and investments, but also through its intelligence agencies." MIVD said China continues to target western militaries data on modern weapon systems and operational expertise. "China tries to get hold of technology in the Netherlands in various ways, using a combination of [cyber] espionage, company insiders, acquisitions, circumvention of export restrictions and reverse engineering of technology for which no licenses are required," the agency said. (South China Morning Post, April 18, 2024)

CHINA ESTABLISHES INFORMATION WARFARE UNIT

Xi Jinping has unveiled a new Information Support Force to support "military struggles" in all areas. As Xi handed the force's flag to the unit's leaders – PLA veteran Bi Yi and political commissar Li Wei – he said its formation was a major strategic decision by the Central Military Commission (CMC) to integrate information resources and strengthen information protection. The force will "support military struggles in all directions and fields," and will report to the CMC, which oversees the military. (Reuters, April 19, 2024)