



## China Reform Monitor No. 1369

May 10, 2019 **Joshua Eisenman**

### **U.S.-TAIWAN TALKS TO COUNTER CHINA'S INFLUENCE**

Senior officials from Washington and Taipei will hold talks in September to counter Beijing's growing pressure on Taiwan. Taiwan's Foreign Minister, Joseph Wu, said the Indo-Pacific Democratic Governance Consultations will allow the two sides to "grow closer and more direct in their cooperation to protect regional freedom and legal order." William Brent Christensen, the de facto U.S. ambassador to Taiwan, said: "We believe it's possible to have a good relationship with Taiwan and a good relationship with China at the same time. Things we do with Taiwan should not be regarded as things that we are doing because we are seeking to provoke China or vice versa." Last year, Congress passed a law encouraging more high-level exchanges with Taipei. (Associated Press, March 19, 2019)

### **CHINA'S NAVAL MOVES CAUSE TEMPER TO FLARE IN MANILA**

Large numbers of Chinese vessels are near islands and islets occupied by the Philippines in the disputed South China Sea. From January to March, more than 200 Chinese vessels traversed a disputed area of sandbars named Sandy Cay between a Philippine-occupied island called Pag-asa or Thitu and a man-made Chinese island called Subi. In response, Manila issued a rare public rebuke of China's "illegal presence" and vowed to take "appropriate action." U.S. officials are also taking note of the buildup. The large numbers of Chinese ships near islands and islets are "aggressive and provocative," U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and Southeast Asia Joseph Felter has said. (*Boston Globe*, April 4, 2019; *TIME*, April 5, 2019)

### **F-16 SALES TO TAIWAN ON HOLD WHILE TRUMP SEEKS CHINA TRADE DEAL**

The White House's initial approval of Taiwan's offer to buy 66 Lockheed Martin F-16V fighter jets has been put on hold until a trade deal is inked with China. On February 27, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense applied to buy the fighters upon the recommendation of the U.S. government. The sale, if completed, would be the first time Taiwan has bought F-16s from the U.S. since 1992. But the prospective deal has encountered bureaucratic resistance in Washington, with the State Department calling for an interagency meeting to determine whether the U.S. will also sell Taiwan M1 tanks. The U.S. National Defense Authorization Act stipulates the Secretary of Defense must respond to a request for defense articles within 120 days. Under the Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. is legally required to aid in Taiwan's defense. (Bloomberg, March 30, 2019; *TIME*, April 5, 2019)

### **TAIWAN'S PRESIDENT VISITS HAWAII**

President Tsai Ing-wen has stopped in Hawaii after her eight-day visit to Palau, Nauru and the Marshall Islands — the island nation's Pacific allies. Tsai was greeted at the airport by James Moriarty, chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan, and Stanley Kao, Taiwan's representative to the U.S. She delivered an address to the Heritage Foundation via video link, attended a photo exhibition at the East-West Center marking the 40th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act, and visited the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. (*Focus Taiwan*, March 27, 2019)

### **CHINA CLAMPS DOWN ON FOREIGN WEBSITES**

China has started its most extensive ever blocks on foreign internet sites, including the Australian Broadcasting Corp., the South China Morning Post, Twitter and Google, making them inaccessible even when using a virtual private network (VPN). One U.S.-based VPN provider overwhelmed with subscribers' complaints posted a notice explaining that "current events in China are affecting connectivity: Our engineers are working around the clock to solve it." (*The Australian*, March 4, 2019)