



China Reform Monitor No. 1392 SPECIAL CRM: THE U.S.-CHINA RELATIONSHIP ON THE BRINK

November 12, 2019 Joshua Eisenman

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; China; Iran

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This special issue of the China Reform Monitor is intended as a snapshot into the rapidly deteriorating bilateral relationship between the United States and China.]

U.S. BLACKLISTS CHINESE ENTITIES FOR MISTREATMENT OF MUSLIMS

The Trump administration has added 28 Chinese security bureaus and tech companies to a U.S. trade blacklist because they are connected to "human rights violations and abuses in China's campaign targeting Uighurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities" in Xinjiang. The U.S. Department of Commerce announced the new restrictions preventing U.S. companies from exporting products to the blacklisted entities, including Hikvision, one of the largest suppliers of video surveillance equipment, because they are aiding China with repression, mass arbitrary detention and high-technology surveillance against Uighurs, Kazakhs and other Muslims. "The U.S. government and Department of Commerce cannot and will not tolerate the brutal suppression of ethnic minorities within China," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has said. Also blacklisted was the Xinjiang provincial public security bureau, along with 18 subordinate municipal and county public security bureaus. (UPI, October 8, 2019)

TIT-FOR-TAT VISA RESTRICTIONS

China's Ministry of Public Security has been working for months on new rules, including an extended visa "blacklist" designed to limit the ability of anyone connected to U.S. military, intelligence services and human rights groups to visit China. For its part, the U.S. has placed visa restrictions on government and party officials connected to the detention or abuse of Muslim minorities. (Reuters, October 9, 2019)

BEIJING'S "VISA BLACKMAIL" OF A U.S. CONGRESSMAN

Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY) has accused Beijing of "visa blackmail" after his delegation to China was denied entry to the mainland because it also planned to visit Taiwan. Maloney said PRC officials had informed his staff on multiple occasions that he would only be granted a visa if the Taiwan trip was cancelled. "This is visa blackmail, designed to staunch the long-standing tradition of robust U.S. congressional engagement with Taiwan, which is especially critical given the executive branch's self-imposed limit on official travel," Maloney said. Maloney and the delegation visited Taiwan on October 7th and met President Tsai Ing-wen, who called for stronger relations between Washington and Taipei. Tsai also thanked Maloney for co-sponsoring the Taiwan Travel Act, which was passed in March 2018 and encourages high-level exchanges between Washington and Taipei officials. (*South China Morning Post*, October 14, 2019)

HOW CHINA HIDES IRANIAN OIL SHIPMENTS

China's tankers are turning off their transponders to hide Iranian oil shipments that violate U.S. sanctions, according to U.S. officials. Trump tightened U.S. sanctions in May in an effort to drive Iran's oil sales to zero, yet China remains the largest buyer of Iranian oil. On September 25th, the U.S. imposed sanctions on five PRC citizens and two Chinese COSCO Shipping Corp. subsidiaries, saying they had shipped Iranian crude in violation of the sanctions. Days later, 14 COSCO Shipping Tanker (Dalian) vessels, about one-third of its fleet, stopped sending location data from their automatic identification system (AIS) and as of October 9th at least 3 ships remain untraceable. COSCO denied that any of its vessels had turned off their AIS controllers or stopped transmitting signals. The International Maritime Organization requires vessels to use transponders, but practically speaking it is not clear how Washington can stop COSCO tankers from turning them off. (Reuters, October 16, 2019)

STATE ORDERS CHINA'S DIPLOMATS TO REPORT LOCAL MEETINGS

China's diplomats are now required to notify the State Department before holding official meetings with local and state officials and at academic and research institutes. China's diplomats do not need the department's permission, only to notify State of the meetings.

"What we're trying to accomplish here is just to get closer to a reciprocal situation, hopefully with the desired end effect of having the Chinese government provide greater access to our diplomats in China. Until that happens, we are going to take some actions that will, like I said, go some ways toward leveling the playing field. Our goal is to get the Chinese authorities to allow our diplomats in China to engage with provincial and local leaders, Chinese universities and other educational and research institutes freely, the same way that the Chinese diplomats are able to do here," said a State Department official. For years, U.S. officials have filed complaints with China through formal channels concerning diplomatic access. (UPI, October 17, 2019)