



China Reform Monitor No. 1421

June 26, 2020 **Joshua Eisenman**

Related Categories: Cybersecurity and Cyberwarfare; Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; International Economics and Trade; Global Health; China; India; Russia; Southeast Asia; Taiwan

CHINESE HACKERS TARGETED EMAILS OF BIDEN CAMPAIGN STAFFERS

A Beijing-backed hacking group has targeted Democratic nominee Joe Biden with phishing emails, Shane Huntley from Google's Threat Analysis Group disclosed. While there was "no sign of compromise," he said that Google had notified both the targets and enforcement. "We are aware of reports from Google that a foreign actor has made unsuccessful attempts to access the personal email accounts of campaign staff," the Biden campaign said in a statement. This is first time China has been accused of attempting to hack a U.S. presidential candidate in the 2020 election. "As we have seen in recent history, APT [advanced persistent threat] groups targeting political campaigns is nothing new. These groups may be looking to use information that they obtain to sow discord in the country of the ongoing campaign [or] for more traditional intelligence collection," said Chris Ragland of cyber security group Digital Shadows. (*Financial Times*, June 4, 2020)

PLA EXPANDS HIGH-ALTITUDE ARSENAL

The People's Liberation Army has developed an array of new "high altitude" weapons, an official state newspaper is disclosing. The Type 15 tank is a "lightweight battle tank can effectively operate in plateau regions difficult for heavier tanks." It has advanced fire control systems and an armor-piercing main gun larger than any other light armored vehicles at high elevations. The 25-metric ton PCL-181 howitzer is lighter, faster and more durable than its predecessors, and has "automatic calibration and semi-automatic reloading." The PLA's new multiple-rocket launcher system uses an 8x8 wheeled high-mobility chassis and carries two sets of four 370mm rockets. The Z-20's powerful engine makes it usable for transport missions, search and rescue, and reconnaissance in harsh terrain and bad weather. The updated large Z-8G transport helicopter can take off from 4500m with a ceiling of 6000m, and the GJ-2 armed reconnaissance drone has a higher ceiling and can carry more payload than its predecessor the GJ-1. The PLA began expanding its arsenal of high-altitude weapons after the 2017 Doklam standoff with India. (*Global Times*, May 31, 2020)

PLA TROOP MOVEMENTS AMID BORDER TENSIONS

China has moved an estimated 5,000 troops into a disputed section of the Indian border. "It is true that people of China are on the border," Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has confirmed. "They claim that it is their territory. Our claim is that it is our area. There has been a disagreement over it...India has done what it needs to do. We don't want any country to bow before us, and we will not bow before any country." Last month, an aggressive cross-border skirmish between Chinese and Indian forces resulted in minor injuries to troops. The incident has been followed in recent weeks by unconfirmed reports of tensions in the mountainous area. "Chinese border defense troops have bolstered border control measures and made necessary moves in response to India's recent, illegal construction of defense facilities across the border into Chinese territory in the Galwan Valley region in May," the official *Global Times* reported on May 25th. Delhi and Beijing cannot even agree on the length of the border, said former Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao. "The India China border is 3488 km. In the Chinese definition, the India-China border is around 2000 km." (CNN, June 4, 2020)

RUSSIAN CORONAVIRUS WEBSITE LISTS "COUNTRY OF TAIWAN"

Coronavirus Control, a Russian website that provides updates on the COVID-19 pandemic, is listing Taiwan as a country. On the website, which provides real-time updates on coronavirus cases around the world, the entry for Taiwan includes its national flag and the description "Coronavirus in the country of Taiwan." It appears that the staff running the website intentionally included "country" with the Taiwan heading, because no other country on the website used the term in the heading. For instance, the entry for Russia is: "Coronavirus in Russia today." Taiwan and its national flag also show up on the site's country list. [Screenshots and photos available in the link] (*Taiwan News*, June 4, 2020)

CHINA OPENS NEW RAIL CORRIDOR TO NEPAL

In early June, China opened a new weekly freight train service to Nepal. The first cargo train departed Xian, Shaanxi bound for Kathmandu carrying medical equipment and construction materials, and a second train with 390 metric tons of goods worth \$1.3 million departed from Lanzhou, Gansu. Beijing has granted Kathmandu direct access to China's sea ports in Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang, and Zhanjiang, and trade hubs in Lhasa, Lanzhou, and Xigatse. These new corridors aim to shorten arrival times for international cargo, which currently takes 35 days to get from Indian ports to Kathmandu. But some say shipping over land remains problematic. "Middlemen and corruption push [up] per-container costs...from Kerung to Kathmandu. That is why for now we prefer the longer Kolkata-based route. More than infrastructure, the challenge is to make customs hassle-free and remove the stranglehold of the transport cartels," said Prakash Singh Karki of the Nepal Freight Forwarders' Association. (*Nepal Times*, June 5, 2020)