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MORE THAN 200 NUCLEAR SILOS BEING BUILT IN XINJIANG AND GANSU

In March, China began construction on a network of up to 110 nuclear silos for long-range intercontinental ballistic nuclear missiles in the desert near Hami, Xinjiang. Satellite images and geospatial data has documented 14 completed silos and grounds cleared for another 19. The revelation follows a separate discovery last month of 119 silos under construction near Yumen, Gansu province. "The silo construction at Yumen and Hami constitutes the most significant expansion of the Chinese nuclear arsenal ever," the Federation of American Scientists has noted. If the new silos were all loaded, "Chinese ICBMs could potentially carry more than 875 warheads when the Yumen and Hami missile silo fields are completed," up from the approximately 185 warheads it has on ICBMs already. (Federation of American Scientists, July 2021; *Insider*, July 27, 2021)

CHINA SENDS TEAM TO HELP PAKISTAN INVESTIGATE TERROR ATTACK

China's Ministry of Public Security had sent criminal investigators to help Pakistan investigate the killing of nine Chinese nationals in a terror attack in late July near Pakistan's Das hydroelectric dam. Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi discussed the attack with Pakistan's Interior Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. Zhao said China and Pakistan will work together to find out who was responsible, track them down and punish them. He urged Pakistan to identify security risks facing Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Pakistan, fix loopholes, strengthen the country's early-warning system and security measures, and ensure the safety of Chinese personnel to prevent future attacks. (*Times of India*, July 20, 2021)

CHINA PUSHES CONSPIRACY THEORY, REJECTS CALLS FOR WUHAN LAB AUDIT

In the face of mounting opposition, Beijing has doubled down on its COVID-19 position, claiming that it has been fully transparent in the inquiry into the pandemic's origins and stating there is no need for further investigation in Wuhan. Rather, according to the Chinese government, the next phase of WHO's search should include other countries — in particular, the U.S. and its Fort Detrick military lab. "On the issue of origin-tracing, some people in the U.S. may indeed have a guilty conscience. China has every reason to raise questions" about the U.S. military lab at Fort Detrick, said China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian. By contrast, in remarks that upset Beijing, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the next phase of the origins inquiry should include "audits of relevant laboratories and research institutions operating in the area of the initial human cases identified in December 2019." (*Sup China*, July 22, 2021)

CHINA, PAKISTAN TO COLLABORATE ON AFGHANISTAN

China and Pakistan will work together amid a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. We will jointly combat terrorism, "push all major forces in Afghanistan to draw a clear line with terrorism, resolutely crack down on terrorist forces such as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, and prevent Afghanistan from falling again into being a hotbed for terrorism," Foreign Minister Wang Yi declared during meetings with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. "China and Pakistan will pursue the hope for peace in an attempt to prevent a civil war in Afghanistan, and mediate for negotiations between the Afghans. The U.S.' hasty troop withdrawal from Afghanistan neither achieved the anti-terrorism goal, nor brought peace to the country, but created a new security black hole there," Wang said. (*Global Times*, July 25, 2021)

TALIBAN WILL PLAY AN "IMPORTANT ROLE": FM WANG YI

In late July, nine Taliban representatives met in Tianjin with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who said that he expects the group will "play an important role in the process of peaceful reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan." Wang urged the Taliban to crack down on Uighur separatists, which represent a "direct threat to China's national security." Taliban spokesman Mohammed Naeem tweeted that the "delegation assured China that they will not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against China. China also reiterated its commitment of continuation of their assistance with Afghans and said they will not interfere in Afghanistan's issues but will help to solve the problems and restoration of peace in the country." (*Irish Times*, July 29, 2021)