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Related Categories: Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; NATO; Resource Security; Afghanistan; China; Southeast Asia; Taiwan

CHINA ACCUSES U.S. OF BUILDING A NATO IN THE PACIFIC

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said the "real goal" of the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is to form a version of NATO in Asia. He accused the U.S. of going to great lengths to form blocs to suppress China. "The perverse actions run counter to the common aspiration of the region for peace, development, cooperation and win-win outcomes. They are doomed to fail," Wang maintained. "No matter how precarious and challenging the international situation may be, China and Russia will maintain a strategic focus and steadily advance our comprehensive strategic partnership and coordination," he added. (*Japan Times*, March 7, 2022)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In recent years, China's leaders have stressed ties with U.S. states as a counterbalance to Beijing's deteriorating relationship with Washington. In 2020, Xi Jinping called for Beijing to work with "American states, local councils and businesses."]

PENTAGON: ATTACK ON TAIWAN WOULD PRODUCE "ROBUST" RESPONSE

An unprovoked attack by China on Taiwan would result in "more robust" consequences than those Russia is currently facing as a result of its invasion of Ukraine, warned Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach, commander of the United States Pacific Air Forces. Beijing should watch the response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has produced global solidarity in opposing "an unprovoked attack on a neighbor," Wilsbach said. He dismissed Beijing's claim that the U.S. is forming a "NATO of the Pacific," and instead blamed China's provocative actions for its neighbors' response. China should recognize that if it moves against Taiwan or another neighbor, "something more robust will happen," Wilsbach said, adding that such an attack would "provide solidarity" for nations to come together in opposition. (*Taipei Times*, March 16, 2022)

TALIBAN AND CHINESE MINING FIRM RESTART COPPER MINING TALKS

This month, a delegation from the China Metallurgical Group Corp. (MCC) will travel to Afghanistan to discuss resuming copper mining in Mes Aynak, about 30 km from Kabul. The Taliban government has invited MCC, which invested more than \$2.5 billion in the first phase of the project, but halted work due to Taliban attacks, to resume mining. The original agreements – signed in 2008 between the then Western-backed Afghan government and the MCC – called for the Chinese side to pay \$400 million a year for a 30-year mining concession. Restarting the mine would threaten the ruins of a 2000-year-old city. More than half of the relics could be lost, including monasteries, stupas, cemeteries and wall paintings. In the original 2008 contract, MCC committed to moving the antiquities, building a power plant for Kabul and a railway to the Pakistan border, carrying out the copper processing in Afghanistan, and compensating locals for any land taken. According to Shahabuddin Dilawar, the Taliban minister of Mines and Petroleum, MCC is trying to pull out of the deal. (*PIME Asia News*, March 15, 2022)

TAIWAN WANTS TO JOIN THE CPTPP AND QUAD

Taiwan wants to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), Taiwanese Vice President William Lai told a visiting U.S. delegation led by former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen. Mullen said he would take Taiwan's desire to join the Quad, which includes the U.S., India, Japan and Australia, back to Washington for discussion. Mullen also said the Ukraine crisis is a turning point for the U.S., and an opportunity to rethink its past practices. During its 30-hour visit to Taiwan, the delegation attended a dinner with President Tsai Ing-wen and met with Premier Su Tseng-chang and Minister of National Defense Chiu Kuo-cheng. (*Taipei Times*, March 3, 2022)

CHINA, SOLOMON ISLANDS SIGN SECURITY COOPERATION MEMO

This month, Wang Xiaohong, China's vice minister of Public Security, and Anthony Veke, minister for police in the Solomon Islands, signed an MoU on police cooperation, and a broader security agreement is now under consideration. According to the MoU, China's police and the military will assist the Solomon Islands in keeping social order, disaster response and protecting Chinese personnel and projects on the Islands. PLA Navy ships can also carry out logistical resupply in the Solomon Islands. In 2019, the Solomon Islands switched diplomatic ties from Taipei to Beijing. "The signing of this MoU simply shows the global community that we are here building meaningful cooperation, one that is based on teamwork and seriousness to develop Solomon Islands," Veke said. (Reuters, March 24, 2022)