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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; Science and Technology; Warfare; Border Security; China; Hong Kong; Taiwan

BIDEN: U.S. FORCES WILL DEFEND TAIWAN

For the fourth time, President Biden has said that U.S. forces will defend Taiwan if it was invaded by China. In a 60 Minutes interview, Biden said: "Yes, if in fact there was an unprecedented attack," U.S. forces would defend Taiwan. He added that the U.S. upholds the One China Policy and that Taiwan should determine its own future. "We're not encouraging their being independent," the President said. "That's their decision." Afterward, a White House spokesperson reaffirmed: "The president has said this before, including in Tokyo earlier this year. He also made clear then that our Taiwan policy hasn't changed." Biden is reinforcing the U.S. commitment to Taiwan without confronting Beijing, according to Wen-Ti Sung of the Australian National University. "By saying 'unprecedented attack,' I think it attaches a certain level of conditionality to it, a conditionality that's not very clearly defined, which again leaves room for interpretation." (NBC News, September 19, 2022)

CHINA RECRUITS LOS ALAMOS SCIENTISTS TO DESIGN MISSILES AND DRONES

Over the last two decades, at least 154 ethnically Chinese scientists have been recruited from the U.S. Los Alamos National Laboratory to work in China on technologies including deep-earth-penetrating warheads, hypersonic missiles, quiet submarines and drones. Some were paid as much as \$1 million to participate in "talent programs." At least 15 Los Alamos veterans now work at China's Southern University of Science and Technology, including its president, Chen Shiyi, who has contributed to China's hypersonic missile program. Before returning to China, the university's vice president, Zhao Yusheng, received nearly \$20 million in U.S. taxpayer grants during an 18-year career at Los Alamos developing bombs that can penetrate deep underground. (NBC News, September 21, 2022)

PLEADS FOR FOOD, MEDICAL CARE GROW AS "ZERO-COVID" PERSISTS

While the world is turning the page on COVID-19, China remains stuck in the throes of the pandemic as a result of Xi Jinping's zero-COVID policy. Nationwide lockdowns are taking an enormous economic and psychological toll on the population. Frantic appeals for food and medical care have spread across the Chinese internet, as tens of millions of people languish under weeks of coronavirus lockdowns. Lockdowns are expected to continue at least through the 20th National Communist Party National Congress, which begins on October 16th and is set to award Xi a third five-year term. (*Washington Post*, September 12, 2022)

CENSORS DROWN OUT POSTS ABOUT FOOD AND MEDICINE SHORTAGES

China's censors are flooding social media with innocuous posts to drown out grievances about mounting food and medicine shortages in Ili Kazakh, Xinjiang (a.k.a. Yili). For weeks, the prefecture's 4.5 million residents, who have been locked down since early August, have posted scores of desperate calls. The directive orders censors to "open a campaign of comment flooding" to drown out complaints. "There are no subject matter restrictions. Content may include domestic life, daily parenting, cooking, or personal moods. All internet commentary personnel should post once an hour (twice in total), but not in rapid succession!" Examples of the "comment flooding" campaign include posts of food and idyllic scenery. (*The Guardian*, September 12, 2022)

HONG KONG POLICE ARREST HARMONICA PLAYER AT QUEEN'S VIGIL

The Hong Kong police have arrested a man for sedition for playing the harmonica at a vigil for Queen Elizabeth II. The harmonica player, a 43-year-old man, was arrested on September 12, 2022, for playing "Glory to Hong Kong," the anthem of the 2019 pro-democracy movement, while 2500 people lined up outside the British consulate in Hong Kong to offer condolences on the Queen's death. He was released on bail pending investigation, police said. A conviction under the 1938 colonial-era sedition law, which had been mothballed for decades until 2020, carries a maximum two-year sentence. (CNN, September 21, 2022)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Hong Kong's sedition law originally defined sedition as speech that brought "hatred or contempt" against the Queen, her heirs, or the Hong Kong government. It was once used by the British colonial government to target pro-China groups.]