



China Reform Monitor No. 1535

January 19, 2023 Joshua Eisenman

Related Categories: Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Warfare; Global Health; Australia; China; Japan; South Korea

PLA NAVY SIMULATES ATTACKS ON JAPANESE ISLANDS

On December 16th, a PLA Navy carrier strike group that included the Liaoning aircraft carrier, type 055 missile destroyers, and advanced vessels capable of ground attacks began ten days of drills simulating attacks on Japan's Nansei Islands. Tokyo plans to build counterattack capabilities, including missile emplacements, on the islands. The PLAN carrier strike group passed between the islands of Okinawa and Miyako, then conducted about 130 takeoffs and landings by ship-borne aircraft and helicopters involving the destroyers. (*Japan News*, December 22, 2022)

CHINA TELLS AUSTRALIA: WORRY ABOUT JAPAN, NOT CHINA

After accusing Australia of targeting China through the trilateral AUKUS security pact recently concluded with the U.S. and UK, China's Ambassador to Australia, Qian Xiao, warned that not long ago "Australia was under threat and being attacked and invaded" by Japan. He urged Canberra not to be too trusting of Tokyo, which poses a greater military threat than China. "During World War II, Japan invaded Australia, bombed Darwin, killed Australians and treated Australian POWs in a way that is humanly unacceptable. And the Japanese government has not apologized for that up to today. If they don't apologize, it means they don't accept it's wrong and they might repeat history. Once somebody threatens you, he might threaten you again. China has been your friend; we will continue to be your friend," Xiao said. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, January 10, 2023)

CHINA REJECTS U.S. COVID VACCINE OFFERINGS

China has rebuffed repeated U.S. offers to share advanced mRNA vaccines to help Beijing fight a fast-spreading wave of Covid-19 within its borders. U.S. officials, who are also worried about the rise of new variants, offered the assistance during a December trip to China. Washington is concerned about a resurgence of the pandemic and sees the rejection as yet another indication that China has little interest in improving bilateral relations. A spokesman for China's embassy in Washington said: "China can not only meet domestic demand but also supply to other countries in need. We are also working to upgrade the vaccines to make them more effective and bolster vaccinations to cope with possible new variants." (*Fortune*, January 6, 2023)

COVID PATIENTS SADDLED WITH DEBTS AS INSURERS REFUSE COVERAGE

Chinese patients suffering from Covid-19 are struggling under mounting medical bills as state-backed health insurance schemes reduce or drop coverage in response to the unprecedented wave of infections sweeping the country. At least 14 Chinese cities and provinces have stopped providing free treatment for the coronavirus after Beijing abruptly rolled back its zero-Covid strategy last month. The narrow definition of cases leaves claimants on the hook after state-backed policies drop free care. For three years, Chinese patients received subsidized care for the virus. (*Financial Times*, January 9, 2023)

CHINA STOPS ISSUING VISAS TO JAPANESE AND SOUTH KOREANS

After China dropped all travel restrictions amid a massive wave in cases, Seoul and Tokyo, worried about Beijing's reluctance to publish accurate Covid-19 data, decided to stop issuing short-term visas to PRC nationals. China has responded by refusing to issue any visas to South Koreans or Japanese nationals. "It's deeply regrettable China took such a countermeasure by entirely suspending issuance of short-term visas," South Korea's Foreign Minister, Park Jin, has said in response. (Reuters, January 11, 2023)