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MISSIONS IN CHINA WARNED OVER "PROPAGANDA" DISPLAYS

China has notified foreign embassies and international organizations not to exhibit "politicized propaganda" on their buildings, an instruction aimed at missions that have displayed Ukrainian flags since Russia's invasion. The notice, which was dated May 10th and addressed to "all embassies, and international organizations' China representative offices," said: "Do not use the building facilities' exterior walls to display politicized propaganda to avoid inciting disputes between countries." The embassies of the European Union, Britain, Germany and Poland have displayed images of Ukrainian flags, which the notice did not explicitly mention, but diplomats confirmed it was related to their Ukraine solidarity exhibits. (Reuters, May 17, 2023)

CANADA EXPELS PRC DIPLOMAT FOR GATHERING INTEL ON MP'S FAMILY

"Canada has decided to declare persona non grata Mr. Zhao Wei. I have been clear: we will not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs," said Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly. "Diplomats in Canada have been warned that if they engage in this type of behavior, they will be sent home." The statement came a week after Zhao was accused of targeting the family of MP Michael Chong. "It's not a victory for me alone. It's a victory for all Canadians who have been a victim of foreign interference for the past five or 10 years, who've been subject to threats from authoritarian regimes," Chong said. In 2021, Canada's spy agency found that Chinese officials were gathering information on MPs "for future potential sanctions," and to "deter others from taking anti-PRC positions." China's embassy in Ottawa denied the accusation. (The Star, May 8, 2023)

AMSTERDAM SHOULD "PUSH EUROPE TO UPHOLD STRATEGIC AUTONOMY"

During a phone conversation with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Chinese Premier Li Qiang called on the Netherlands to "push Europe to uphold strategic autonomy to contribute more to advancing the development of China-EU relations." China's EU policy has maintained a high degree of continuity and stability, Li said, adding that both sides should practice true multilateralism and jointly oppose bloc confrontation and a "new Cold War." (CGTN, May 16, 2023)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In Chinese diplomatic parlance, "strategic autonomy" means that Europe should distance itself from the United States.]

CHINA CLOSES THOUSANDS OF WEBSITES AND REMOVES DOZENS OF APPS

In the first three months of 2023, the Cyberspace Administration of China shut down more than 4,200 websites and removed 55 apps from app stores. In a statement, China's top internet regulator said it had summoned people in charge of more than 2,200 websites and instructed "them to rectify their content." Two weeks ago, Zhuang Rongwen, the director of the internet watchdog, pledged to clean up political content in order to "safeguard" online opinion. Microsoft's Bing and China's Baidu, Sina Weibo, Douyu, and Douban are among the platforms that have been fined or summoned. The cyberspace authority said these service providers failed to supervise information posted by their users, causing the spread of "harmful information." This year, Beijing will mobilize provincial and prefecture-level cyberspace administration teams to carry out on-site inspections. Last year, China removed more than 54.3 million items, 2,890 apps and mini-programs, and shut down 7,300 websites. (South China Morning Post, May 2, 2023)

MEXICAN PRESIDENT OFFERS PROOF CHINA SHIPPING ILLEGAL FENTANYL

Mexican President Andres Manuel López-Obrador has appealed to China again to stop sending drugs to his country. "We already have proof," he said, referring to a container with packages of drugs that was intercepted in the Pacific port of Lázaro Cárdenas. Mexican Navy Secretary Rafael Ojeda said the container had 75 lb. packages of fentanyl and methamphetamine hidden in fuel resin. The cargo left Qingdao, Shandong and passed through South Korea before reaching Mexico. "We are going to send this information to reiterate the request that they help us," López-Obrador said. Last month, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said: "there is no such thing as illegal trafficking of fentanyl between China and Mexico." López-Obrador first wrote to Xi Jinping in March requesting help in the anti-narcotics fight. (BBC, May 6, 2023)