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Related Categories: Cybersecurity and Cyberwarfare; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; International Economics and Trade; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Science and Technology; Border Security; Africa; China; North Korea

NORTH KOREA BUILDS CHINA BORDER WALL

During the pandemic, North Korea began sealing its borders with China in order to tighten the inflow of information and goods, and cut off smuggler and defector routes. Satellite imagery reveals security infrastructure has been built on 489 km of the border including wire fencing, concrete walls, and additional guard posts and cameras. North Korean border guards have been ordered to shoot anyone trying to cross. In 2022, 67 defectors reached South Korea, compared with 1047 in 2019. "The traditional North Korea-China route is now effectively over, unless there is a major change in the situation," says one South Korean pastor who helps North Koreans defect. Last year, in a speech declaring victory over COVID-19, Kim Jong Un noted the construction of a "multiple blockade wall in the border, frontline and coast areas and in the seas and air." (Reuters, May 27, 2023)

CHINA'S YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT HITS RECORD HIGH

China's youth unemployment (age 16-24) hit a record 20.4 percent in April, up from 19.6 percent in March. This year, 11.6 million more college graduates enter the workforce suggesting that youth unemployment could increase still further in the coming months. China's industrial production also fell short of expectations last month, rising by only 5.6 percent year-on-year, and falling by 7.8 percent between April and March. "Four months into the reopening, China's economic recovery can best be described as uneven, front-loaded, and still necessarily state-supported," says Louise Loo of Oxford Economics. (*South China Morning Post*, May 16, 2023)

CHINA'S SPIES SOUGHT TO INFILTRATE ALASKAN MILITARY BASES

Security has been beefed up at military facilities in Alaska after Chinese citizens posing as tourists made several attempts to gain access to the installations. In one incident, a vehicle with Chinese citizens blew past a security checkpoint at Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks; it was stopped and a drone was discovered. In addition to concerns about the secrets they may document on U.S. military bases, intelligence officials are concerned that spies are leaving behind sensors that pick up sensitive military communications. (*USA Today*, May 31, 2023)

CHINESE HACKERS HIT KENYA'S GOVERNMENT

Since late 2019, Chinese hackers have been targeting Kenya's government to learn more about the country's debt repayment plans. The multi-year campaign has hit eight Kenyan ministries and government departments, including the presidential office, the National Intelligence Service (NIS), and the foreign and finance ministries. "A lot of documents from the ministry of foreign affairs were stolen and from the finance department as well," said one Kenyan cybersecurity expert. It remains unclear exactly what information was taken during the hacks, but the NIS breach appeared to be aimed at gleaning information on how Kenya planned to manage its debt payments to China. Kenya, which took billions of dollars in Chinese loans for infrastructure projects, now faces repayment challenges. (Reuters, May 24, 2023)

CHINA SIMULATES HYPERSONIC STRIKE ON U.S. CARRIER GROUP

China has published the results of a simulated hypersonic strike against a U.S. carrier group. During 20 simulated battles on war game software, the PLA used 24 hypersonic anti-ship missiles to "sink" the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier fleet. In the scenario, the U.S. vessels are attacked after they approach a China-claimed island in the South China Sea, with Chinese forces using "an intentionally complex three-wave attack meant to deceive and overcome the formidable defense systems of the US carrier group." The U.S. fleet included six surface ships chosen for their "unparalleled strength and advanced technology" - the CVN-78 Gerald R. Ford, the San Jacinto, a CG56 Ticonderoga-class cruiser, and four DDG-103 Arleigh Burke-class Flight IIA guided missile destroyers. The war game, which was to be "lenient with the enemy and strict with oneself," praised the PLA for its "sophisticated launch strategy." (*South China Morning Post*, May 23, 2023)