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Related Categories: Intelligence and Counterintelligence; China; Taiwan

CHINA TO MOBILIZE ENTIRE NATION IN COUNTER-ESPIONAGE

China is establishing a system for people to encourage, commend, and reward citizens who participate in counter-espionage work, the Ministry of State Security posted on its WeChat account. Political security is the top priority of national security, and the "core" of political security is the security of China's political system. "The most fundamental is to safeguard the leadership and ruling position of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics," explained Minister of State Security Chen Yixin. In recent years, China has arrested and detained dozens of Chinese and foreign nationals on suspicion of espionage. (Reuters, August 2, 2023)

TAIWAN INVESTIGATES LEAKS

Taiwan is investigating several military officers, including a lieutenant and a colonel, who are accused on providing sensitive military secrets to China. A half dozen active and retired members from the army's aviation and special forces commands are suspects in the leaks; two have been detained and four released on bail. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said China's spying poses a "serious threat" and pledged to ramp up security and enhance personnel education to resist infiltration. (Bloomberg, August 2, 2023)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In January, Taiwan detained three active-duty officers and a retired Air Force officer on suspicion of spying for Beijing. Last month, Taiwan detained five people over allegations they recruited officers to collect intelligence for China.]

TWO U.S. SAILORS ARRESTED FOR SPYING FOR CHINA

Two U.S. Navy sailors, Wei Jinchao, and Zhao Wenheng, have been charged with using their security clearances to provide China with U.S. military secrets. The indictment claims that while serving as a machinist on the USS Essex, Wei entered into a "handler/asset" relationship with a Chinese intelligence officer beginning in February 2022. In exchange for thousands of dollars, he sent the Chinese officer photos and videos of the Essex and other ships, along with dozens of technical manuals detailing their layouts and weapons systems obtained from restricted Navy computer systems. Between 2021 and 2023, Zhao provided sensitive military information - including operational plans for a major military exercise - to a Chinese intelligence officer. Zhao, who was responsible for servicing electrical equipment on U.S. military installations, sent the blueprints of a U.S. radar system in Okinawa and photos of computer screens that showed "operational orders of military training exercises." (CNN, August 3, 2023)

FEW FOREIGNERS VISITING CHINA

Half a year after China reopened its borders, few foreign travelers are going. In cities like Beijing and Shanghai, the numbers of foreigners who visited in the first half of 2023 totaled less than a quarter of the number that did during the same period in 2019. Nationwide, just 52,000 people visited China on trips organized by travel agencies during the first quarter of 2023, as compared with 3.7 million in the first quarter of 2019. "The number of visitors from Europe, America, Japan and Korea are all dropping, substantially," says Xiao Qianhui of the China Tourism Association. A lack of flights to China is one reason, but foreign visitors have also grown wary as relations between China and other countries have deteriorated. (Wall Street Journal, August 3, 2023)

CHINA SAYS IT EXPOSED A U.S. SPY

China's Ministry of State Security said it has exposed a Chinese national who was providing sensitive military information to the CIA. The suspect, identified as Mr. Zeng, worked for an unidentified Chinese military industrial group in a role which gave him access to classified information. The ministry said that when Zeng was studying in Italy, he had been approached by a U.S. embassy official, and the two had gradually developed a "close relationship." Eventually, the U.S. official revealed himself to be a CIA officer and offered Zeng "a huge amount" of money and immigration to the U.S. for his family in exchange for sensitive information about the Chinese military. Zeng signed an espionage agreement and received training before he returned to China and provided "a large amount of core intelligence," according to the Ministry's statement. (CNN, August 11, 2023)