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October 23, 2023 **Joshua Eisenman**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Energy Security; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Science and Technology; Warfare; Corruption; Border Security; Australia; China; United States

### CHINA'S CAMPAIGN OF HARASSMENT

Unsafe interceptions of U.S. and allied aircraft in international airspace by Chinese fighter aircraft are "a centralized and concerted campaign [to] coerce a change in lawful U.S. operational activity," according to Ely Ratner, U.S. assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs. Speaking at the Pentagon, Ratner warned that PLA intercepts are part of its behavior "throughout the region, throughout domains and throughout geographies." Chinese vessels are also harassing U.S. and allied warships in international waters and "we're seeing it on land against our Indian partners. This is part of a much broader picture. Since the fall of 2021, we have seen more than 180 such incidents: More in the past two years than in the decade before that. That's nearly 200 cases where PLA operators have performed reckless maneuvers, or discharged chaff, or shot off flares, or approached too rapidly or too close to U.S. aircraft," Ratner said. (*DOD News*, October 17, 2023)

### FORMER BANK OF CHINA BOSS ARRESTED

The former chairman of the Bank of China has been arrested for bribery and giving out illegal loans. Liu Liange, 62, who served as chairman of the state-owned bank from 2019 to 2023, resigned in March and is now facing corruption charges. Liu's arrest comes a week after he was expelled from the Communist Party of China and accused by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of a range of illicit activities, including illegally granting loans and using his position to accept bribes and other perks such as invitations to private clubs and resorts. Liu has previously held senior positions in China's central bank and the Export-Import Bank. (*BBC*, October 16, 2023)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Liu is one of the most senior bankers ensnared in China's \$60 trillion anti-corruption probe into its financial sector. Several high-profile financial executives from state-owned banks have already been fined, jailed, or are under investigation. The former chairman of China Life Insurance, Wang Bin, was sentenced to life in prison without parole for bribery.]

### CHINA'S FIRST HYDROGEN-POWERED SHIP SETS SAIL

Three Gorges Hydrogen Boat No. 1, China's first hydrogen fuel cell-powered vessel has set off on its maiden voyage from Yichang, Hubei. On the same day, the Green Electricity and Green Hydrogen Demonstration Station of the Three Gorges, China's first inland dock-type hydrogen production and refueling station, was officially opened to supply the boat. The 49.9 meters long Three Gorges Hydrogen Boat No. 1 has a top speed of 28 km per hour, a range up to 200 km and can accommodate 80 passengers. The vessel and station are part of the "hydrogenation of the Yangtze" initiative, designed to advance low-carbon development in inland waterway transportation. (*Xinhua/ECNS*, October 11, 2023)

### CHINA DEPORTS HUNDREDS OF NORTH KOREANS

South Korea says China has forcibly repatriated about 600 North Korean defectors, most of them women. Hundreds were put on trucks and sent from their detention centers to North Korea. The defectors now face imprisonment, sexual violence or death in the North. South Korea protested to China and reiterated its position "that under no circumstances should North Koreans living abroad be forcibly repatriated against their will." The UN special rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, Elizabeth Salmon, estimates that some 2,000 North Koreans are being held in China for crossing the border without permission. (*BBC*, October 13, 2023)

### SET FREE, CHENG LEI IS WELCOMED BACK IN AUSTRALIA

After three years of detention in China, Australian journalist Cheng Lei, 48, has been released. She was met at the airport by Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong upon her arrival in Melbourne. Cheng had been working for China's official CGTN when she was arrested in August 2020 and accused of "illegally supplying state secrets overseas." She was imprisoned for breaking an embargo with a television broadcast on a state-run TV network a few minutes following a briefing by officials. After her arrest, Cheng spent the first six months in solitary confinement without charges. She was tried in Beijing in a secret court and convicted of illegally providing state secrets abroad and sentenced to two years and 11 months behind bars. (*NBC*, October 18, 2023)