"THE NAVY: PROTECTING THE SEAS, SECURING OUR FUTURE"
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DU30 DECIDES IF AIDES WILL FACE ‘USELESS’ SENATE PROBE

By Leila B. Salaverria,
DJ Yap and Melvin Gascon
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte said he would not allow his Cabinet officials to appear in legislative inquiries if they would just be berated and their time wasted by lawmakers as he continued to criticize the Senate for looking into allegedly overpriced pandemic supplies purchased from a small company with links to one of his longtime friends.

In a taped meeting with members of his Cabinet aired on national television on Tuesday, Mr. Duterte said he was not questioning the legislative authority to investigate but he would limit what the senators could do with members of the executive branch.

He said so many officials had been summoned to Senate hearings but ended up waiting for hours before being questioned and some not being called at all.

"This time I will require every Cabinet member to clear with me any invitation. And if I think that he will be called for a useless purpose ... to be berated in front of the Republic, then I will stop it and prohibit him from attending it," the President said.

The top officials who have so far testified in the inquiry are Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, National Task Force Against COVID-19 chief Carlito Galvez Jr. and acting budget department officer in charge Tina Rose Canda.

The Senate opened its probe on the allegedly irregular transfer of P42 billion in Department of Health (DOH) funds to the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM) and the P8.7 billion worth of contracts bagged in 2020 by the undercapitalized trading company Pharmally Pharmaceutical Corp.

From the hearings senators learned that the total amount transferred to the PS-DBM to purchase pandemic supplies was P47.7 billion and that Pharmally, which had a paid-up capital of only P625,000, cornered around P11.49 billion in contracts in 2020-2021.

The Senate investigations also revealed that Michael Yang, a Chinese national and decadeslong friend of the President who briefly served as his economic adviser, had loaned money to the financially struggling Pharmally. He also introduced Pharmally to his friends in China where the company could get its supplies.

The President said Duque, who had appeared in most of the Senate hearings, "has not been in control of the workings" of the DOH because of so much time he had...
spent with the senators. Each of the six hearings lasted an average of about six hours.

"I am ordering Secretary Duque that the next time that he is invited, he should clear the invitation to appear with me and I will decide," he said. "Secretary Duque has answered what he could. What more do they want? Do they want to drag his soul?"

**Fulfilled obligations**

Mr. Duterte also defended the purchases from Pharmally, saying the company had fulfilled its obligations and the procurement contracts were in accordance with the powers given to him by the Bayanihan 1 law "for the fastest delivery of the things that we need."

"You can crumple Pharmally, we don't care about it," he added. "What we care about is that we ordered items, these arrived, the order was correct, and the price was negotiated."

Several senators alleged that the company supplied, among others, overpriced surgical masks, COVID-19 testing kits and personal protective equipment.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the President's decision to allow or disallow officials to testify in the hearings was his prerogative as Chief Executive.

"However, the Senate will exercise our legislative oversight function over government projects and expenditures that we approved," he said in a Viber message.

Sen. Richard Gordon, who is leading the probe as chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Mr. Duterte's statements.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan said the President's stance showed his unwillingness to expose irregularities involving his officials.

"If they have nothing to hide, they should face it. If there are truly no anomalies, they shouldn't be scared of testifying," he told reporters.

'A ruckus thing'

Mr. Duterte said he would allow officials to attend if the hearings were reasonable.

"I plead for fairness for the people you summoned because if your style will be like that, I will tell all government personnel, 'Do not go to the Senate.' Then it would be a ruckus thing, you will have them arrested. And then I will say, 'Do not arrest them, do not believe the Senate.' Then what will happen?" he said.

In January, the President directed the Presidential Security Group to ignore any invitation from the Senate to appear in an inquiry on its acquisition of an unregistered COVID-19 vaccine.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said Mr. Duterte could issue an executive order on the attendance of officials in legislative inquiries, guided by a Supreme Court ruling that Cabinet officials should not be cited in contempt for not attending a hearing if ordered by the President.

**Incomplete documents**

Sen. Risa Hontiveros said in a statement on Tuesday that the hearings had shown that Pharmally snagged the contracts, even with incomplete documentation and presigned proofs of delivery, with help from the PS-DBM itself.

She cited a testimony by Pharmally Incorporator Kriale Mago who told the senators that the company had secured only three of four documents necessary to complete a procurement—a delivery receipt, an inspection and acceptance report of the delivery, and a statement of account of the delivery. It did not have a delivery order, the first document required, but it was still issued a delivery receipt.

"This deal between Pharmally and the PS-DBM is clearly a shortcut to corruption," Hontiveros said. "Pharmally's incorporators seem to be naive entrepreneurs, intent on profiteering and making a quick buck, and PS-DBM was a willing enabler."

She said Mago also testified that the PS-DBM management "compelled them to fake inspection reports needed for the release of the checks."

'Scam of the decade'

Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes said the Pharmally deals had "the makings of a 'scam of the decade'" that could rival the P20-billion pork barrel scam unearthed by the Inquirer in 2013.

Reyes said there was also "reasonable basis to suspect" that Pharmally was a mere "dummy company" acting as a middleman.

In preventing his officials from testifying in the Senate probe, Mr. Duterte was willing to "trigger a constitutional crisis just to cover up the truth," he said.

"We're now seeing a more brazen and intense cover-up and outright disrespect to a coequal branch in government," said Reyes.

**Hold-departure order**

Gordon had requested Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra and Bureau of Immigration Commissioner Jaime Morente that Yang, Pharmally executives and former PS-DBM head Lloyd Christopher Lao be placed on a hold-departure order, immigration watch list or lookout bulletin to monitor any attempt to leave the country.

Yang was absent from Monday's hearing. His lawyer said his blood pressure had shot up and he was advised by his doctor to stay in bed for five days.

Hontiveros said Yang's testimony was crucial to piecing together the "big puzzle" in the ties between Pharmally and PS-DBM. "With reports from Krixia Suribing, Surigao and Inquirer Research Lab."
NCR under second highest COVID alert

New system, granular lockdowns piloted Sept. 16-30

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Starting Sept. 16, Metro Manila will be placed under Alert Level 4 during the pilot implementation of the COVID-19 Alert Level System that allows some industries to resume operations, Malacañang announced yesterday.

“We will be on Alert Level Number 4 during its pilot implementation in Metro Manila. This is good news. Workers and employees of restaurants and eateries in Metro Manila can go back to work starting Thursday, Sept. 16... Workers of personal care services will also return to work,” presidential spokesman Harry Roque said, noting that the Department of Health (DOH) will be declaring alert levels on a weekly basis.

DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said Metro Manila’s Level 4 status was because of its high case counts, moderate risk two-week growth rate and high-risk average daily attack rate of 39.09 per 100,000 population.

Intensive care utilization rate is also high-risk at 77.5 percent while bed utilization is at 69.5 percent.

“During this time, we must ramp up active case finding, conduct risk-based testing using RT-PCR and fast track vaccination among high-risk

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groups," she said.

**General guidelines**

Restrictions will be imposed on closed, crowded spaces and on activities that promote close contact, while some activities will be allowed for fully vaccinated individuals.

Under Alert Level 4, both food establishments and personal care services can operate at 30 percent capacity for outdoor and 10 percent for indoor, but only for fully vaccinated customers. The same tier-based restrictions apply for in-person religious gatherings.

For Alert Levels 1 to 3, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said there would be no distinctions in vaccination so more businesses can open, with increased operational capacity and lesser restrictions on lower alert levels.

While enforcing the alert level system, local governments will also impose granular or localized hard lockdowns of not less than 14 days in critical zones.

Once under granular lockdown, only health care workers and personnel employed at hospitals, laboratories and dialysis facilities will be allowed to enter and leave the premises.

Also included in the exception are uniformed personnel and departing/arriving overseas Filipino workers.

Roque said the national and local governments would deliver food to residents affected by the localized lockdowns.

"The Department of Social Welfare and Development also has a regular program, the assistance to individuals in crisis situations. So, they can also receive assistance from the DSWD like transportation expenses or medical expenses," he added.

Despite approving the alert level system in Metro Manila, Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año said the no vaccination, no dine-in policy enforced in Cebu City is not approved by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Guillermo Eleazar yesterday ordered police commanders to help local government units on information dissemination about the guidelines in the new alert level system.

"Your PNP will actively participate in enforcement and information dissemination of these guidelines. The police will also observe these rules," Eleazar said, reminding cops to observe maximum tolerance, impose only what is stated in the guidelines and not punish violators.

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With Sheila Crisostomo, Romina Cabrera, Emmanuel Tupas
JAPAN WARNS CITIZENS IN PH OF TERROR THREAT; PNP VERIFYING REPORTS

By Dexter Cabaiza
@dexcabalzaINQ

The Philippine National Police has yet to receive any report on possible terror attacks in the country amid a warning from the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its citizens in Southeast Asia to stay away from religious facilities and crowds due to "increased risks such as suicide bombings."

"But this does not mean that we will lower our guard on this matter," Gen. Guillermo Eleazar, chief of the PNP, said on Tuesday. He added that the police was continuously monitoring intelligence reports coming from the ground as well as from local and foreign intelligence units.

In a statement, the Japanese Embassy confirmed that Tokyo had "received information about a possible terror attack, but we cannot give you any detailed background at the moment."

The warning from Japan’s Foreign Ministry was issued to Japanese citizens in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines.

Eleazar assured the public that the PNP was continuing its intensified intelligence-gathering, along with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to prevent any attacks being plotted by terrorist groups, both local and international.

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan last month, the PNP chief has ordered police units, especially in Mindanao, to be on high alert to prevent the possibility of a spillover of hostilities.

Rommel Banlaoi, chief of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, earlier warned of a possible spillover in Mindanao of the political turmoil in Afghanistan, saying the conflict there could inspire local terrorist groups to also carry out attacks.

"The victory of the Taliban can also inspire other Islamist groups worldwide to pursue their brand of jihad (holy war), that it can happen, that they can also do it," he said.

According to Banlaoi, Afghanistan has also been home to international terrorist groups Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. Both were affiliated with local terrorists—the Maute Group and Abu Sayyaf Group—which were involved in the 2017 Marawi crisis that killed over a thousand.

Banlaoi said that with the death of Maute’s leaders Isnilon Hapilon and Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, the local jihadist group was now being led by a certain Saygula, "who is now based in Afghanistan [and] being coddled by Taliban forces who defected to the Islamic State."

“We need to be vigilant about the developments happening in Afghanistan. We need to prevent the situation in Afghanistan from spilling over to the southern Philippines,” he warned.
PNP-AFP: No terror attack report

BY JOHN ROSSON

Officials of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have denied receiving any information regarding possible terror attacks in the country, but vowed to not let their guard down.

"We have not received any report on possible terror attacks as advised by the Japan Foreign Ministry, but this does not mean that we would lower our guard on this matter," PNP chief General Guillermo Eleazar said.

Japan has warned its citizens about potential attacks like suicide bombings in Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar.

The PNP is continuously monitoring intelligence reports from the ground and even from foreign counterparts, Eleazar said.

He said the PNP has intensified intelligence-gathering on terror groups since the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States and the 2017 siege of Marawi City.

Police units, especially those in Mindanao, have been alerted since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan so they may prevent a possible spillover of hostilities, which may be perpetrated by local terrorists, he added.

Col. Ramon Zagala, AFP spokesperson, said in a separate statement that the military has also yet to receive any report on a possible terror attack.

"We constantly validate all reports on security matters and it is a continuous process. As per the last review, our threat level is moderate," he said.

"We ensure that all citizens, Filipinos or not, as long as they are within our territory, are protected and kept safe from terrorists' threats," he added.
8 halfway houses for former NPA rebels open

Eight halfway houses for former communist rebels have been opened in Northern Luzon to facilitate the returnees' reintegration into mainstream society. Lt. Gen. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr., Northern Luzon military chief, said on Tuesday that the halfway houses were completed in time for the expected influx of New People's Army rebel surrenderers in Northern Luzon. Burgos said the eight halfway houses were located in Bantay, Ilocos Sur; Laoag City; Burgos, Pangasinan; Lallo, Cagayan; Cabaruguis, Quirino; Lagangilang, Abra; Bontoc, Mountain Province; and Tabuk City. The houses, which can accommodate 271 persons, are fully furnished but have no electricity and water as of now. —JEANNETTE LANDRADE
By Krixia Subingsubing and Villamor Visaya Jr. @Team_Inquirer

Books and documents on the peace negotiations between the government of the Philippines (GRP) and the communist National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) have been removed from the library of a state university in the north.

Evangeline Cabello, chief librarian of the Kalinga State University (KSU) Bulanac Campus in Tabuk City, told the Inquirer on Tuesday that she pulled out the books on the NDFP after a group of policemen and soldiers came and inspected the library on Sept. 1.

"They removed the NDFP pamphlets [from the shelves] and took these with them," Cabello told Inquirer Northern Luzon in a phone interview.

She said she decided to remove the books to "protect [the students] from being recruited to join communist groups."

The books are being kept by the university "somewhere else," she said.

Among others, copies of the GRP-NDFP Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) have been removed, as well as:

- The Declaration of Understanding
- The NDFP Declaration and Program of Action for the Rights, Protection, and Welfare of Children
- The GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations Major Arguments
and joint statements for Sept. 1, 1980-June 2018

- The GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations: Major Written Agreements and Outstanding Issues
- NDFP Adherence to International Humanitarian Law: Letters to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN Secretary-General
- NDFP Adherence to International Humanitarian Law: On Prisoners of War
- Two articles on the People's Struggles for Just Peace
- The NDFP Reciprocal Working Committee Perspectives on Social and Economic Reforms.

'Like the Nazis did'
The regional task force to end local community armed conflict in the Cordillera has lauded the removal of the books and documents from the KSU library as part of its so-called “whole-of-nation” approach to the insurgency.

But for the rights group Karapatan, the action was part of the government’s crackdown on suspected communists and served to “restrict academic discourse and information on the peace negotiations and armed conflict in the country.”

“What’s next? Raiding and ransacking libraries and the public burning of books, like what the Nazis did? Removing documents on the peace process from a university library’s collection is absurd,” said Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay.

“Those are public documents. Some of them, such as the CARHRIHL, were signed by the government,” she said.

Palabay warned that the removal of these articles “clearly show[ed] the chilling effect of the terror law on free speech and academic freedom, such that counterterrorism effectively represses, information, as well as freedom of thought and knowledge.”

She said it was also an “attack on academic freedom... that does nothing to resolve the roots of armed conflict and bring about just and lasting peace in the country.”

She called on other state universities and colleges to resist such actions and to protect academic freedom and freedom of information in their halls.

‘On my own, but...’
Cabello said she was of two minds about her action.

“I acted on my own... but with personal reservations because I think some of those books should not have been removed from the library,” she said.

The KSU president, Dr. Eduardo Bagtang, confirmed that pulling the books off the library’s shelves was Cabello’s sole decision.

He added, however, that he would review the chief librarian’s move.

Asking to comment, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (Opapp) said it was unaware of the incident at KSU, and that it had no policy of encroaching on the right of academic institutions to manage their learning activities.

“It’s their decision if they want to remove publications or books from their own library. We can’t impose anything on them,” said Wilben Mayor, Opapp assistant secretary and spokesperson.

The Inquirer also sought comment on the issue from the Commission on Higher Education but its chair, Prospero de Vera III, had yet to respond at press time. —WITH A REPORT FROM JEANNETTE LANDRADE ENQ
3 NPA rebels killed in Negros Occidental clash

Three suspected New People’s Army (NPA) rebels were killed while 14 others were arrested, four of them wounded, following an encounter with police Special Action Force (SAF) commandos in Barangay Tabu in Illog, Negros Occidental yesterday.

Nilda Bertulano, secretary of the NPA’s South West Front was among those wounded from the side of the rebels, according to Lt. Col. Ryan Manongdo, SAF Battalion 6 commander.

A SAF trooper was also wounded.

Manongdo said four M16 rifles were recovered at the scene.

He said the encounter occurred when SAF commandos and personnel of the 2nd Negros Occidental Police Mobile Force Company chanced upon 20 armed men while conducting combat operations.

— Gilbert Bayoran
3 REBELS KILLED IN NEGROS GUN BATTLE

BACOLOD CITY: Three suspected members of the New People’s Army (NPA) were killed while 14 others were arrested on Tuesday during an encounter with the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) in Barangay Tabu, Ilog, Negros Occidental.

LtCol. Ryan Manongdo, commander of the Special Action Battalion 6, said four of the 14 arrested rebels suffered injuries during the encounter, including Nilda Natan Bertulano, secretary of the NPA South West Front.

One SAF trooper was injured in the clash, Manongdo said.

The unidentified bodies of the slain rebels and four M16 assault rifles were recovered from the encounter site.

Manongdo said police troopers chanced upon a group of around 20 armed men led by Bertulano while they were conducting combat operations in the area which led to the encounter and lasted for more than one hour.

Bertulano and the four injured NPA rebels were treated by SAF combat medics before they were transported to a hospital for further treatment, Manongdo said.

The remaining ten rebels were turned over to the Ilog Police Station.

EUGENE ADIONG
IP groups seek Makabayan lawmakers’ resignation

The government’s anti-communist task force said several tribes of indigenous peoples (IP) sought the resignation of lawmakers belonging to the Makabayan bloc in the House of Representatives for allegedly “misrepresenting and manipulating” indigenous communities.

Gaye Florendo, spokesperson for the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, said 126 IP tribes want Rep. Eufemia Cullamat of Bayan Muna party-list and the rest of the Makabayan bloc lawmakers to step down from their positions.

Florendo read “resolutions” of the IP groups, which mentioned indigenous communities will “no longer tolerate and allow Rep. Eufemia Cullamat and all the other members of the Makabayan Bloc in Congress, including Kabataan Rep. [Sarah] Elago and Bayan Muna Rep. [Carlos] Zarate, to misrepresent, manipulate and use the indigenous communities to serve their violent political agenda.”

The IP tribes issued the call after the Makabayan lawmakers “blocked the budgets of the agencies mandated to provide basic services to our IP communities.”

“It is clear to our IP communities, this is not only about misrepresentation and false claims hostageing and disabling the capabilities and mandates of the government to provide services to our tribes,” Florendo said in a statement.

“This is also to hold Rep. Cullamat accountable and the rest of the Makabayan bloc and the CPP-NPA (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army) for the crimes they have done to our indigenous community such as recruitment and the slaying of IPs, the youth, women and traditional leaders,” she added.

She said Datu Rico Maca, the municipal IP mandatory representative of San Miguel, Surigao del Sur, claimed Cullamat may be an IP member, but “she failed to represent them, while receiving no action or support from Cullamat even as they helped Bayan Muna gain a seat in Congress.”

Maca noted he saw “no remorse and condemnation from Rep. Cullamat in the killing of IP leaders and the unabated recruitment of indigenous youth and women to Bayan Muna and the CPP-NPA-National Democratic Front through alternative schools.

“That is why we are calling for her (Cullamat) resignation. Help us in holding all of them accountable,” Maca said.

The task force said Rurelyn Bay-ao, a “bakwit scholar,” was recruited by the New People’s Army at the age of 12.

Bay-ao, now 26, said she would have been slain during encounters with government troops had she not surrendered.

“They (communist rebels) are the ones ruining our future. What they are saying that they are human rights and environmental defenders are lies,” Bay-ao said.

DEMPSEY REYES
Indigenous People, pinagbibitiw si Rep. Cullamat, Makabayan Bloc

Dahil sa kabiguan isulong ang kapakanan ng mga tribu ng Indigenous People (IP), pinagbilibaw ni Datu Rico Maca, Municipal Indigenous People Mandator y Representative ng San Miguel, Surigao del Sur si Bayan Partylist Rep. Eufemia Cullamat at mga miyembro ng Makabayan Bloc sa Kongreso. Sa virtual balitaan ng National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), sinabi ni Maca na bagamat nebibilang si Cullamat sa IP na Manobo Tribe, tinatikaran nila ang kanyang pangako at sa halip ay nakipagsabwatang sa Makabayan Bloc sa mga pagpaslang sa mga lider ng mga tribu na sumasalungat sa mga agenda ng CPP-NPA-NDF.

Sinabi ni Maca na walang plano para sa kapayapaan si Cullamat gayundin sa mga kabataan na talawis sa pangako nito na magiging bosses ng tribu sa Kongreso. Ginagamit lamang nito ang poseyion para lamang sa pangarapang interes at kapakanan ng komunistang teroristang samahan.

Dahil dito, sinabi ni Maca na nangpasang 126 resolusyon ang kanilang mga tribu na kasapi sa Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People (ICCs/IPs) at idinekta lang "persona non grata" na si Cullamat sa kanilang mga ancestral lands. (Doris Franche)
Cong. Cullamat, Makabayan Bloc pinagbibitiw ng IP


Sa virtual balitahan ng National Task Force to End Local Communit Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), zamah ni Maca na hagaten na labindalig si Cullamat sa IP na Marobo Tribe, tinatalsan nito ang kanyang pangako ay sa halip ay nakiwabawan sa Makabayan Bloc sa mga pagtulungan sa mga lider ng mga tribu na sumusulat ng mga agenda ng National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

Sinabi ni Maca na wala ang plano para sa kapayapaan si Cullamat gayundin sa mga kabatasan na labindalig na pangako nito na magbigay boxers sa tribu sa Kongreso. Giranggit lamang nito ang posisyon para lamang sa daming interes at kapalidad ng komunista ng Konstitusang Pilipinas kahit na sahalana.

Kayo't nagpasang ng 126 resolusyon sa pagkilala ng mga tribu na kasi sa Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People (ICCs/IPs) at itinanghal kay 'persona non grata' na si Cullamat sa kanilang mga ancestral lands.

Samantala, dahil sa mga gawain na ginagawa, sinabi ni Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Maj. Gen. Romeo S. Bravero Jr., commander ng Army's 4th Infantry Division (4ID), na nagpasensibidad sa naibibigay ng CPP-NPA-NDF sa mga kanayunan at malatag na langgam ng mga IP lalo na sa mga lugar ng Northern Mindanao at Cagayan Region.
After the war on terrorism, war on China?

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
The New York Times

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan after a failed 20-year nation-building exercise has left many Americans and analysts saying, "If only we knew back then what we know now, we would have never gone down that path." I am not sure that's true, but it nevertheless raises this question: What are we doing today in foreign policy that we might look back 20 years from now and say, "If only we knew back then what we know now, we would never have gone down that path?"

My answer can be summed up in one word: China.

And my fears can be summed up in just a few paragraphs: The 40 years from 1979 to 2019 were an epoch in US-China relations. There were many ups and downs, but all in all it was an epoch of steady economic integration between our two countries.

The depth of that US-China integration helped to fuel a much deeper globalization of the world economy and buttress four decades of relative peace between the world's two great powers. And always remember, it's great-power conflicts that give us enormously destabilizing world wars.

That era of US-China globalization left some US manufacturing workers unemployed, while opening huge new export markets for others. It lifted out of poverty hundreds of millions of people in China, India and East Asia, while making many products much more affordable to more American consumers.

In short, the relative peace and prosperity that the world experienced in those 40 years cannot be explained without reference to the US-China bonding.

For the past five years, though, the United States and China have been stumbling down a path of de-integration and maybe toward outright confrontation. In my view, it is China's increasingly bullying leadership style at home and abroad, its heads-we-win-tails-you-lose trade policies and the changing makeup of its economy that are largely responsible for this reversal.

That said, if it continues, there is a good chance that both of our countries — not to mention many others — will look back 20 years from now and say that the world became a more dangerous and less prosperous place because of the breakdown in US-China relations in the early 2020s.

But before we transition from "co-opetition" to confrontation with China, we should ask ourselves some hard questions. China needs to do the same. Because we both may really miss this relationship when it's gone.

For starters we need to ask: What aspects of our competition/conflict with China are inevitable between a rising power and a status quo power, and what can be dampened by smart policy?

Let's start with the inevitable. For roughly the first 30 of the 40 years of economic integration, China sold us what I call "shallow goods" - shirts we wore on our backs, tennis shoes we wore on our feet and solar panels we affixed to our roofs. America, in contrast, sold China "deep goods" - software and computers that went deep into its system, which it needed and could buy only from us.

(To be continued)
He reiterated his flamboyant promises yet again during his first State of the Nation Address. All those hungry for change were spellbound. At this point, President Duterte could do no wrong and his popularity soared.

Slowly, however, reality set in and the President’s narrative began to change. In his 2018 SONA, he admitted that the drug war could not be won within six months – not even in one year. In his 2019 SONA, he admitted that he could not solve corruption either. In the SONA delivered last June, he admitted that he underestimated the depth and breadth of both the drug problem and of corruption. He said both were so entrenched in the system that no one could fix them.

The fairy tale that President Duterte sold to the public turned out to be a mirage – an illusion. When it was time to deliver, he either reneged on his promises, made a joke of them or ignored them. In reality, the joke was on us, gullible Filipinos who believed the Duterte narrative.

Five years into the administration and the drug trade is thriving, corruption is back with the cold-bloodedness of Satan himself, social injustice is pervasive and political dynasties are more entrenched than ever. As for China’s territorial grab, well, they are allowed to have their way in the West Philippine Sea while Malacañang watches passively without pushback.

I am not sure if President Duterte feels embarrassed about falling flat on his promises. But it begs the question – why make such extravagant promises if the probability of keeping them is less than fair?
It comes down to two factors—his penchant for oversimplifying problems and his proclivity to overestimating his capabilities.

Based on what we have observed of him, the President’s thinking process is linear and simplistic, with an inclination for reducing complex problems into simple equations of cause-and-effect. He oversimplified the drug problem by assuming that the circumstances that were true in Davao when he was mayor are also true for the entire country. That if shock and awe tactics were enough to quell drug distribution in Davao, it should work for the entire country too.

Similarly, he overestimated his capabilities. In the feudal set-up of Davao, guns, goons and gold never fail to solve problems, especially those that relate to criminality. This is not the case on the national level where geographic, diplomatic, constitutional and human rights obstacles stand in the way of bamboozling people into submission.

The same oversimplification was committed in addressing the core problem of the country, poverty. It will be recalled that Mr. Duterte peddled the idea that if only we solve the problems of illegal drugs and criminality, the economy would boom, investors would come in droves, poverty will be eliminated and all of us will be more affluent.

What he failed to consider is that peace and order is only a small part of the equation. There are more important issues that must be addressed to improve the economy, not the least of which is ease in doing business, sanctity of contracts, a non-political legal system, supply chain linkages, labor capacitation, etc.

This oversimplification was a fatal mistake. While precious administrative time and hundreds of billions of pesos were squandered into policing the public, education was neglected, resources for social services were reduced, economic competitiveness took the back seat, efforts to attract foreign investors were benign and our manufacturing industries contracted.

Even the pandemic was oversimplified into a peace and order issue. Unlike more sophisticated governments that utilized science-based methods to quell the contagion, Mr. Duterte decided to impose the world’s longest and most restrictive lockdown. It was a militaristic solution for a health care problem. Not only did the lockdown fail to tame infection, it consigned the economy to five quarters of sharp economic contractions. The Philippines now has the distinction of being the most economically devastated country in Asia with thousands of corporations consigned to bankruptcy. This exemplifies how oversimplification carries dire consequences.

The last five years have taught us not to be gullible towards politicians who make extravagant promises. We should never believe anyone who offers quick-fix solutions to complex problems. There is no short cut to building a strong economy, to forming enduring institutions, to capacitating our youth, to lessening poverty and to strengthening our democracy.

The formula for effective governance has not changed for centuries. It calls for realistic goal setting, data-based strategy formulation, methodical executions of plans, transparency and agility to pivot, when necessary.

Good intentions, popularity and bravura are simply not enough to be an effective leader. Thus, our next president must have more to offer than the best of us. He/she must have a keen understanding of economics, social development principles, foreign policy, technological trends and the law. He/she must possess an analytical mind capable of comprehending complex issues and formulating long-term strategies. Most of all, he/she must respect our democratic processes, our institutions and the rule of law.

Let us remember these hard lessons as we move forward.

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PH tops Asian countries with highest number of land defenders' killings

Published September 14, 2021, 12:04 PM
by Joseph Pedrajas

The Philippines has been ranked as the top country in Asia with the highest number of documented killings of land defenders, a recent report from an international human rights organization showed.

London-based Global Witness said in its September 2021 report that the Philippines is also among the top countries in the world with the highest number of land defenders’ deaths per capita. The other countries are Nicaragua, Honduras, Colombia and Guatemala.

Land defenders are defined by the group as “people who take a stand and peaceful action against the unjust, discriminatory, corrupt or damaging exploitation of natural resources or the environment.”

Out of 227 worldwide deaths documented by Global Witness in 2020, the Philippines ranked third in the world in terms of definite number with the highest number of deaths. This came after it logged 29 land-related killings, mostly of the indigenous people and state officials or park rangers. The top country is Colombia, with 65; followed by Mexico, with 30.

In Asia, other countries where documented killings were reported were: India, with four; Indonesia, with three; Thailand, with two; and Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sri Lanka, with one respectively.

“In the Philippines, opposition to damaging industries is often met with violent crackdowns from the police and military,” Global Witness said in its 36-page report entitled “Last line of Defence.”

According to the report, over half of the lethal attacks they gathered were directly linked to defenders who were opposing mining, logging and dam projects.

“President Duterte used the COVID pandemic to further crackdown on dissent… The government also took advantage of the pandemic to rush through the Anti-Terrorism law, which came into effect in June. Critics argue that this will accelerate ‘red-tagging’—labelling activists and social leaders as communist rebels—and will lead to an increase in violence against environmental and indigenous defenders,” it added.

Global Witness expressed alarm that the rise in the number of land defenders’ killings was “a crisis against humanity” because “the unaccountable exploitation and greed driving the climate crisis is also having an increasingly violent impact on people.”
“Each killing is a complex and deeply personal tragedy, rooted in a predatory economic model driven by greed. It might feel morbid to record and analyze each death of a land and environmental defender,” it said.

According to the group, companies are “responsible” as “many threats and attacks against land and environmental defenders occur after communities voice their concerns about companies and their projects affecting their rights, including to their land.”

It added that governments are also to blame because they “have been all too willing to turn a blind eye and fail in providing their core mandate of upholding and protecting human rights.”

“States around the world – from Liberia and Sri Lanka to the Philippines – used the COVID pandemic to strengthen draconian measures to control citizens and close civic space. With journalists, activists, campaigners, and academics confined to their homes, and the freedom of press under renewed attack, the scant pre-pandemic protections that defenders had are under increasing strain,” it added.

For Greenpeace Philippines Country Director Lea Guerrero, the killings and persecution of environmental activists, even amid the pandemic, “shows [the] distorted priorities that put profit and the gain of a few over the welfare of communities and the environment we depend on.”

“Greenpeace believes that the work of environmental defenders is even more crucial now: we need to ensure a green, inclusive, and just recovery post COVID. We need to prevent government[s] and businesses from pursuing misguided policies and projects that are destructive to the environment and climate,” Guerrero said.

‘PHL economy can weather Covid risks’

BY BIANCA CUARESMA

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno

BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Benjamin Diokno insisted that while the economy continues to be under pressure due to the effects of the global pandemic, its fundamentals remain solid enough to withstand the shocks.

The BSP chief said in a recent speaking engagement that manageable inflation, stable banking sector, and robust external payments position, among other fundamentals, will support recovery and help keep the economic effects of the pandemic temporary.

“The Philippines’s economic fundamentals remain sound. While the pandemic poses challenges in the short term, the country continues to enjoy bright medium- and long-term growth prospects,” Diokno said.

In terms of inflation, the governor said that while estimates point to a missed target this year, they are confident that prices will ease back toward the midpoint of the target band next year and in 2023.
“Manageable inflation will continue to provide an enabling environment for investments and, therefore, job creation and income growth,” Diokno said.

In terms of banking sector stability, banks in the country have kept their capitalization and liquidity buffers well above the regulatory requirements and their exposure to bad debts manageable throughout the crisis.

“As such, banks will remain capable of supporting growth of the economy,” Diokno said.

And on the country’s external accounts, the governor said the current buffers are sufficient to manage impact of shocks, including market reaction over pending move of the US Federal Reserve to normalize its monetary policy.

“Our external liquidity buffers continue to be more than adequate. Our hefty GIR[gross international reserves], steady inflows from remittances and BPOs [business process outsourcing], and recovery of exports and FDI [foreign direct investments] will support the peso,” the governor said.

Diokno also said that local economic managers are “bent not only to regain over the short term what was lost from the crisis” but also in “building a new Philippine economy that is safer, stronger, more technologically advanced, and more inclusive.”

For its part, Diokno said BSP will keep its policy settings and regulatory relief measures supportive of the economy as needed.

Beginning Sept. 16, Metro Manila will be placed under Alert Level 4 wherein granular lockdowns will be enforced only in critical areas as part of the improved version to control the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) surge.

This was disclosed by Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año Tuesday, Sept. 14 in an interview over GMA News: “Alert Level 4 ang ipapatupad sa NCR (National Capital Region) (Alert Level 4 will be imposed in NCR).”

He confirmed that the Metro Manila mayors have agreed to implement a single alert level in the region.

Based on data analytics, Año noted that five NCR areas are considered Alert Level 5 while two others are considered as Alert Level 3. But most areas are under Alert Level 4.

The government’s new guidelines stated that areas under Alert Level 4, the second highest alert level in the new system are those with COVID-19 case counts that are high or rising while the total beds and intensive care unit (ICU) beds in the hospitals are at high utilization rate.

Those who are not allowed outside their residences under Alert Level 4 are persons below 18 years old, individuals aged over 65 years old, persons with immunodeficiencies, comorbidity, or other health risks and pregnant women.

In previous declarations, the DILG said that these individuals will only be allowed to go out to gain access to essential goods and services and for work in permitted industries and offices.

Also under Alert Level 4, intrazonal and interzonal travel for persons not otherwise required to remain at their residences may be allowed subject to the reasonable regulations of the local government units (LGUs) of destination.

Meanwhile, in the same GMA News report individual outdoor exercises are allowed under the alert level for all ages regardless of comorbidities or vaccination status, but shall be limited within the general area of their residence.

Under Alert Level 4, outdoor or al fresco dine-in services in restaurants and eateries will operate at the maximum of 30 percent venue/seating capacity regardless of vaccination status.

On the other hand, indoor dine-in services may be allowed at a limited 10 percent of the venue/seating capacity but will cater only to fully vaccinated individuals against COVID-19 in addition to their allowed outdoor or al fresco capacity.
The DILG chief explained that the alert level system is totally different from the community quarantine scheme since the former imposes restrictions in critical zones while allowing economic activities that are not under the granular lockdowns.

Año compared Alert level 4 to the modified community quarantine (MECQ).

In a previous statement, DILG Undersecretary Epimaco Densing III said the Alert Level 5 which may be compared to the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) may be imposed as a last resort when the COVID-19 cases go haywire. (Chito A. Chavez)

NCR lockdown guidelines ‘deemed approved’

By Azer Parrocha  September 14, 2021, 3:21 pm

(File photo)

MANILA – Malacañang on Tuesday announced that the guidelines for the pilot implementation of granular lockdowns and alert level system in Metro Manila are “deemed approved” under an already existing executive order.

Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque made this remark after a new classification framework for Metro Manila, which will be imposed from Sept. 16 to 30, was released on Monday night.

“Yan po ay deemed approved under EO 112. Di ko lang po sigurado kung tama nga yung number pero may EO po na nagde-delegate ng kapangyarihan na mag-issue ng ganitong patakaran sa IATF (That is deemed approved under EO 112. I’m just not sure if the number is right but there is an EO delegating the IATF to issue such guidelines),” he said in a Palace press briefing.

Executive Order (EO) 112, inked by President Rodrigo Duterte, implements enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in high-risk areas and general community quarantine (GCQ) in the rest of the country.

“Maganda rito po, hinahayaan natin magbukas yung mas malaking porsiyento ng ating ekonomiya sa ilalim po ng GCQ. Ibig sabihin po makapagtrabaho ang marami sa ‘tin. Hindi pa rin po lahat, pero mas marami po ngayon ang makakapagtrabaho (What’s good about this is that we are allowing a bigger percentage of our economy to open under GCQ. This means many of us can resume work. Not everyone, but more people can resume work),” he added.

Under the new guidelines, the new community quarantine classifications will have five alert levels that would determine the activities allowed in cities and/or municipalities.

These are:

* Alert Level 1 - refers to areas wherein case transmission is low and decreasing, total bed utilization rate, and intensive care unit utilization rate is low.
* Alert Level 2 - refers to areas wherein case transmission is low and decreasing, healthcare
utilization is low, or case counts are low but increasing, or case counts are low and decreasing but total bed utilization rate and intensive care unit utilization rate is increasing.

*Alert Level 3* - refers to areas wherein case counts are high and/or increasing, with total bed utilization rate and intensive care unit utilization rate at increasing utilization.

*Alert Level 4* - refers to areas wherein case counts are high and/or increasing, with total bed utilization rate and intensive care unit utilization rate are high.

*Alert Level 5* – refers to areas wherein case counts are alarming, with total bed utilization rate and intensive care unit utilization rate at critical level.

“Areas placed under Alert Level 5 shall observe the guidelines applicable to Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) as provided for under the IATF Omnibus Guidelines on the implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines, as amended,” the new guidelines stated.

On Sept. 3, the IATF issued a resolution which provides that under the new classification framework, which focuses on the imposition of granular lockdown measures, community quarantine shall be reduced to either ECQ or general community quarantine (GCQ) “with the latter having an alert level system (Alert Level 1 to 4) with each alert level limiting restrictions only to identified high-risk activities.”

Metro Manila will be placed under GCQ with Alert Level 4 from Sept. 16 to 30, according to Interior Secretary Eduardo Año.

He said the pilot implementation of the alert level system in the capital region will be assessed and it may be recommended to the President for a possible nationwide implementation.

Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Benhur Abalos said the National Capital Region (NCR) mayors agreed to implement uniformAlert Level 4 during the pilot test of the granular lockdowns and alert level system.

Under Alert Level 4, the following protocols shall be observed:

*Persons below 18 years old and over 65 years of age and with immunodeficiencies, comorbidities or other health risks, and pregnant women shall not be allowed outside;*

*Intrazonal and interzonal travel may be allowed subject to the reasonable regulations of the LGU of destination;*

*Individual outdoor exercises shall be allowed “but shall be limited within the general area of their residence”;*

*Establishments and/or activities characterized as high-risk for transmission shall not be allowed to operate;*

*Outdoor or alfresco dine-in services in restaurants and eateries shall be allowed at a maximum of 30 percent venue capacity while indoor dine-in services may be allowed at a limited 10 percent capacity “but will cater only to individuals fully vaccinated against Covid-19”;*

*Personal care services limited to barbershops, hair spas, nail spas, and beauty salons shall be allowed at a maximum of 30 percent venue/seating capacity if such services are conducted outdoors regardless of vaccination status. These establishments are allowed to operate at a limited 10 percent indoor;*

*In-person religious gatherings shall be allowed at a maximum of 30 percent venue/seating capacity if conducted outdoors regardless of vaccination status. These gatherings may be allowed indoors at a limited 10 percent seating capacity but may accommodate only individuals who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 in addition to their allowed outdoor capacities;*

*Gatherings for necrological services, wakes, inurnment, funerals for those who died of causes
other than Covid-19 shall be allowed, provided that the same shall be limited to immediate family members; and,

* Agencies and instrumentalities of the government shall remain to be fully operational and shall adhere to at least 20 percent on-site capacity while applying work-from-home and other flexible work arrangements. (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153489
MANILA, Philippines — Shorter curfew hours will be implemented in Metro Manila when the capital region shifts to an experimental lockdown scheme on Thursday.

Curfew will be implemented from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. during the pilot run of a new alert level system, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chairman Benhur Abalos said on Tuesday.

Currently, curfew in the capital region—which is under modified enhanced community quarantine—runs from 8 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Abalos said the implementation of new curfew hours will be simultaneous with the pilot test of localized lockdowns and the alert level system. He said Metro Manila mayors are set to issue a resolution on the matter.

The capital region will be placed under Alert Level 4 beginning Thursday.

Alert Level 4 means “case counts are high and/or increasing, with total bed utilization rate and intensive care unit utilization rate at high utilization.”

Under Alert Level 4, individuals below 18 years old, senior citizens, those with immunodeficiencies and comorbidities, and pregnant women are not allowed to go out of their houses.
Intrazonal and interzonal travel for authorized persons outside of residences may be allowed subject to regulations of the local government of destination.

Outdoor dining is allowed at 30% capacity, while indoor dining is limited to 10% capacity and would only cater to fully-vaccinated people.

Religious gatherings are also allowed at 30% capacity in outdoor venues, but are limited to 10% in indoor venues where only fully-vaccinated people may participate. — Gaea Katreena Cabico

'Bakuna Bubble' strategy backed by over 1,000 business owners

Support for the promising “Bakuna Bubble” proposal of Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship and Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion continues to snowball.

Over 1,000 business owners and franchisees rallied behind Concepcion’s call to allow greater mobility to fully vaccinated individuals a way to revive the economy.

In a manifesto, the business owners and proprietors expressed full support for the implementation of the Bakuna Bubble, which Concepcion first floated last month as a way to deal with the restrictions caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in Metro Manila.

Under the Bakuna Bubble, COVID-19 guidelines are eased for fully vaccinated individuals to help boost the economy and facilitate the employment of many Filipinos. “Bakuna” is the Filipino word for vaccine.

“It (Bakuna Bubble) would allow these severely affected establishments the opportunity to bounce back and more importantly for their employees to begin to rebuild their livelihood,” the manifesto backers said.

“We believe that this is the best way to safely open up the economy, saving both lives and livelihood,” they added.

They lamented that they have incurred tremendous losses since the start of the pandemic 18 months ago. Specifically, the financial losses and obligations resulted from the lockdowns implemented by the national government.

“Our employees have families to feed and stable employment is difficult to assure without a clear plan,” they noted.

The Metro Manila Council (MMC) recently joined Concepcion’s push to let fully vaccinated individuals enjoy greater mobility as a means to jumpstart the economy.

In a resolution signed by the 17 Metro Manila mayors and Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Benhur Abalos, the MMC asked the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to let fully vaccinated people engage in business and other activities that are prohibited under quarantine guidelines issued by the IATF.

As part of their support to the government’s initiatives, businesses have actively encouraged their employees to get vaccinated. A lot of companies have even invested in vaccines to ensure that their workers are protected.
The business owners also expressed support to the planned granular lockdowns, which are more localized and specific as opposed to region-wide quarantine classifications.

They also appealed to the government to consider the granular lockdowns as a sustainable option that provides responsive and prudent framework in preventing the spread of COVID-19 within communities.

“This framework can serve as a secure a safe way to restart and sustain the economy whilst ensuring that proper measures are in place to safeguard citizens’ health,” the manifesto stated.

Gov’t to provide food supply, not cash aid, for areas under granular lockdown

No cash aid will be given to areas in Metro Manila that will be placed under granular lockdown, but Presidential spokesman Harry Roque clarified on Tuesday, September 14, that the government will provide food supplies.

The Palace official said providing food supply to the households will be a “shared responsibility” of the local government units (LGUs) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

“Ayon po dun sa (Based on the) shared responsibility na napagkasunduan ng mga (agreed upon by the) mayors at ng (and the) DSWD food, food supplies po ang pamimigay sa mga (will be given to) areas na (that are) subject to granular lockdown,” Roque shared during a virtual press briefing.

The spokesperson is currently in New York to seek support for his nomination to be a member of the International Law Commission (ILC).

For his part, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Benjamin “Benhur” Abalos Jr. said that the LGU and DSWD will divide the two-week granular lockdown between themselves.

The mechanics, he explained, will be for the LGU to provide and distribute food packs for the first week. That will give the MMDA the time to “submit the papers” to the DSWD to know how many families will be given food packs for the second week of the lockdown.

Abalos reported that there will be about 2,000 to 3,000 families who will be under lockdown in Metro Manila during the pilot implementation of the government’s new quarantine classification.

From September 16 to 30, Metro Manila will follow the new alert level system. The Department of Health (DOH) will declare which areas will be under Alert Levels one to four while the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases will be the one to declare Alert Level 5 or hard lockdown, the strictest among the alert levels.

READ: [NCR under Alert Level 4 lockdown classification starting Sept. 16- Año](https://mb.com.ph/2021/09/14/northeast-philippines-under-lockdown-classification-starting-sept-16-año/)

Roque also said the DSWD has a “regular program” to “assist individuals in crisis situation.”

He noted the areas under lockdown may still receive cash assistance from the DSWD for transportation and medical-related expenses.

‘Policies stifling agriculture, manufacturing mired economy for decades’

BY BUSINESSMIRROR

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Karl Kendrick T. Chua

POLICY distortions that have stifled the growth of agriculture and manufacturing made the Philippine economy dependent on the output of low-skilled labor, according to the country’s Chief Economist.

In his speech at the 7th annual public policy conference (APPC) webinar of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick T. Chua said these policy distortions were implemented over a span of 60 years.

Chua said this accounts for the current administration’s efforts to transform agriculture into the foundation of the country’s structural transformation post-pandemic.

“Instead of agricultural productivity paving the way [for] a labor-intensive manufacturing sector, then a capital-intensive manufacturing sector, and finally a high-skill services sector, a different path happened,” Chua said.

“Agricultural productivity remains largely depressed and manufacturing has not grown to potential. As a result, a low-skill services sector has emerged as the dominant sector in the economy. Employment shifted out from agriculture to the informal services sector, instead of manufacturing,” he added.

Efforts to address these policy distortions were done through the investment in social services and infrastructure, including the passage
of the Rice Trade Liberalization Law and the Philippine Identification System or National ID program, he explained.

Chua said the RTL Law allowed rice to become more affordable. He noted that between 2017 and March 2019, rice was one of the top 10 contributors to inflation.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) Chief said in 2017, rice was the 10th major reason for inflation while in 2018, the commodity became the 2nd top cause of the increase in prices.

Since the enactment of the RTL Law, however, rice prices have posted an average contraction of 2.6 percent in the past 28 months. In 2019, it posted a contraction of 3 percent; 2020, 2.6 percent; and in 2021, the year to date inflation of rice is -2.2 percent.

Chua said the country’s rice production increased to 3.5 million metric tons in the third quarter of 2020, posting 15-percent growth over the same period in 2019.

Through the RCEF and other programs, he noted, the rice sector produced 19.3 million metric tons in 2020—the highest in years.

“Moving forward, more are needed to improve the competitiveness of agriculture as well as other sectors through more cluster and value chain analysis,” Chua said.

Agriculture, infrastructure damage due to 'Jolina' exceeds P1B

MANILA – The damage to agriculture and infrastructure caused by Typhoon Jolina has so far amounted to over PHP1.12 billion.

In its update Tuesday, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said damage to agriculture from the typhoon has been placed at PHP1,059,263,164, in the regions of Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas.

Meanwhile, infrastructure damage was estimated at PHP63,456,053 in Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol and Eastern Visayas.

Damaged houses were placed at 15,790 -- 15,190 of which were classified as partially damaged and 600 as totally damaged in Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, and Eastern Visayas.

The NDRRMC reported that a total of 1,347 barangays in Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Soccsksargen and the National Capital Region have been affected by the typhoon.

The typhoon's total affected population has reached 313,399 persons which is equivalent to 81,077 families.

Some 2,958 families or 11,212 individuals are currently at 181 evacuation centers while the rest are sheltering with families and friends.

At least three were confirmed dead, along with 19 injured and two missing due to the typhoon.

Meanwhile, reports of 16 deaths, six injured and three missing are still undergoing validation. *(PNA)*

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153458
The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) has upgraded the La Niña Watch to a La Niña Alert, which means La Niña is highly likely to form before the end of 2021.

PAGASA Administrator Dr. Vicente Malano said their recent climate monitoring and analyses have indicated that La Niña may emerge in the coming months.

“Based on the latest forecasts mostly from climate models and expert judgments, there is a 70 percent to 80 percent chance that the La Niña will form in the 4th quarter of 2021 and may persist until the first quarter of 2022,” Malano said in a statement on Monday, Sept. 13.

La Niña is characterized by unusually cool ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

Malano noted that rainfall forecasts suggest a “higher probability of above-normal rainfall conditions in many areas of the country in the next several months.”

“This can be attributed to the expected stronger easterlies, enhanced northeast monsoon and tropical cyclone occurrences,” he said.

“Furthermore, the eastern sections of the country, which normally receive more rainfall during the last quarter of the year, could further increase the likelihood of more adverse impacts such as floods and landslides over highly vulnerable areas,” he pointed out.

Malano advised concerned agencies to take the necessary precautionary measures to mitigate the potential adverse impact of the looming La Niña.

PAGASA said it will closely monitor these conditions and regular updates and advisories will be issued as appropriate.
A La Niña Watch was first issued by PAGASA on July 16, 2021, before it was upgraded to a La Niña Alert on Sept. 13, 2021.

If La Niña develops later this year, it will be a back-to-back event as the 2020-2021 La Niña only ended in June 2021.

PAGASA’s Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section chief Ana Liza Solis said during the climate outlook forum in August that back-to-back La Niña episodes are not unusual, noting that the last six episodes occurred back-to-back.


MANILA, Philippines — Fair weather with episodes of cloudy skies and scattered rain showers due to the intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ) and isolated thunderstorms are expected nationwide on Wednesday, the state weather bureau said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said that Mindanao and Eastern Visayas will experience cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms due to ITCZ. Metro Manila and the rest of the country are expected to have fairer weather, but rain showers are still possible due to isolated thunderstorms, according to Pagasa.

"Sa Luzon, kita po ang ating clear skies, associated po yan sa ridge o extension ng isang high pressure area sa may North Pacific Ocean," said senior weather specialist Benison Estareja.

(In Luzon, the clear skies are visible, which is associated with the ridge or extension of a high pressure area in the North Pacific Ocean.) Pagasa also said that no gale warning was raised in any of the seaboards nationwide with the rest of the country having slight to moderate sea conditions.

https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1488035/fair-cloudy-wednesday-weather-possible-rain-showers-pagasa
PH Fleet holds series of warfighting exercises

By Priam Nepomuceno  September 14, 2021, 10:22 am

ENHANCING CAPABILITIES. Officers of the Philippine Fleet lead the launch of the "Exercise Pagbubuklod" at Sangley Point in Cavite on Monday (Sept. 13, 2021). The exercise aims to further enhance the interoperability and readiness of Philippine Navy units in order to address traditional and non-traditional threats. (Photo courtesy of Philippine Fleet)

MANILA – The Philippine Fleet, the primary unit of the Philippine Navy (PN), will hold a series of exercises aimed at boosting its warfighting capabilities.

In a statement Monday night, Lt. Commander Ryan Luna, Philippine Fleet spokesperson, said the "Exercise Pagbubuklod" officially opened on Monday and will be held at the Sangley Point and Ternate, Cavite and the approaches of Manila Bay until Sept. 17.

"These forces will conduct joint Amphibious Planning and Field Training exercises (FTX) on land and at sea. 'Exercise Pagbubuklod' focuses on the Command's thrust of validating organizational structure, concepts of operations, and published doctrines to address the current and future scenario in the operational areas," he added.

"Exercise Pagbubuklod" is an annual maritime exercise conducted by the Philippine Fleet aimed at further enhancing the interoperability and readiness of PN units in order to address traditional and non-traditional threats.

Among the major exercises which will be conducted are the maritime interdiction operation with high angle sniping, amphibious air support, maritime air surveillance/intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance, maritime search and rescue, and high-risk visit, board, search and seizure.

Also included are amphibious assault/raid, insertion/extraction, amphibious sealift, tactical sealift, force protection capability, support and sustainment, afloat command and control, gunnery exercise, shipboard helicopter operations (HELOPS), and casualty evacuation operation (CASEVAC).

He added that all face-to-face activities during the "Exercise Pagbubuklod" will be carried out with strict adherence to health protocols set by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.
Luna said participants were also tested and certified as free from Covid-19 by authorized medical professionals and units prior to the start of all activities.

He added that all medical interventions and health protocols will be implemented during the conduct of the exercise.

"Medical services will also be provided to all personnel of the different component forces. Those who will manifest Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) symptoms will be immediately pulled out from the exercise to be evacuated to the nearest military treatment facility for evaluation," Luna said. *PNA*

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153436
MANILA – Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Gen. Guillermo Eleazar on Tuesday ordered the force’s Maritime Group to strengthen coordination and interoperability with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to fight illegal drug activities within the country’s territorial waters.

In a statement, Eleazar said this is to curb activities of international and local syndicates where illegal drugs are being unloaded in international waters and are later picked up by their local contacts and eventually smuggled into the country.

“In our relentless campaign against illegal drugs as ordered by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, I have already directed our Maritime Group to strengthen the coordination and interoperability with the Philippine Coast Guard to shield our territorial waters and coastlines from smuggling of illegal drugs into the country. Our airports and seaports are under strict surveillance due to the strengthened relationship with our Bureau of Customs, PDEA (Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency), and other government agencies through our whole-of-government approach to illegal drugs so we are focusing on our territorial waters,” he said.

This came following last week’s neutralization of 11 big-time drug traffickers and the recovery of around PHP5.5 billion worth of shabu in a series of operations in Zambales, Bataan, and Cavite -- which is so far the biggest drug haul in the country this year.

Eleazar, meanwhile, emphasized the need for strong coordination and good working relationship with other law enforcement agencies to finally end the threat of illegal drugs in the country.

“Inaasahan ko din ang patuloy na pagbabantay ng ating mga chiefs of police at ang pagpalalakas ng ugnayan ng PNP sa mga coastal communities bilang pakikisama sa adhikain ng ating Pangulo na tuluyan nang tapisin ang banta ng iligal na droga sa ating bansa (I also look forward to the continued vigilance of our chiefs of police and the strengthening of the PNP’s relationship with coastal communities in solidarity with our President's aspiration to finally end the threat of illegal drugs in our country),” he said. (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153462
Embassy confirms receipt of terror attack warning in PH, 5 others

By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora  September 14, 2021, 6:26 pm

MANILA – The Japanese Embassy in Manila on Tuesday confirmed that Tokyo has received an intelligence report about a possible terror attack in six countries, including the Philippines.

In a statement sent via email, the Embassy said it cannot disclose details, but the advisory is addressed to its citizens.

"We confirm that the Japanese government has received information about a possible terror attack, but we cannot give you any detailed background at the moment. In relation to this, we issued a warning to alert Japanese people residing in some Southeast Asian countries, but we cannot disclose the source," it said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, on the other hand, said they have not received any official report about the threat.

"The DFA has not been officially informed about this matter. Travel alerts for a country’s citizens are usually not officially notified to other countries, however, this type of information may have been shared among intelligence agencies," DFA Assistant Secretary Eduardo Meñez told reporters.

AFP spokesperson, Col. Ramon Zagala also assured that the Philippine government takes seriously all received reports of possible terrorism-related activities.

"We constantly validate all reports on security matters and it is a continuous process. As per last review our threat level is moderate," he said.

"We ensure that all citizens, Filipinos or not, as long as they are within our territory, are protected and kept safe from terrorists' threats. This is also to underscore the importance of the active participation of the populace in defeating terrorism since security is, after all, everyone's concern," he added.

Japan's Foreign Ministry, cited by reports on Monday, warned its citizens in Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar to stay away from religious facilities and crowds after obtaining information that "there are increased risks such as suicide bombing." (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153531
Calm down: DND allays public fears on Japan's terror alert

The Department of National Defense (DND) called for calm Tuesday night, September 14, as it said it would validate the threat alert issued by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Philippines and five other Southeast Asian countries due to possible terrorist attacks.

DND spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said the department “appreciates” and “takes cognizance” of the recent terrorism advisory issued by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its citizens who are residing in the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar.

“As with all reports concerning the safety and security of our communities, the aforementioned advisory will be subjected to the process of validation,” he said.

The DND and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have been on a constant state of heightened alert for terrorist activities since the Marawi City siege in 2017, according to Andolong.

The DND and AFP have also been working closely with other concerned agencies such as the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) to continuously monitor and assess terror threats within the country’s borders all year round, he added.

Prior to this, the AFP said they have not yet received the threat alert from Japan although they would work with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to validate the information.

The Japanese Embassy in the Philippines has confirmed that their government issued a threat alert against terrorism to their citizens living in the six Southeast Asian countries.

There are little to no details of the potential terror activity monitored by Japan although it warned its citizens to stay away from religious facilities and other crowded areas due to the possibility of “increased risks” of terror attacks “such as suicide bombings.”

The threat alert was met with utmost concern on social media, with the hashtags “Stay safe everyone” and “Japan” on the trending list as of Wednesday morning, September 15.

as much as possible avoid going out, and if its necessary, avoid crowded places. its not yet confirmed but its better be safe than sorry right? also pray too, prayers are powerful. stay safe everyone!

— ; ciara day ! (@supersunoo) September 14, 2021
One netizen tweeted: “[A]s much as possible avoid going out, and if [it’s] necessary, avoid crowded places. [It’s] not yet confirmed but [it’s] better be safe than sorry right? [A]ls pray too, prayers are powerful. [S]tay safe everyone!”

Another one urged the public to pray and stop making jokes about the security concern.

The least thing we all can do is to keep updated about the news. Also pls stop making jokes about it and step aside your jokes coz this is a very serious matter. If you feel anxious pls take a deep breath. Stay safe everyone!

— dery (@wayvisuals) September 14, 2021

“The least thing we all can do is to keep updated about the news. Also [please] stop making jokes about it and step aside your jokes [because] this is a very serious matter. If you feel anxious, [please] take a deep breath. Stay safe everyone!”

No report of terror threats amid Japan's warning: AFP

By Priam Nepomuceno  September 14, 2021, 3:36 pm

MANILA – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Tuesday said it is taking seriously all received or disseminated reports of possible terrorism-related activities.

This came after Japan's Foreign Ministry on Monday issued an alert cautioning its citizens in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar, against possible terror attacks.

"As of now, we have not received any report. We constantly validate all reports on security matters and it is a continuous process. As per last review our threat level is moderate," AFP spokesperson, Col. Ramon Zagala said in a statement.

Zagala said the AFP is continuing with the fight against all forms of terrorism and violence in the country through intensified internal security operations aimed at preserving peace and order.

"We ensure that all citizens, Filipinos or not, as long as they are within our territory, are protected and kept safe from terrorists' threats. This is also to underscore the importance of the active participation of the populace in defeating terrorism since security is, after all, everyone's concern," he added.

Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said it has not received any report of possible terror attacks linked to Tokyo's warning.

"However, this does not mean we will lower our guard on this matter. Our intelligence monitoring is stronger than ever, especially after the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the Marawi siege. We continue to work with other countries against terrorism through information sharing and partnership in dealing with terrorists," PNP chief, Gen. Guillermo Eleazar said in a statement.

He added that they are also working with the community and other stakeholders to thwart any possible terror attacks in the country. (with Lloyd Caliwan/PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153497
The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced Tuesday, September 14, that it is checking on the veracity of reports about Japan’s supposed issuance of a threat alert regarding “increased risks” of terrorist activities in six Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines.

Col. Ramon Zagala, AFP spokesperson, said the threat alert reportedly issued by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not reached the military leadership yet.

“We take seriously all received reports that pertains to security matters, especially on terrorism. As of now, we have not received any report,” he told reporters.

“We constantly validate all reports on security matters and it is a continuous process. As per last review our threat level is moderate,” he added.

Capt. Jonathan Zata, chief of AFP public affairs office, said the military will also coordinate with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to validate the information.

According to reports, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an alert to its citizens via email about “increased risks” of terror activities in Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar.

No other details were divulged but the threat alert was reportedly addressed to Japanese people living in the six Southeast Asian nations, advising them to avoid religious facilities and crowded areas.

Zagala assured the public that the AFP has sustained its intensified campaign against all forms of terrorism and violence in the country.

“We ensure that all citizens, Filipinos or not, as long as they are within our territory, are protected and kept safe from terrorists’ threats,” he said.

“This is also to underscore the importance of the active participation of the populace in defeating terrorism since security is, after all, everyone’s concern,” he added.

Military assures safety, security of foreigners in PHL after Japan terror attack warning in SEA countries

BYRENE ACOSTA
SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

The military assured on Tuesday the safety and security of Japanese and other foreigners in the country following the warning of the Japanese government for its citizens in the Philippines and five other countries in Southeast Asia to be wary of possible attacks.

“We ensure that all citizens, Filipinos or not, as long as they are within our territory, are protected and kept safe from terrorists’ threats,” the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said through its spokesman Ramon Zagala.

The Japanese foreign ministry warned on Monday its citizens in Southeast Asia, including in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Myanmar to be mindful of possible terrorism without elaborating.

The Japanese government, without citing sources, said it had obtained information about the “increased risks” of attacks in Southeast Asia “such as suicide bombings,” a warning that puzzled security officials in the region.

Still, the military is not taking Japan’s warning lightly, although according to Zagala, they have not receive any report yet about the
threats of terrorism and other attacks, especially against Japanese citizens in the country.

“We take seriously all received reports that pertains to security matters, especially on terrorism. We constantly validate all reports on security matters and it is a continuous process,” the military spokesman said.

Zagala said that based on the military’s last review of the threat level in the country, it is categorized as “moderate.”

He said the military is sustaining its campaign against all forms of terrorism and violence in the country through an intensified internal security operations.

No terror threat in PH but PNP not lowering guard, Eleazar says

Authorities have not received information on possible terror threat in the country so far, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said in reaction to the warning of the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs about potential attacks in Southeast Asia.

But PNP chief Gen. Guillermo Lorenzo Eleazar said they are continuously monitoring intelligence reports that they received from the ground and from counterparts both from local intelligence units and from foreign counterparts.

“We have not received any report on possible terror attacks as advised by the Japan Foreign Ministry but this does not mean that we would lower our guard on this matter,” Eleazar said.

Aside from the Philippines, the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar are at risk of attacks, such as suicide bombings.

Eleazar assured the public that the PNP continues its intensified intelligence-gathering measures to prevent any atrocities being plotted by lawless and terror groups, whether local or international.

He said the police are also continue working with the military to secure the country, as well as with other groups and stakeholders in the communities to ensure peace and order in the society.

Eleazar also stressed that since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, police units, especially those in the Mindanao region, have been alerted so they could prevent the possibility of spillover of the hostilities from the country, which may be perpetrated by local terrorists.

3 NPA rebels killed, 4 wounded in Negros town clash

BACOLOD CITY — Three suspected members of the New People’s Army (NPA) were killed, while four others, including a policeman, and an alleged NPA leader were wounded in an encounter with the Philippine National Police (PNP) – 6th Special Action Force Battalion (6SAB) at Barangay Tabu, Ilog, Negros Occidental on Tuesday morning.

Police Lt. Col. Ryan Manongdo, 6SAB commander, said the firefight lasted for about an hour, but no civilians were affected, as the encounter site is far from the houses.

Manongdo did not elaborate further on how the clash occurred, as it could jeopardized their operation, but stressed it was a “legitimate operation.”

Manongdo said the three wounded suspected NPA rebels, including their alleged leader were given first aid by the police combat medics and were guarded while waiting for them to be transported.

Manongdo said a member of the 6SAB suffered minor injuries in his chest after his vest was hit during the firefight. That cop, however, has rejoined his colleagues in the clearing operation.

Authorities initially recovered four M16 rifles.

Manongdo said nine individuals who were suspected to have links with the NPA after they were caught at the adjacent area near the encounter site were also held for questioning.

“We’ll check if they have arrest warrants,” said Manongdo.

Manongdo said the 2nd Negros Occidental Provincial Mobile Force Company, and the Army’s 15th Infantry Battalion (IB) augmented the 6SAB as clearing operation is ongoing.

https://mb.com.ph/2021/09/14/3-npa-rebels-killed-4-wounded-in-negros-town-clash/
ANTI-REBELS. Residents of Barangay Minapasuk in Calatrava, Negros Occidental burn communist flags and denounce their atrocities in this November 2020 photo. The military revealed that insurgents recruit even minor family members. *(Photo courtesy of 79IB Facebook)*

**MANILA** – Ruthless members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) conduct recruitment within their families, luring even children as their membership continues to decrease.

The health crisis has suspended face-to-face classes since last year, thus depriving the CPP-NPA of the chance to entice students to leave schools and join them.

The insurgents have since turned to relatives and indigenous peoples communities, not sparing even minors, according to Maj. Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., commander of the 4th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army.

“So ang nangyayari is that pati na rin iyong mga kamag-anak nilang mga bata, hinihikayat nila na maging miyembro ng New People’s Army. So that’s one very sad fact na nalaman po namin dito ‘no recently doon sa mga nag-surrender po sa atin (What happens is they persuade their younger relatives, even children, to be NPA members. That’s what we learned recently from those who have surrendered to us),” Brawner bared during the “Tagged” virtual media briefing of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) on Monday.

But Brawner said the CPP-NPA has lost the trust and support of the masses.

*Wala na rin silang mga suporta doon sa taumbayan. Even iyong mga mass bases nila, wala na rin po silang masyadong suporta. So ang nagsusuporta na lang po sa kanila ay iyong mga kamag-anak*
Brawner said the military is communicating with and reaching out to relatives of NPA members to enlighten them on why they should not join the armed struggle.

Between Sept. 8 and 10, five NPA members aged 11 to 17 were rescued during a series of clashes between government troops and rebels in Bukidnon.

The Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Philippines. (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153509
PH backs UN 'anticipatory action' to typhoons: Locsin

By Joyce Ann L. Rocamora  September 14, 2021, 8:14 pm

MANILA – The Philippine government supports the United Nations' anticipatory action to address the impact of natural disasters on communities.

In a high-level humanitarian event last September 9, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. cited the need for action as the country has been plagued by the numerous typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

"It is because of these experiences, burned into our collective memories, that the Philippines is committed to anticipatory action. We’ve gained the wisdom that predicting, preventing and mitigating the shock and impact of a disaster are key to risk reduction and management," he said in his statement by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Tuesday.

Locsin said the country has reflected this in the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), which mandates data sharing and the establishment of platforms for managing disaster-related information, as well as providing for capacity building for local anticipatory planning.

The UN has selected the Philippines as a pilot case for its USD7.5 million (approximately PHP374.7 million) "tropical cyclone anticipatory action" to address typhoon-related disasters.

READ: UN picks PH as pilot case for 'anticipatory action' on cyclones

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the pilot builds on the existing capacity of numerous organizations and networks already working on forecast-based
financing while being deeply rooted in operational realities of responding to typhoons in the Philippines, including Covid-19 compounding effects.

Bicol Region and Eastern Visayas will serve as the pilot areas since they are most often where destructive typhoons made their initial landfall, which brings the greatest damage in terms of wind impact and storm surge.

The pilot anticipatory action will involve setting up a trigger mechanism that corresponds directly to the tropical cyclone hazard. The mechanism then enables the activation of the framework and release of pre-agreed funds.

As an active supporter of the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, Locsin said the Philippines look forward to working as a pilot country for the initiative.

"We are an active supporter of the UN Central Emergency Fund. We contribute USD50,000 yearly and that’s peanuts. We can give more, much more. We have the money when we need it, as this pandemic has shown," he said.

"We look forward to working as a pilot country with CERF in its project on anticipatory action to typhoons. The best policies are based on common sense. We all have that. We just need the will to think and act on it," he added.

According to UN OCHA, approximately 20 tropical cyclones enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) yearly and an average of five of these are potentially destructive. (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1153543
Climate change could push over 200 million people to leave their homes by 2050, report says

SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 / 10:16 AM / AP

Climate change could push more than 200 million people to leave their homes in the next three decades and create migration hotspots unless urgent action is taken to reduce global emissions and bridge the development gap, a World Bank report has found.

The second part of the Groundswell report published on Monday examines how the impacts of slow-onset climate change such as water scarcity, decreasing crop productivity and rising sea levels could lead to millions of what the report describes as "climate migrants" by 2050 under three different scenarios with varying degrees of climate action and development.

Under the most pessimistic scenario, with a high level of emissions and unequal development, the report forecasts up to 216 million people moving within their own countries across the six regions analyzed. Those regions are Latin America; North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; Eastern Europe and Central Asia; South Asia; and East Asia and the Pacific.

In the most climate-friendly scenario, with a low level of emissions and inclusive, sustainable development, the number of migrants could be as much as 80% lower but still result in the move of 44 million people.

- "We have to go": Climate change driving increased migration from Central America

The report didn't look at the short-term impacts of climate change, such as effects on extreme weather events

The findings "reaffirm the potency of climate to induce migration within countries," said Viviane Wei Chen Clement, a Senior Climate Change Specialist at the World Bank and one of the report's authors.

In the worst-case scenario, Sub-Saharan Africa — the most vulnerable region due to desertification, fragile coastlines and the population's dependence on agriculture — would see the most movement, with up to 86 million climate migrants moving within national borders.

As climate talks near, pressure grows on Asia to cancel new coal projects

KUALA LUMPUR: With six nations accounting for more than 80 per cent of planned new coal projects globally, winning commitments to cancel those projects could help November’s COP26 UN climate summit “consign coal power to history”, a key goal of organisers, researchers said.

Proposed new coal power capacity globally has plunged 76 per cent since the Paris Agreement in 2015, with 44 countries agreeing to end new projects, according to a report by think-tank E3G released on Tuesday (Sep 14).

Asia however is still at the centre of the world’s remaining pipeline, which means action by six countries alone - China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey and Bangladesh - could remove more than four-fifths of planned projects before construction.

Ending the use of coal - the most polluting fossil fuel - for power production has been a key focus for climate change activists, leading to funding and insurance for new projects rapidly drying up.

Swiftly ending coal use is seen as vital to global goals of capping global warming at "well below" 2 degrees Celsius and ideally 1.5 degrees Celsius, and avoiding swiftly worsening climate threats such as harsher storms, floods, wildfires and crop failures.

But coal remains a mainstay for power generation in Asia, which accounts for 75 per cent of global coal demand, according to the International Energy Agency.

Countries with significant coal deposits or energy systems reliant on the fuel have been slow to abandon it, tied down in part by the costs of abandoning still-functioning plants and mines or reluctant to break commitments to new plants.
Over 100 world leaders to attend UN General Assembly in person

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

UNITED NATIONS—More than 100 heads of state and government are planning to attend the UN General Assembly’s annual gathering of world leaders in person next week, including US President Joe Biden, King Abdullah II of Jordan and the presidents of Brazil and Venezuela, according to the latest speakers list.

The prime ministers of Japan, India and the United Kingdom will also be at UN headquarters to deliver their country’s speech to the 193-member assembly, along with Israel’s new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. And 23 ministers are slated to speak in person as well, according to the list obtained Monday by The Associated Press.

Because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the UN’s members decided to make this year’s gathering hybrid, offering nations the possibility of sending leaders to New York in person or making prerecorded statements to be shown in the assembly chamber, as virtually all countries did last year.

Many diplomats and leaders have complained publicly that virtual meetings cannot substitute for in-person one-to-one or group contacts to tackle regional and global challenges and crises.

The high number of leaders planning to attend in person—73 heads of state and 31 heads of government—reflects the importance of the annual UN gathering, officially called the General Debate, and its role in diplomacy. While all countries speak publicly in the assembly, a lot of the world’s business gets discussed at private meetings, lunches and dinners on the sidelines.

Among those delivering prerecorded statements this year will be the presidents of Iran, Egypt, France, Indonesia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
The high-level week begins September 20 with a closed meeting on climate change between Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and world leaders. He will deliver his state of the world address at the following day’s opening of the global gathering, officially called the General Debate, followed by in-person speeches by Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro, Biden and about three dozen other leaders.

The last scheduled speakers on September 27 are from the delegations of North Korea, Myanmar, Guinea and Afghanistan.

The credentials of Myanmar’s current ambassador, from the country’s ousted democratic government, are being challenged by the military junta, but diplomats say it’s unlikely that challenge will be heard before high-level week by the General Assembly’s Credentials Committee. Afghanistan’s new Taliban rulers have not yet submitted a letter challenging the credentials of the previous government’s ambassador, and neither have the leaders of the recent coup in Guinea.

During high-level week, there are other events on energy and food security, which will both be virtual, and commemorating the 20th anniversary of the controversial UN conference on racism in Durban, South Africa, and on disarmament, which are both in-person. All other side events will be held outside the UN headquarters complex.

Under measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, member states have agreed to limit the delegations entering UN headquarters with a leader or minister to six people, with only four of them allowed in the General Assembly chamber. The secretary-general has also mandated that all UN staff in the building during the week be vaccinated.

Pakistan has consistently fended off allegations of supporting the Taliban in the US’ War on Terror, instead portraying itself as a victim for the past two decades. Prime Minister Imran Khan said in an interview in July: “70,000 Pakistanis died in a war we had nothing to do with. We had more than $150 billion loss to our economy.”

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday accused Pakistan of "hedging its bets constantly about the future of Afghanistan" by supporting Washington in its counterterror operations in the country, while harbouring terrorists during the 20-year-long 'War on Terror'.

“I think you’re very right to point at the role that Pakistan has played throughout the past 20 years and even before,” stated Blinken, responding to a question from Democrat lawmaker Bill Keating, who accused Islamabad of being “duplicitous” in its dealings with the US.

“And so, going forward, what we are looking at — what we have to look at — is to insist that every country — including Pakistan — makes good on the expectations that the international community has of what is required of a Taliban-led government, if it has to receive legitimacy of any kind,” Blinken added.

‘We Don’t Need to Hear Lies’: Blinken Excoriated By Lawmakers Over Biden’s Botched Afghan Withdrawal
The State Department’s top diplomat reiterated his list of demands for the Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan — ensuring freedom of travel and safe passage for Afghans and foreigners wanting to leave the nation, not allowing Afghanistan to be used as a safe haven for “outward directed terrorism”, forming more inclusive government, to allow humanitarian aid into the country and upholding the rights of women, girls and minorities — as preconditions before the US and its partners would move towards recognising the recently unveiled cabinet in Kabul.

“Pakistan needs to line up with the rest of the — with the broad majority of the — international community in working towards those ends and in upholding those expectations,” Blinken went on to say. The significant remarks come as Islamabad tries to forge a global consensus on a greater international engagement with the Taliban, in the wake of the new rulers in Kabul announcing their new cabinet last week.

https://sputniknews.com/20210914/think-you-are-right-blinken-agrees-pakistan-played-duplicitous-role-in-us-war-on-terror-1089056312.html
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi warned late last month that the global community "cannot forget those who have been left behind" in Afghanistan following the Taliban's* takeover. The UN official emphasized that a "robust and urgent" response would be necessary to address the needs of Afghan refugees and residents.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced on Monday that it intends to extend nearly $64 million in humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan via a number of independent organizations, such as UN agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Funds will come from both the USAID, as well as the US State Department.

The independent agency highlighted the US is presently the "largest humanitarian donor in Afghanistan," with nearly $330 million contributed to such efforts this year.

The USAID has also mobilized a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) that is based outside of Afghanistan, and will be tasked with leading Washington's humanitarian response for Afghans facing issues related to conflict, recurring natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the like.

China Threatens ‘Severe Measures’ in Taiwan Office Name Spat

HERCULES REYES  SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

1 MINUTE READ

China issued a warning to the US and Taiwan over discussions about changing a Taiwanese agency’s name. Representatives warned that it would be a violation of the One China Policy, and “severe measures” would be taken in response to the proposal.

Financial Times reported that there is a “serious consideration” in the US regarding changing the name of the “Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office” in Washington DC to “Taiwan Representative Office.” White House Asia adviser Kurt Campbell allegedly backed the proposal, while National Security Council and state department officials also supported the move.

China: US Has “No Intention” of Going Against One-China Policy

Zhao Lijian, deputy director of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Department, stated in a press conference on Monday that Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden agreed on the One China policy. According to Lijian, Biden said that “the US has no intention to change” it. He urged the US not to proceed with the office name change based on this understanding.

“The US should abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, honor its commitments with concrete actions, stop all forms of official exchanges or elevate substantive relations with Taiwan,” Lijian added.
He said that such a move is equivalent to “sending wrong signals to ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces,” and that the US should “stop.” Lijian added that any mishandling of the issue by the US could “seriously undermine China-US relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”

‘Severe Measures’

Chinese publication *Global Times* remarked that should the US decide to push through with the “Taiwan card,” diplomatic measures may not be enough. “The Chinese mainland will have to take severe economic and military measures” as a response to the issue.

US Silence

In a news briefing, principal deputy spokesperson for the US State Department Jalina Porter refused to comment on the name change proposal, merely reiterating American support for Taiwan. “Broadly speaking, our support for Taiwan is rock solid and we remain committed to keeping our ties with Taiwan, which is a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner,” Porter added.

https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/09/14/china-taiwan-office-name-spat/
Chinese FM Wang Yi urges the US to take an objective attitude toward China's development

By Global Times Published: Sep 15, 2021 12:17 AM

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, urged the US on Tuesday to take an objective attitude toward China's development and seek peaceful co-existence, cooperation and win-win relations.

Wang made the remarks during the joint press conference with Singapore Foreign Affairs Minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, after meeting with the country's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and the Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat. Singapore is the third stop for Wang's tour to neighboring countries after Vietnam and Cambodia. The last stop will be South Korea.

Some reporters asked at the press conference if China is engaged in a diplomatic competition with the US in the region and how Southeast Asian countries could avoid picking sides.

In response, Balakrishnan said that the US is the most developed country in the world and most important partner for the region. But for the past 40 years, the most successful story has been China's rise. As a close friend of China, Singapore hopes China and the US could deal with their competition in a constructive way, keep tensions under control and work together with regional countries on global challenges, including the COVID-19 and climate change.

Wang said that China's development is inevitable as it has strong internal driving forces. The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is irreversible and must be accomplished. This is also one achievement of the overall development of humanity.

How to view China's development is an important issue for every country. Wang noted that during his meeting with Singapore Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, he praised the Singaporean leader for taking a rational, justified and objective view on China's development, adding that it is good to find opportunities for cooperation and joint development.

Wang said that there are some countries and forces in the world that could not accept China's development because of doubts or even serious miscalculations. This does no good for cooperation or development of relations, he said.
Wang said that the US should realize that it is not the only one in the world that has the right for development but other countries have it too. The Americans are not the only ones that have the right to live in happy lives, people in other countries also have it.

The world is colorful and the development shared by all is true and sustainable one. It is unfair to let one or a few countries to be developed while others are left in poverty, said Wang.

He noted that we hope the US could, like Singapore and many other countries, take an objective attitude toward China and seek and expand cooperation. As the world's largest economies, China and the US cooperation will benefit the world. The US should abandon its zero-sum mentality, advance with the times and learn how to coexist with other nations and peoples to build a stable, peaceful and prosperous world.

https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202109/1234299.shtml
Chinese envoy to U.S. urges stable commercial ties despite trade conflicts

September 14, 2021 | 3:00 pm

WASHINGTON – China’s new ambassador to the United States called on Monday for stable and constructive commercial ties between the world’s two biggest economies, even as they struggle to resolve political and trade differences, a trade group said.

The envoy, Qin Gang, made the comments in an online meeting with the chief executives of major U.S. companies who serve on the board of the U.S.-China Business Council, the group said in a statement on Monday.

“The ambassador’s message to the CEOs was that the commercial relationship must thrive and grow while we work harder to resolve disagreements,” said Craig Allen, president of the nonprofit group of 200 U.S. companies that work with China.

The meeting came days after U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed in a telephone call on the need to ensure that competition between their nations did not veer into conflict.

Allen said the overall U.S.-Chinese relationship was “in a troubled place” at the moment, but Qin told the group their commercial ties remained strong.

Allen attended the meeting and has met the ambassador several times since he arrived at his new post in August.

U.S. companies are growing frustrated by the slow pace of the Biden administration’s review of China trade policies, and the continuation of tariffs on hundreds of billions of goods traded between the two countries.

The Phase 1 interim trade deal, which expires at the end of the year, called for China to boost purchases of U.S. exports by $200 billion over two years, but Beijing is far behind that target, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. – Reuters

Chinese students hit by US visa rejections amid tension

After a semester online, Wang Ziwei looked forward to meeting classmates who are returning to campus at Washington University in St Louis. But the 23-year-old finance student said the US revoked his student visa on security grounds.

Wang is among at least 500 students the Chinese government says have been rejected under a policy issued by then-President Donald Trump to block Beijing from obtaining US technology with possible military uses. Students argue it is applied too broadly and fume at what they say is an accusation they are spies.

"The whole thing is nonsense," Wang said. "What do we finance students have to do with the military?"

The students join companies and individuals whose plans have been disrupted by US-Chinese tension over technology and security, Beijing’s military buildup, the origins of the coronavirus, human rights and conflicting claims to the South China Sea and other territory.

The policy blocks visas for people who are affiliated with the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People’s Liberation Army, or universities deemed by Washington to be part of military modernisation efforts.

US officials say they believe thousands of Chinese students and researchers participate in programs that encourage them to transfer medical, computer and other sensitive information to China.

Washington cites Beijing’s strategy of "civil-military fusion", which it says treats private companies and universities as assets to develop Chinese military technology.

“Joint research institutions, academia and private firms are all being exploited to build the PLA’s future military systems — often without their knowledge or consent,” the State Department said in a 2020 report.

Trump’s successor, Joe Biden, has given no indication of what he might do.

China rushes to contain 'school centered' Delta outbreak before major holiday season

By Nectar Gan, CNN
Updated 1031 GMT (1831 HKT) September 14, 2021

Hong Kong (CNN) Chinese authorities are rushing to contain a widening Delta variant outbreak in the southern province of Fujian ahead of a major upcoming national holiday, when hundreds of millions of people are expected to travel across the country -- creating a window for the highly infectious variant to spread far and wide.

The outbreak, dubbed China’s "first school-centered flare-up" by state media, was originally detected Friday at a elementary school in the city of Putian. It has since spread throughout the province, infecting more than 100 people in three cities.

The National Health Commission (NHC) reported 59 cases in Fujian for Monday, including 24 in Putian and 32 in Xiamen, a major coastal city popular with tourists. On Tuesday, the two cities launched mass Covid testing for all residents.

Putian has about 3 million residents, while Xiamen has a population of 5 million. Both cities have ordered residents not to leave town for non-essential travel. Those with legitimate reasons to leave must produce a negative coronavirus test taken within the past 48 hours. Long-distance coaches departing from the two cities have also been suspended.

On Tuesday, Xiamen imposed targeted lockdowns on residential neighborhoods affected by the outbreak, with residents forbidden from leaving their apartments or compounds. It also shut down libraries, museums, bars, cinemas and gyms, banned large-scale gatherings and canceled events celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival, a three-day holiday that begins on Sunday.

Similar restrictions have also been imposed in Putian. The city has reported a total of 85 infections, including 30 children under the age of 10, the municipal government said at a news conference Tuesday.

In Xianyou, authorities have placed more than 3,000 direct and secondary contacts of infected cases in quarantine, including large numbers of school children, some of whom have been separated from their parents, according to Wu Haiduan, head of the county government.

"It is a difficult problem when outbreaks occur among children," Wu said. "If the children can be quarantined independently, we quarantine them independently. If they need parents to accompany by their side, we arrange their parents to stay in a room next to them so they can chat to each other. Of course, they can only chat in the next door."

As of Tuesday, no related cases have been reported outside of Fujian, but local governments across China are on high alert. The NHC estimates about 30,000 people from
Putian, the epicenter of the latest outbreak, had left the province in the two weeks prior to Friday.

An expert team sent by the NHC to Fujian called the outbreak "severe and complicated," but said it could hopefully be controlled before the National Day holiday next month if containment measures were implemented thoroughly, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

China Aims for 'Civilised' Internet With Focus on 'Socialist Values' - Xinhua

By Reuters

Sept. 14, 2021

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China will step up efforts to promote a "civilised" internet by strengthening oversight over the likes of news sites and online platforms and encouraging them to promote core socialist values, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday.

After years of runaway growth and rapid change, China's regulators have been trying to strengthen control over society with more stringent supervision of a range of sectors from technology to education and entertainment.

Cyberspace should be used to promote education about the ruling Communist Party and its achievements, according to guidelines published by the State Council, the news agency reported.

A clear-cut stand should be taken against "historical nihilism", defined as any attempt to use the past to question the party's leading role or the "inevitability" of Chinese socialism, and good moral values should be promoted, such as by publicising cases involving model workers, it said.

Behavioural norms in cyberspace should also be strengthened by cultivating ethics and rules that conform to socialist core values, it said, adding that efforts should be made to help young people use the internet "correctly" and "safely".

https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-09-14/china-aims-for-civilised-internet-with-focus-on-socialist-values-xinhua
China Online Meeting Including Myanmar’s NLD Seen as Recognition of Ousted Myanmar Party’s Influence

Aung Sang Suu Kyi’s party was one of four Myanmar groups included in a CCP-hosted meeting of Asian parties.

China’s inclusion of Myanmar’s former ruling party in a regional summit is an indication that Beijing believes that the party ousted in a Feb. 1 military coup will continue to be a force in politics, analysts and party members told RFA.

Aung Sang Suu Kyi’s democratically elected National League for Democracy government was deposed in a coup d’état, but the NLD was one of four Myanmar political parties invited to an inter-party event on economic development hosted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China in June referred to coup leader Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing as “the leader of Myanmar,” a move that The Diplomat magazine said was a step toward “de facto recognition” of the junta. Beijing is among countries that have not publicly condemned the military takeover.

Under its Belt and Road Initiative of global infrastructure spending and lending, China has invested more than $21 billion in Myanmar, and has long been concerned about the stability of its southern neighbor.

Beijing has had contacts with the NLD since the coup. The NLD sent a congratulatory letter when the CCP marked its 100th anniversary on July 1, and received a letter of thanks from Beijing on July 21.

In a message to junta leaders last month, Chinese officials said they wanted to see the NLD continue to exist as a political party, in response to the military regime’s recently revealed plan to dissolve the NLD, The Irrawaddy online newspaper reported.

Political analysts told RFA’s Myanmar Service that China invited the NLD to the meeting because Beijing is aware that the ousted
political party still has strong support among Myanmar’s population of 54 million.

“This just shows that China recognizes the NLD’s continued presence in Myanmar politics. It also shows that Beijing did not accept the military’s attempt to dissolve the NLD,” said Hla Kyaw Zaw, a Myanmar political analyst based in China’s Yunnan province across the border from Myanmar.

“I think the Chinese idea is to have a comprehensive dialogue to resolve the issues peacefully between the military council, the NLD and all the major organizations in the country. China is urging them to find a negotiated solution,” Hla Kyaw Zaw said.

While China has sided with previous military regimes in Myanmar, it has not forgotten the lessons of the past, Ye Tun, a Myanmar lawmaker turned political analyst told RFA.

“China seems to think the NLD will win the elections in August 2023. In reality, we can see that our country’s politics without the NLD will be very difficult to achieve stability.

A U.S.-based analyst of Chinese foreign policy, however, saw only modest significance in Beijing’s gesture to the NLD.

“I don’t think China’s meeting with the four political parties, including NLD, is hedging the bet,” Yun Sun, Director of the Washington-based Stimson Center’s China Program told RFA.

“This is party-to-party diplomacy, rather than state-to-state relations. The NLD is neither disbanded nor declared illegal,” she said. China’s ruling party “faces no constraints to engage the NLD,” Sun added.

But including the NLD in the meeting does show that China is adjusting to the situation on the ground in Myanmar, a local NLD leader in Myanmar’s largest city Yangon told RFA.

“China must have thought during the first couple of months that the military would gain complete control over the country. But now, seven months after the coup, we have been forced to take up arms and reclaim our territory,” said lawmaker Bo Bo Oo, who
represented the NLD at the online meeting and is responsible for the party’s communications with China

“The junta also has no control over the economy. Diplomatic relations with other nations have also plummeted. Under these circumstances, the future of the military council is uncertain,” he said.

“Beijing has changed its perception due to this uncertainty. In my view, Beijing’s analysis of the current situation is closer to the truth than ever before,” said Bo Bo Oo.

Myanmar remains strategically important to China, according to Zin Ma Aung, foreign minister for the shadow National Unity Government (NUG), made up of ousted NLD lawmakers.

“Myanmar is a close neighboring country to China, and the NLD is a major political party. As China adheres to the principles of the Chinese Communist Party, it is more likely that it will continue to engage in inter-party relations,” Zin Ma Aung told RFA.
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is visiting several Southeast Asian nations in a bid to push ratification of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement and shore up their relations with Beijing. His visit comes after trips by several senior US officials aimed at turning those nations into adversaries of China.

Wang’s weeklong tour began in Vietnam on Friday and will touch Cambodia, Singapore and South Korea, as well.

In Vietnam, Wang urged that disputes in the South China Sea should not be allowed to disrupt the hard-won peace and stability in the region. China and Vietnam have made competing claims over island chains and sea lanes in the waterway, and can often be seen harassing the fishing fleets and oceanography vessels of the other nation in disputed waters. However, both nations’ claims are also contested in part by several other countries, including Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Wang also announced that China would donate 3 million more COVID-19 vaccines to Vietnam, bringing the total supplied to 5.7 million, and urged Hanoi to ratify the RCEP agreement.

On Sunday, Wang went to Phnom Penh, where last week, Cambodia became the fourth nation to ratify the agreement. A massive Asian trade pact signed by 15 nations in November 2020, it will include 30% of the world’s population and 30% of its gross domestic product in a single common market. However, it cannot enter force without being ratified by six of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and three of the five non-ASEAN nations.
So far, Cambodia and Singapore are the only ASEAN members to ratify RCEP, while non-members China and Japan have also ratified it.

Dato Lim Jock Hoi, secretary-general of ASEAN, hailed RCEP last week at the 18th China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, saying it had the potential to play a significant part on the region’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic - if it enters force in time.

"To reap the rewards of the RCEP, we need to ensure the timely entry into force of the RCEP agreement," Dato Lim stated, as quoted by Xinhua News Agency.

Tan Sri Dato' Azman Hashim, Chairman of Malaysia-based AmBank Group, said at the expo that RCEP member nations’ combined GDP could grow to a majority of world production under the pact, collectively gaining at least $174 billion in real income by 2030.

Cambodian Commerce Minister Pan Sorasak told lawmakers government forecasts suggest entering RCEP would boost GDP by 2%, the country’s exports by 7.3% and investment by 23.4%.

Scant Room For Classroom Debate After Death of Hong Kong's Liberal Studies: Teachers

Where students were once asked to debate topics from more than one perspective, they are now being told to memorize swathes of government-approved content by rote.

By Cheng Yut Yiu, Lu Xi, and Man Hoi Yan
2021-09-13

Three weeks after the start of the new semester, teachers of the new "civic and social development" curriculum that replaced Liberal Studies in Hong Kong’s schools say there is scant freedom for classroom debate.

Teachers delivering the new Values Education (Moral, Civic and National Education) curriculum said they were confused over which teaching materials to use, but were less likely to confer with colleagues amid a growing culture of informing on teachers for having the wrong political opinions in schools.

They said the teaching materials are structured so as to ensure there is little room for free discussion and debate among students and teachers in the classroom.

In stark contrast to the Liberal Studies curriculum that was abolished this year, no contemporary news reports are used as examples to illustrate the points being made, they said.

Instead, students were asked to memorize by rote sections of the draconian national security law that was imposed on Hong Kong by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from July 1, 2020, ushering in a citywide crackdown on political opposition and peaceful dissent.

Instead of current affairs reporting, speeches by CCP officials were also offered as examples for the topics being taught.

A teacher who gave a pseudonym Wong, who previously taught Liberal Studies for more than 10 years, said all of the topics in the new Values Education curriculum must be taught in the order specified by the education bureau, using approved textbooks.
"The textbooks and syllabus materials define the three treaties [that led to the founding of a British colony in Hong Kong] as unequal treaties, and Hong Kong as an 'issue,' and as an inseparable part of China," Wong said.

"The biggest difference compared with Liberal Studies is that you could debate the good or bad on both sides of any topic, whereas now ... there's very little room for discussion because Hong Kong is defined as an inseparable part [of China]," Wong said.

According to the Education Bureau website, Values Education includes topics titled National Identity, Law-Abidingness and Responsibility, as well as Integrity and Empathy.

National security education

A primary-school teacher who gave only the surname Lee said national security education, which insists that the national security law protects people rather than criminalizing critical speech and peaceful protest, has been deployed throughout the education system.

"It's the kids who are suffering the most right now, especially the younger ones," Lee said. "They are really going through a dark time."

"There is a huge problem with teachers leaving, because they don't feel it's safe to be a teacher any more," he said. "That's the very sad state of education in Hong Kong."

The changes being imposed on schools and universities under the national security law are having a far-reaching impact on civil society.

On Sept. 11, members of Hong Kong's oldest professional body, the Professional Teachers' Union, voted to formally disband after repeated denunciations by the CCP-backed media.

"With the worsening of the situation, this is a decision we have to
make, actually we're quite sad about this," president Fung Wai-wah told journalists on Saturday, in comments reported by government broadcaster RTHK.

The move came after the government said it would stop working with the union, and after it was called a "malignant tumor" by state news agency Xinhua and CCP mouthpiece the People's Daily.

According to Wong, teachers are now far less likely to discuss their work with colleagues, or share teaching materials.

"If we share our teaching materials, and then they are deemed problematic, they could be used to label us," Wong said. "Now we've been cut off from our peer support, we will get more and more isolated and powerless."

"Liberal Studies used to be a core subject that would help students qualify for university," Wong said. "But our role has been reduced to just getting the students through the course, with a pass or fail."


Hong Kong District Councilor Expelled After Failing to Take Loyalty Oath

Authorities say they are unconvinced by the oaths of seven more, including two councilors awaiting trial for 'subversion' under the national security law.
Authorities in Hong Kong have expelled an elected pro-democracy member of the city’s District Council for failing to turn up to pledge allegiance to the government and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), while calling into question the oaths of seven other opposition councilors.

Peter Choi, who was elected in Hong Kong Island's Eastern district, failed to turn up alongside 24 colleagues for a mass oath-taking ceremony on Friday. He was expelled from the council with immediate effect.

Officials also asked seven other councilors -- Clarisse Yeung and Leung Pak-kin from Wanchai, Wei Siu-lik, So Yat-hang, Chan Wing-tai and Lai Tsz-yan from Eastern, and Michael Pang from Southern district -- for further information after finding their oaths "questionable."

"As the oath administrator had doubts on the validity of the oaths taken by seven district council members, they were required to provide additional information for the oath administrator to decide the validity of their oaths," state news agency Xinhua reported.

Yeung and Pang also face charges under a draconian national security law imposed on Hong Kong by the CCP from July 1, 2020. They are among 47 former lawmakers and democracy activists charged with "subversion" for taking part in a democratic primary ahead of planned elections to the Legislative Council (LegCo).

Leung said via social media that he had been given until 5.00 p.m. local time on Monday to respond to the request.

The remaining 17 councilor on Hong Kong Island will be allowed to remain in their seats, after they took their oaths, officials said.
While the pro-democracy camp took control of all but one of the city's 18 councils in November 2019, more than 260 district councilors have resigned amid an ongoing crackdown on public dissent and mandatory oath-taking since the national security law took effect.

Macau turnout plummets

Some cited the oath-taking as a reason, amid fears councilors who "failed" their oath-taking would be required to pay back their salaries and expenses.

District Councilors, LegCo members and around 170,000 civil servants in Hong Kong are expected to take oaths of allegiance to the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the People's Republic of China.

The national security law criminalizes any kind of public statement that could be regarded as inciting ill-feeling against the authorities, both in Hong Kong and Beijing.

The person administering the oath determines whether an oath is valid or not, and there is no right of appeal, according to an oath-taking law that took effect from May 2021.


Uyghur Tribunal Wraps up in London With Eye on December Ruling on Genocide Allegations

The hearings in London aim to determine if abuses of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims amount to genocide.
The final round of a tribunal investigating whether China’s treatment of its ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims constitutes genocide ended in London Monday after four days of hearings and testimony provided by nearly 40 witnesses and experts, with a nonbinding verdict expected at the end of the year.

The nine-member tribunal chaired by prominent British lawyer Geoffrey Nice conducted the first set of hearings in London known as the Uyghur Tribunal in early June, during which the panelists heard accounts from internment camp survivors describing abuses such as systematic rape, other forms of gender-based violence, torture, and killings.

During the second round of hearings from Sept. 10-13, nine witnesses and 28 experts testified about their experiences with and research findings on the Uyghur crackdown. The tribunal has no state backing or powers of sanction or enforcement, and any judgments issued are nonbinding on any government.

China has come under criticism for heavy-handed policies targeting the 12 million predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in the far-western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

Alleged abuses include the demolition of mosques; the imprisonment of Uyghur intellectuals, artists and business leaders; the replacement of Uyghur with Chinese as the main language in schools; the use of a pervasive and intrusive surveillance system to monitor Uyghurs’ move; forced labor at factories and farms; and forced birth control and the sterilization of Uyghur women.

China has held up to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a network of detention camps since 2017. Beijing has said that the camps are vocational training centers and has denied widespread and documented allegations that it has mistreated Muslims living in Xinjiang.

The U.S. and the legislatures in several European countries have deemed the treatment of Uyghurs and others in the XUAR as constituting genocide and crimes against humanity.
Intimidation of Uyghurs abroad

During the final day of the session, Laura Harth, campaign director for Spain-based Safeguard Defenders, focused in her remarks to the panel on Beijing’s public campaign to intimidate Uyghurs living abroad to prevent them from speaking out on alleged abuses in Xinjiang.

“The so-called counter-evidence that Beijing and local authorities have sought to posit to the world over the past years bear all the hallmarks of yet more human rights violations and seemed to have the sole purpose of intimidating, discrediting, and silencing individual witnesses overseas,” she said.

Barrister Rodney Dixon told the panel that he and two colleagues had submitted a report on crimes committed against Uyghurs in Xinjiang to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague on behalf of the East Turkestan government in exile and the Uyghur people.

They gathered evidence about Uyghurs being targeted by Chinese authorities in ICC member states, such as Tajikistan and Cambodia, “in order to arrest them and bring them back into China where they are never heard from again and where they are effectively disappeared,” Dixon said.

The report urges the ICC to open a full investigation of the crimes, he said. The ICC can investigate and prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and the crime of aggression.

Though China has not joined the ICC, the court has jurisdiction to prosecute crimes committed on the territory of member states, even if those responsible are citizens of a country that is not a member of the court.

The tribunal also heard testimony from ethnic Kazakh Gulzire Alwuqanqizi, who was arrested in July 2017 when she entered Xinjiang from Kazakhstan at the Khorgas border checkpoint with the Kazakh equivalent of a green card and a Chinese passport.

Subsequently interned in four different facilities in Xinjiang over more than 14 months, Gulzire was made to take pills, give blood
samples, have medical checks, including ultrasounds, and be injected with what she was told was a flu shot, leaving her unable to have children, she said.

Gulzire told the panel she had been kept in shackles for six months at one camp and had to work as a cleaner, bathing female detainees who had been tied to a bed and raped violently by Han Chinese men. She then had to mop up the floor after the sexual assaults took place.

“I saw that Uyghur women were brought to that room, and they were raped, and I had to wash them afterwards,” she said through a translator.

“I would hear them scream and shout and beg for help, but no one would do so,” said Gulzire, who testified that one of the men told her he had paid money to assault Uyghur women.

Involvement of central government organs

Adrien Zenz, a German researcher whose work first brought worldwide attention to the internment camp system, presented the panel with a new report detailing the strong involvement of China’s central government institutions in the mass incarcerations that began in Xinjiang in 2017.

New evidence shows that “three very important central government organs” — the Central Committee Xinjiang Work Coordination Small Group, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in Beijing, and the State Administration for Religious Affairs — were involved in the drafting of a March 2017 regulation that laid the foundation for the vocational skills education training centers in Xinjiang.

Those groups also helped pass revisions to regulations in October 2018 to fully legitimize the “re-education institutions,” said Zenz, whose new report will be released by the Washington-based think tank Jamestown Foundation on Tuesday.

Chen Quanguo, who has been Communist Party chief in Xinjiang since August 2016 and is considered the architect of the
crackdown on Uyghurs, “was likely brought in as a ruthless and efficient implementer of a hatched plan that was outlined and approved by the central government.” Zenz told the panel.

Evidence of the Chinese Central Government’s Knowledge of and Involvement in Xinjiang’s Re-Education Internment Campaign

By: Adrian Zenz

September 14, 2021 03:43 PM Age: 11 hours

Documents leaked to the New York Times (also known as the Xinjiang Papers) in November 2019 revealed how Chinese President Xi Jinping laid the groundwork for the Chinese government’s draconian campaign of internment in the northwestern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). In April 2014, while visiting the region, Xi demanded an all-out “struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separatism” that showed “absolutely no mercy.” He likened Islamic extremism to a virus, noting that its eradication would require “a period of painful, interventionary treatment” (New York Times, November 16, 2019). But more direct links between Xinjiang’s re-education internment campaign that began in 2017, and the central government—including Xi himself—have so far remained elusive.

In the absence of such evidence, western expert, media and political commentary on the atrocity has typically placed the responsibility for these policies on the XUAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo (陈全国), who has been widely referred to as their “architect” (e.g., Bloomberg, September 27, 2018; Shareamerica.gov, July 27, 2020). In July 2020, Chen became the highest-ranking Chinese official to be sanctioned by the U.S. government in connection with “serious rights abuses against ethnic minorities” in the XUAR (U.S. Treasury Department, July 9, 2020), but other central government figures have escaped such designations. Researchers have refrained from explicitly stating that Chen was implementing a central government blueprint, instead noting that “regional Party Secretary Chen
Quanguo himself [may be] the progenitor of increasingly repressive measures now employed in Xinjiang”, or that he may “simply [be] the most ruthless tool by which to implement them” (China Leadership Monitor, May 16, 2018).

Now, previously unanalyzed central government and state media commentary from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) surrounding the introduction of the crucial March 2017 “XUAR De-Extremification Regulation” ([新疆维吾尔自治区去极端化条例], Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhi qu jiduanhua tiaoli, hereafter ‘Regulation’) as well as its October 2018 revision show that several important central government institutions were closely and directly involved in the drafting of this key legislation. The March 2017 Regulation legalized Xinjiang’s re-education internment campaign in the eyes of the state and directly preceded the campaign’s inception.[1] The October 2018 revision contained blunt mandates for re-education in so-called Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers (VSETC, 职业技能教育培训中心, Zhiye jineng jiaoyu peixun zhongxin, a state euphemism for what are in effect high-security internment camps).

Two of the three central government institutions involved can be directly linked to some of the most powerful members of China’s top decision-making body, the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC, 中国共产党中央政治局常务委员会, Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang zhengzhi ju dangwu weiyuanhui). Specifically, they are overseen by the Politburo Standing Committee’s third- and fourth-ranked members, who rank directly under General Secretary Xi Jinping (first-ranked) and Premier Li Keqiang (second-ranked).

Xinjiang officials have asserted that both the Regulation and the vocational “centers” implement central government policy for the region and the “important instructions” of Xi Jinping (Humanrights.cn, November 23, 2018; Chinaxinjiang.cn, March 31, 2017). Such statements contextualize Xi’s 2020 assertion that “ethnic work [in Xinjiang] has been a success” (Xinhua News, September 26, 2020). Finally, there is substantial circumstantial evidence that when Xi personally addressed Xinjiang’s leadership in March 2017, he spoke in direct relation to the state’s mass internment campaign that would begin weeks later.

While it was always clear that an authoritarian figure such as Xi Jinping, who has presided over the growing centralization of the Chinese party-state since coming to power in 2012, must have at least tacitly approved the PRC’s Xinjiang policy, the
extent to which Chen Quanguo may have acted independently—albeit presumably under a generalized central government mandate to bring the region under control—has been unverified. Given Chen’s extensive expertise in previously working to suppress a major restive ethnic group in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), researchers including this author previously speculated that Chen may have both authored and implemented the re-education internment drive (China Brief, September 21, 2017).

Experts have rightly noted that despite the trend toward centralizing control under Xi, the “actual governance of China can be extremely decentralized,” with centrally appointed provincial leaders enjoying substantial degrees of autonomy as long as they align with Beijing’s will (Council on Foreign Relations, June 23). Nevertheless, the new evidence for the more specific and immediate involvement of central government institutions, coupled with official commentary on linkages between regional policies and the will of the central government, may serve to reframe the discussion on the evolution of the Chinese state’s 2017-2019 internment campaign in Xinjiang.

**Central Government Involvement in the Drafting of the March 2017 Regulation**

The March 2017 De-Extremification Regulation laid the foundation for the “normalization, standardization, and legalization” (常态化、规范化、法治化, changtaihua, guifanhua, fazhihua) of Xinjiang’s re-education (lit. “transformation through education”—教育转化, jiaoyu zhuanhua) through “centralized education” involving “behavioral correction” (XUAR Government, March 30, 2017; Legal Daily, April 11, 2017). Re-education camp construction bids and anecdotal accounts from the ground indicated that Xinjiang’s campaign of mass internment began right around when the Regulation came into effect.[2] The PRC has also stated that the Regulation constitutes the legal basis for the VSETC (PRC Consulate-General in Brisbane, November 30, 2018). The Regulation was revised in October 2018 to fully legitimize the VSETC, referring to them as “re-education institutions” (教育转化机构, jiaoyu zhuanhua jigou) (Standing Committee of the XUAR People’s Congress, October 9, 2018). Construction bids for such “centers” were already being published by the fall of 2017.[3]

An April 11, 2017 article published by Legal Daily (法制日报, Fazhi Ribao), a newspaper backed by the state’s Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission
(CPLC, 中央政法委, Zhongyang zheng fa wei) that describes itself as “the party’s main mouthpiece on the political and legal front,” noted that the drafting of the Regulation took “over two years” (Legal Daily, April 11, 2017; Legal Daily, August 1, 2020; China Court, April 6, 2017). The process involved extensive consultations (lit. “extensively solicited opinions”, 广泛征求意见, guanfan zhengqiu yijian) with three important central government organs: the Office of the Central Committee Xinjiang Work Coordination Small Group (中央新疆工作协调小组办公室, Zhongyang Xinjiang gongzu xietiao xiaozu bangongshi, often shortened to 中央新疆办, Zhongyang Xinjiang ban); the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) (全国人大法工委, Quanguo renda fa gong wei), and the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA, 国家宗教局, Guojia zongjiao ju) (Legal Daily, April 11, 2017).

BHUTAN’S COMING BORDER CRISIS WITH CHINA

WRITTEN BY JOHN POLLOCK

13 September 2021
In early April 2021, the 10th Expert Group Meeting (EGM), a joint Sino-Bhutanese delegation which includes Bhutan’s Ambassador to India, Major General Vetsop Namgyel, was held in Kunming, China. Their goal: to lay the groundwork for the 25th round of negotiations later this year on the contested Sino-Bhutanese frontier. Described in the Global Times as having a “warm and friendly atmosphere”, behind the diplomatic pleasantries and photo opportunities presented by this meeting however lies a simmering border dispute, with implications for all of South Asia. Beijing is altering the territorial status quo in Bhutan, and there is little Thimphu can do to oppose it.

The border between Bhutan and China spans 477 kilometres through some of the most remote and hostile terrain on the planet. Amid heavily forested ravines and ice-capped mountain summits, consensus on its precise location has been hard to reach and harder still to enforce. Ethnic Tibetan herdsmen routinely cross into Bhutan and, on numerous occasions, so have People’s Liberation Army (PLA) patrols. In September 2020, during the Sino-Indian standoff at Pangong Tso, the PLA was seen to be more aggressively patrolling near the Pasamlung Valley and preventing the Royal Bhutanese Army from entering Dermalung, regions located in the sparsely populated north and claimed by Beijing.

Should it transpire in the coming years that Chinese villages or roads are being constructed in Sakteng, alongside those on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, it is conceivable that Indian mountain troops from IV Corps would intervene as at Doklam in 2017, thus placing Bhutan at the centre of a future Sino-Indian standoff.

The border dispute has a long history and is one of China’s last remaining land disputes alongside the tensions with India. Between 1984 and 2016, 24 rounds of talks between Bhutan and China were conducted despite lacking formal diplomatic ties. The 25th round has been delayed for almost five years, first by the 2017 Doklam standoff, and more recently, by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, Beijing has become increasingly aggressive in its conduct towards Bhutan, laying fresh claim to swathes of land such as Sakteng, constructing new villages on Bhutanese territory such as Pangda at Doklam or Gyalaphug in Pasamlung, and reinforcing the border near Doklam with
dual-use infrastructure and military hardware. The aim is to secure a strategic advantage over India at the expense of Bhutan’s territorial integrity.

The changing status quo in Bhutan

Robert Barnett and his team of researchers have brought widespread attention to Beijing’s recent moves in the Himalayas and highlighted the scale of the challenge now facing Bhutan. Historically, Beijing has claimed over 760 square kilometres within Bhutan. This includes Sinchulung, Dramana, Shakhatoe, and Doklam in the west near the India-China-Bhutan tri-juncture, and the Jakarlung and Pasamlung Valleys, located north near the Tibet Administrative Region (TAR).

Since 2014, satellite images from Maxar Technologies/Google Earth reveal that China has been steadily reinforcing its infrastructure along the TAR’s border with Bhutan, Nepal and India, constructing 600 new villages within Tibet as well as highways and railway lines. Barnett’s investigation however has revealed the existence of a large Chinese village, identified by its Tibetan name of Gyalaphug. The village is similar in scope to Pangda near Doklam located within the contested Pasamlung Valley. Known to the Bhutanese as Beyul Khenpajong, the area is of enormous cultural and religious significance to both Bhutanese and Tibetan Buddhists. The investigation further reveals Gyalaphug is not simply an isolated village. Rather, it sits within a network of projects, including a small hydropower station, two Chinese Communist Party administrative centres, and five police outposts. This, alongside a similar enclave reportedly under construction in the Menchuma Valley, represents a low-level annexation by China in territory internationally recognised as belonging to Bhutan. Beijing meanwhile contends that Gyalaphug is administratively part of Lhodrak in the TAR, as per comments by Wu Yingjie, the CCP Party Secretary of Tibet.

Along with renewed pressure in the north, Beijing has also upped the ante for Bhutan in the east. In June 2020, at the 58th meeting of the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), China’s delegation unexpectedly objected to grant assistance for the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, claiming this region lies within Chinese territory. This sudden announcement amounts to an additional 740 square kilometres of Bhutanese territory claimed by Beijing in a highly sensitive region, given it borders the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. As Bhutanese journalist, Tenzing Lamsang highlights, Sakteng is an entirely new claim and represents a deliberate escalation in Sino-Bhutanese border tensions. Maps produced by the Chinese Communist Party in 2014 and even those dating back to 1977 have not previously featured Sakteng, nor has eastern Bhutan been a subject of discussion in the 24 rounds of prior border talks or when Vice-Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou visited Bhutan in 2018. Beijing’s sudden claim to Sakteng becomes clear when placed in a wider context, however.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at The Istana on Sep 14, 2021. (Photo: Ministry of Communications and Information)

Next

SINGAPORE: China’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Tuesday (Sep 14), the second and final day of his working visit to Singapore.
During their meeting at the Istana, both affirmed the "excellent" state of relations between Singapore and China, and the "positive momentum" in cooperation amid COVID-19, Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said in a press statement.

Mr Lee and Mr Wang also discussed regional and international developments and welcomed the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations this year, said MFA.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at The Istana on Sep 14, 2021. (Photo: Ministry of Communications and Information)

In a Facebook post, Mr Lee said that he and Mr Wang "reaffirmed the longstanding ties" between Singapore and China, and had a "productive and candid" discussion on international and regional developments.

"Despite challenging global circumstances in this pandemic, we have continued working closely, sharing resources and expertise to better manage the outbreak," said Mr Lee.

"Singapore welcomes China's continued contribution in our part of the world, and will continue working with China to build a more harmonious and peaceful world," he added.

On Monday, Mr Wang called on Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat and met his counterpart, Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan.

Singapore is the third stop in Mr Wang’s tour of Southeast Asia, which also included Vietnam and Cambodia. He will visit South Korea after departing Singapore.
China Company Reportedly Hopes to Revive Stalled Plans to Mine Vast Afghan Copper Deposit

Afghanistan’s Mes Aynak copper deposit, one of the largest untapped high-grade projects in the world, is estimated to hold 240 million tonnes of 2.3 percent grade copper ore, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS) - yet hurdles stand in the way of mining at the site.

China is exploring ways to begin mining copper at Mes Aynak, Afghanistan's best-known deposit located about 40 kilometers south-east of the capital, Kabul, according to Kandahar-based outlet Taand. The reserves of an estimated 240 million tonnes of 2.3 percent grade copper are believed to be worth at least $50billion.

Jiangxi Copper on September 13 announced that the company, along with the Metallurgical Corp of China (MCC), was monitoring the situation in what is now Taliban*-ruled Afghanistan, hoping to push forward with the joint venture.

"Due to the unstable situation in Afghanistan, the Mes Aynak copper mine invested in by the company has not yet undergone substantial construction," Zheng Gaoqing, the chairman of Jiangxi Copper said in an online briefing.

Jiangxi has a 25 percent stake in Mes Aynak with Metallurgical Corp of China (MCC) and a 30-year contract worth US$3 billion to develop the deposit, touted as one of the world’s largest untapped high-grade projects.

Back in 2007, the Afghan government signed a 30-year agreement to develop the deposit with a consortium of state-owned Chinese mining companies,
including MCC and Jiangxi Copper. As part of the deal, MCC pledged to build the mine and the infrastructure around it. However, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan put the plans on hold.


Chinese FM arrives in Seoul in latest effort to bolster regional ties

By Lee Ji-yoon

Published : Sept 14, 2021 - 17:29       Updated : Sept 14, 2021 - 22:32

President Moon Jae-in and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi pose after holding talks at Cheong Wa Dae in this file photo dated on Nov. 26 last year. (Cheong Wa Dae)

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrived in Seoul on Tuesday evening as part of a weeklong Asia tour that aims to bolster regional ties.

According to Seoul’s Foreign Ministry, China’s top diplomat will hold talks with South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong on Wednesday. He is also likely to pay a courtesy call to President Moon Jae-in before leaving for China later in the day.

Wang last visited Seoul 10 months ago, in November last year. South Korea is the final destination in an Asia trip that also included stops in Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore.

The high-level talks are expected to touch on a range of topics, from bilateral ties to North Korea and the Beijing Winter Olympics. But observers downplayed...
speculation that the aim of the upcoming visit was to increase pressure on South Korea, which has distanced itself from the escalating US-China rivalry and avoided being drawn in.

“The key purpose of Wang’s visit appears to be managing bilateral relations amid the prolonged pandemic,” said Hwang Jae-ho, a professor of international studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.

“For China, South Korea is a key partner in the region, especially ahead of mega-events next year such as the Beijing Olympics and the Communist Party’s party congress. He is more likely to seek backing from South Korea rather than renewing pressure.”

Additionally, the apparent resumption of activity at North Korea’s Yongbyon nuclear complex is expected to be high on the agenda. While the US has reiterated its willingness to resume talks with the North without preconditions, China has urged sanctions relief to expedite the stalled talks.

On Monday, North Korea said it had successfully test-fired a new type of long-range cruise missile over the weekend, possibly in an attempt to gain attention as South Korea, the US and Japan were set to hold a trilateral meeting in Tokyo on Tuesday to discuss the North’s nuclear activities.


Japan, US, S.Korea affirm cooperation on N.Korea
Senior government officials of Japan, the United States and South Korea are believed to have agreed to strengthen cooperation on the issue of North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs.

Representing Japan at Tuesday's meeting was the head of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Funakoshi Takehiro. He met with the US special envoy for North Korea Sung Kim and the South Korean Foreign Ministry's Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk.

They are said to have shared the latest information about North Korea's announcement that it succeeded in test-launching long-range cruise missiles on the weekend. They reportedly analyzed Pyongyang's intentions.

Japan's officials are also believed to have reiterated their request for cooperation to quickly resolve North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals.

TOKYO (Sputnik) - The Japanese government is making final preparations for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's visit to the United States, where he will attend the upcoming Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) summit along with leaders of India, Australia and the US, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said on Tuesday.

Quad is an informal strategic forum between the United States, Japan, Australia and India. US President Joe Biden will host the first-ever in-person Quad summit at the White House on 24 September. The agenda will focus on deepening ties between the sides and advancing practical cooperation in areas such as promoting free and open Indo-Pacific, among others.

"Prime minister Suga will visit Washington and participate in the [Quad] summit under favorable circumstances. At present, coordination of this issue has begun, with an eye to carrying out this trip," Kato told a press conference.

Tokyo expects the sides will have a thorough discussion of issues of importance to all, including the creation of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, as well as measures to combat the coronavirus pandemic, the official added.

YANGON: Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi returned to court on Tuesday (Sep 14) to face charges of incitement and flouting COVID-19 restrictions, her lawyer said, a day after failing to appear on health grounds.

Aung San Suu Kyi and her elected government were deposed by the military in a February coup that sparked a mass uprising and a brutal junta crackdown on dissent.

Cut off from the world except for brief meetings with her legal team and court appearances, the 76-year-old Nobel laureate faces a raft of charges that could see her jailed for more than a decade.

Monday’s hearing was adjourned after Aung San Suu Kyi suffered from what her lawyer said was “car sickness” while being taken from the compound where she is under house arrest to the courtroom.

Aung San Suu Kyi “said she was still somewhat dizzy,” according to lawyer Khin Maung Zaw, who met with her before Tuesday’s hearing.

The hearing on charges Aung San Suu Kyi flouted coronavirus restrictions during elections her party won last year was postponed after prosecution witnesses failed to appear, he added.

Aung San Suu Kyi’s lawyers have denied those charges.

Two prosecution witnesses also failed to appear at a hearing in July after becoming infected with the coronavirus.

The trial was then postponed for two months as the country battled a COVID-19 surge.

Journalists are barred from the proceedings against Aung San Suu Kyi, who also faces charges of sedition, accepting illegal payments of gold and violating a colonial-era secrecy law.

Security forces have killed more than 1,000 civilians since the putsch, according to a
local monitoring group.

The military says the toll is much lower.

Myanmar's junta chief said last month that elections would be held and a state of emergency lifted by August 2023, extending the initial one-year timeline the military announced days after the coup.

Myanmar court moves venue for secrets trial of Australian

Lawyers say a court in Myanmar has agreed to change the venue for the trial of an Australian economist and adviser to ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi on charges of violating the nation’s official secrets law.

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

14 September 2021, 17:59

BANGKOK -- A court in Myanmar has agreed to change the venue for the trial of an Australian economist and adviser to ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi on charges of violating the nation’s official secrets law, lawyers said Tuesday.

Sean Turnell was charged along with Suu Kyi and three former Cabinet ministers under the law in March, a month after the military ousted Suu Kyi’s elected government and seized power.

The decision by the country’s Supreme Court will move the trial from Yangon, Myanmar’s biggest city where Turnell was arrested, to the capital, Naypyitaw, said one of Suu Kyi’s lawyers, Kyi Win.

That will consolidate most of the legal cases against Suu Kyi in a single location. The cases, lodged at the behest of the military-installed government, are widely seen as an effort to discredit Suu Kyi and prevent her from returning to politics.

Violating the official secrets law carries a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. The colonial-era statute criminalizes the possession, collection, recording, publishing, or sharing of state information that is “directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy.”

The exact details of Turnell’s alleged offense and those of the others have not been made public, though state television, citing government statements, has
said the Australian academic had access to “secret state financial information” and had tried to flee the country.

Turnell has been confined in Yangon’s Insein Prison, known for decades for holding political prisoners.

Meanwhile, the trial of Suu Kyi, 76, and two colleagues continued Tuesday at a special court in Naypyitaw, a day after she had to cancel her participation because of illness. The court on Monday allowed her to return to her place of detention -- which is kept secret by the authorities -- after she explained that she was suffering from cold symptoms and felt dizzy on the ride to the court.

Another of her lawyers, Khin Maung Zaw, said her condition had visibly improved Tuesday when she returned to court, though she informed her legal team that she still felt some dizziness. Her co-defendants on several charges, former President Win Myint and Naypyitaw ex-Mayor Myo Aung, were also in attendance.

Suu Kyi is being tried in Naypyitaw on charges of sedition, defined as spreading information that could cause public alarm or unrest, and sometimes termed incitement; two counts of flouting COVID-19 pandemic restrictions during the 2020 election campaign; illegally importing walkie-talkies for her bodyguards to use; and unlicensed use of the radios.

Suu Kyi’s lawyers have argued in court that the sedition case should not be prosecuted, and both her team and the prosecution on Tuesday presented arguments to the court on that matter, Khin Maung Zaw said.

Two prosecution witnesses failed to show up to testify about the COVID-19 restrictions case and the testimony of a third was postponed, he said.
Khin Maung Zaw also told reporters that the defense lawyers had Suu Kyi sign documents appointing them to represent her in corruption cases filed in the central city of Mandalay.

The military seized power just before Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy party would have begun a second five-year term in office. It said it acted because last November's election was marred by widespread fraud, an assertion that is widely doubted. Protests over the army takeover are continuing, along with growing armed resistance.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian government would propose amendments to the Federal Constitution in order to create a third deputy speaker post, said de facto law minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar on Tuesday (Sep 14).

The role will be held by the opposition, he added.

Speaking in parliament as he outlined why the government was seeking to postpone the election for a new deputy speaker, he said: “We want to bring a constitutional amendment to this house, to amend Article 57(1)(b) for us to increase the number of deputy speakers from two to three.”

He said the Constitution did not state who would hold the deputy speaker posts, as the individuals were elected by Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Lower House.

“So we will make a rule maybe, that one of the three deputy speakers, once it is approved, will be held by the opposition, no matter who forms the government,” Mr Wan Junaidi said.
He added that he had discussed the matter with the Attorney-General. He said that the proposed amendment could have its first reading by the end of the current session and later be passed during the following parliamentary session in October.

The speaker agreed to postpone the election of the deputy speaker, without any need for debate.

Mr Wan Junaidi was responding to a question by Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin on why the election had been postponed.

The Parti Keadilan Rakyat MP said as parliament would be meeting throughout September and until December, the workload would be very heavy with just Speaker of the House Azhar Azizan Harun and Deputy Speaker I Mohd Rashid Hasnon. Under the current Constitution, there is one speaker and two deputies.

“There were many motions to debate, including the Royal Address, as well as the upcoming Budget 2022 and various special parliamentary committees,” Mr Sim noted.

Indigenous People Launch Petition to Rename New Zealand

20 hours ago

© AFP 2021 / MARTY MELVILLE

WELLINGTON (Sputnik) - New Zealand's indigenous political Moori party has started collecting signatures in support of the petition that seeks to change the country’s official name to the Polynesian "Aotearoa" and to restore the Moori names for all towns, cities and places by 2026.

Rawiri Waititi and Debbie Ngarewa-Packer, co-chairs of the Maori Party, said that the original names of New Zealand and its cities were distorted, rejected and ignored.

"It’s well past time that Te Reo Māori was restored to its rightful place as the first and official language of this country. We are a Polynesian country – we are Aotearoa," Waititi and Ngarewa-Packer declared in a statement launching the petition.

According to the party leaders, colonial education and English names given to the country's places at the beginning of the 20th century reduced the ability of the indigenous people to speak their native language from 90% in 1910 to 26% in 1950.

"In only 40 years, the Crown managed to successfully strip us of our language and we are still feeling the impacts of this today," Waititi and Ngarewa-Packer emphasized.

The Maori make up about 15% of the population, but only 3% of New Zealanders can speak the Maori language.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern stated that the government had "not explored" the idea of changing New Zealand's name to Aotearoa.

China has been scathing in its criticism of the US-led Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, describing it as an effort to contain the rise of Beijing in the global world order. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has referred to the Quad as an “Indo-Pacific NATO”, while saying Washington’s policy in the region poses “a big underlying security risk”.

A discussion on “regional issues” and “humanitarian assistance” will be at the top of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s agenda when he attends the first-ever Quad Leaders' Summit at the White House on 24 September, a statement from Indian foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

The meeting, hosted by US President Joe Biden, is also set to be attended by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga, as per the official release.

Indian foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has called for global coordination to ensure “unimpeded, unrestricted and direct access” for humanitarian aid providers to Afghanistan, while speaking at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on the Humanitarian Situation in Afghanistan on 13 September.
The four countries (Australia, India, Japan, the US) that comprise the ‘Quad’, or the ‘Quadrilateral Security Framework’, describe the grouping as that being one of “like-minded democracies” with one of its main aims being to ensure a “free, open and an inclusive Indo-Pacific region” premised on the centrality of Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

A joint statement after the first-ever Quad Virtual Leaders’ Summit in March this year called for “support of the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity.”

New Delhi. Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, a highly-decorated officer who retired from the Indian Army in February 2016 after nearly four decades of service, has been appointed the Governor of the north Indian state of Uttarakhand.

He held prestigious appointments of Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Adjutant General and Corps Commander of Strategic XV Corps that overlooks the Line of Control in Kashmir and was also handling operational and military strategic issues about China as Additional Director General of Military Operations.

Lt Gen Gurmit Singh has had associations with IDSA, the think tank of the Ministry of Defence, as well as the Indian Army’s think tank CLAWS. During his stint as an officer in the Army, he was part of numerous expert groups, joint working groups, annual dialogues and China study group meetings for over a decade. He visited China seven times for important military and diplomatic meetings on border or Line of Actual Control.

He also led a military delegation to Beijing, Urumchi and Shanghai and visited Pakistan twice for defence-related talks. He also did a training course at the National Defense University at Washington and Taipei.

The soft spoken officer with a firm handshake, Lt Gen Gurmit Singh served in Kashmir for a decade from 2005 to 2014. Peace, Stability and Prosperity of the people in the areas of his command were always his primary objectives, he often said.

Lt Gen Gurmit Singh studied at the Sainik School, Kapurthala, from 1967 to 1973 before joining the National Defence Academy (NDA) where young cadets are prepared for military career in the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. There are so many heart-warming memories there, he says while talking about his alma mater. “The Teachers there were The Best.”

He fondly speaks of his Sainik School – India’s coveted primary educational institution to prepare children for military careers – observing: “The school was one place where I learned everything. Every prospective of being a soldier was learned there, be it discipline, drill or sports. The teachers created an environment to prepare us as a future leader.”
A great debater, amazing sportsperson, academically brilliant, always a topper, and every time an appointment holder is how Jawahar Dhawan, Lt Gen Singh’s classmate remembers him. “He was very clear from the beginning that he wanted to join the armed forces.”

Col Prashant Saxena, the current Principal of the school, told a newspaper: “In the past too, Saikapians have been rising to great heights in all walks of life, be it the Army, Navy, Air Force or civil services. With Lt Gen Gurmit Singh being appointed the Governor, it is another feather in the Sainik School’s cap. I find myself singularly privileged to be head of the institution. It is a matter of responsibility for me because when I see Saikapians doing so well, it reminds me of my duties.”

Lt Gen Gurmit Singh is the recipient of four Distinguished Service/Gallantry awards, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, and VSM.

A graduate of Defence Services Staff Course and National Defence College, he has M.Phils from Madras and Indore Universities on Defence. He researched on India-China Boundary Issue at the Institute of Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University during his study leave from the Army.

The General is currently pursuing PhD from Madras University on Smart Power for National Security Dynamics.

MOSCOW (AP) — In the months before Sunday’s parliamentary election in Russia, authorities unleashed an unprecedented crackdown on the opposition, making sure that the best-known and loudest Kremlin critics didn’t run.

Some were barred from seeking public office under new, repressive laws. Some were forced to leave the country after threats of prosecution. Some were jailed.

Pressure also mounted on independent media and human rights activists: A dozen news outlets and rights groups were given crippling labels of “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations” or accused of ties with them.

The embattled opposition groups admit the Kremlin has left them few options or resources ahead of the Sept. 19 election that is widely seen as a key to President Vladimir Putin’s effort to cement his hold on power. But they still hope to erode the dominance of the ruling United Russia party in the State Duma, or parliament.

“We still want to take a lot of seats away from the United Russia so that a lot of candidates not approved (by the authorities) become State Duma deputies and members of regional legislatures,” Leonid Volkov, top ally of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny, told The Associated Press.

The election is crucial because the Kremlin wants complete control over the next parliament, opposition politicians and political analysts say. The Duma chosen this year will still be in place in 2024, when Putin’s current term expires and he must decide on running for re-election or choosing some other strategy to stay in power.

“Putin loves to maintain uncertainty and make decisions at the last minute,” says political analyst Abbas Gallyamov, a former Kremlin speechwriter.

“No one will know until the last minute what he will do in 2024,” Gallyamov said. “Will he run himself once again or put forward a successor? ... Will it be another constitutional reform, or will a new cabinet need to be approved, or
election laws need to be changed? ... All roads must be open to Putin, he must feel that his options are not limited by anything. For that, the parliament must be absolutely obedient.”

It’s equally important to eliminate any risk of lawmakers supporting possible protests in 2024, Gallyamov said, because a directly elected institution opposing the Kremlin alongside demonstrators could take the conflict to another level.

It won’t be easy, however, to preserve United Russia’s dominance in parliament, where it holds 334 of 450 seats.

A poll by the independent Levada Center showed only 27% of Russians are prepared to vote for the party. Thus, steamrolling the opposition and using administrative leverage is the only way, Gallyamov said.

https://apnews.com/article/europe-russia-elections-media-vladimir-putin-e9f4d4dde1293317ebbec028d358bd17
Putin to self-isolate due to COVID-19 among inner circle

FILE - In this Sept. 3, 2021, file photo, Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures as he delivers his speech during a plenary session at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia. The embattled opposition groups admit the Kremlin has left them few options and resources ahead of the Sept. 19 election that is widely seen as a key to Putin’s effort to cement his hold on power. But they still hope to erode the dominance of the ruling United Russia party in the State Duma, or parliament. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko, Pool, File)

14 Sep 2021 05:28PM (Updated: 14 Sep 2021 05:28PM)

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin is going into self-isolation because of coronavirus cases in his inner circle, the Kremlin said on Tuesday (Sep 14). The announcement came in the Kremlin’s readout of Putin’s phone call with the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon.

Putin has been fully vaccinated with the Russian coronavirus vaccine Sputnik V – he received his second shot in April.

On Monday, the Russian president attended several public events. He met with the Russian Paralympians, attended military exercises conducted in coordination with Belarus, and met with with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Asked if Putin tested negative for the virus. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said “of course, yes.”

Russia and the Taliban: Prospective Partners?
Samuel Ramani

14 September 2021 6 Minute Read

Main Image Credit Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov welcomes a member of the Taliban delegation during talks on Afghanistan in Moscow in November 2018. Courtesy of Reuters / Alamy Stock Photo

Russia’s cautious accommodation of the Taliban shows it will likely combine diplomacy with deterrence in the coming months.

Since Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled Kabul on 15 August, Russia has cautiously accommodated the Taliban’s seizure of power. Diplomats, such as Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Dmitry Zhirnov and President Vladimir Putin’s envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov, have praised the Taliban’s contributions to security in Kabul and the struggle against Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIS-K). While Russia has no immediate plans to afford diplomatic recognition to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Putin recently stated that Moscow will engage with the Taliban as soon as it ‘enters the family of civilized people’.

Russia’s accommodation of Afghanistan’s new political order reflects the impact of more than a decade of clandestine and public diplomacy with the Taliban. However, it masks Russia’s serious reservations about the Taliban’s long-term consolidation of power and purported commitment to combating transnational terrorism. Instead of establishing a partnership with the Islamic Emirate, like Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid recently predicted, Russia’s strategy towards Afghanistan will synthesise diplomacy and deterrence. This strategy will allow it to maintain cordial relations with the Taliban, while assuaging the legitimate security concerns of its Central Asian partners.

Russia’s Prospects of Diplomatic Engagement with the Taliban

Although Russia labelled it as a terrorist organisation in 2003, Moscow has maintained a longstanding informal diplomatic relationship with the Taliban. In 2007, Russia held clandestine talks with the Taliban on the prevention of drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Central Asia. These negotiations produced few results, as Russia opened its airspace for US military operations against the Taliban in 2009 and collaborated with the US on anti-narcotics raids in 2010. Russia’s engagement with
the Taliban revived in 2015, as the threat of ISIS-K grew. In December 2015, Kabulov stated that Russia had established communication channels to exchange information with the Taliban and **argued** that the Taliban’s desire to combat ISIS-K objectively coincided with Moscow’s interests.

The expansion of Russia–Taliban dialogue caused alarm in Kabul and Washington. In December 2016, the Afghan Foreign Ministry cautioned **external powers**, such as Russia, against elevating the Taliban’s stature, as it could create long-term threats to regional and international security. Afghan lawmaker Shinkai Karokhail subsequently **claimed** that Russia provided assistance to the Taliban, as it wished to prolong the US war in Afghanistan. In March 2018, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan, John Nicholson, alleged that Russian weapons were smuggled across the Tajik border to the Taliban. Nicholson **asserted** that Russia inflated the ISIS-K threat to provide a justification for military assistance to the Taliban. The Russian Foreign Ministry has repeatedly denied reports that Moscow had **supplied weaponry** to the Taliban.

More than $1 billion in aid pledged for Afghanistan as country faces 'most perilous hour'

By Helen Regan, CNN
Updated 0742 GMT (1542 HKT) September 14, 2021

(CNN)More than $1 billion in aid has been pledged for Afghanistan to help ease one of the world's "worst humanitarian crises," as millions of people in the country could soon run out of food and the economy is on the verge of collapse, the United Nations said on Monday.

Speaking at a high-level ministers meeting on the crisis in Geneva, UN Secretary General António Guterres said poverty rates in Afghanistan had spiraled since the Taliban's takeover last month, with one in three people not knowing where their next meal was coming from and basic public services not functioning.

"The people of Afghanistan need a lifeline. After decades of war, suffering and insecurity, they face perhaps their most perilous hour," Guterres said.

The UN had made an emergency appeal for $606 million to meet the most pressing needs in the country, a request that had been "fully met," Guterres said during a news conference.

"Today, we already have clearly more than $1 billion of pledges. It is impossible to say how much of these will be for the flash appeal, but in any case, it represents a quantum leap in relation to the financial commitment of the international community towards the Afghan people," he said.

The Taliban want to lay down the law. Far outside Kabul, rural Afghans just want to get paid

Even before the Taliban's return to power, protracted conflict, poverty, back-to-back droughts, economic decline and the coronavirus pandemic had worsened an already dire situation in which 18 million Afghans -- almost half of the population -- were in need of aid, UN agencies said. More than half of children under five years old are facing acute malnutrition and fighting has forced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, they added.

With winter now approaching, many people could run out of food by the end of the month, the UN chief said.

The World Food Program, which on Sunday brought its aid workers back to the capital Kabul for the first time since the takeover, said 14 million people were on the "brink of starvation."

Food prices have risen, cooking oil has doubled in price and 40% of the country's wheat crop this year has been lost, WFP's executive director, David Beasley, said.

Children are suffering disproportionately from the multiple crises. Without immediate action, the humanitarian catastrophe will deteriorate further and 1 million children risk starving to death,
Crisis looms one month after Taliban takeover

World
Afghanistan

Wednesday will mark one month since the Taliban took control of the capital Kabul and regained power in Afghanistan.

The Taliban intend to form a government based on Islamic teachings. The interim government is made up entirely of Taliban members.

The Taliban flag, which is emblazoned with a verse from the Koran, is now flying over the former presidential palace and at the entrance of the closed US Embassy.

In addition to drastic social shifts, the country faces a worsening economy and a growing humanitarian crisis.

In Kabul, people are struggling to make ends meet. Many have been forced to sell furniture and household goods to get by. Long lines have been forming at banks. A lack of cash is hitting the economy hard. People are worried about the impact of the worsening economy on their lives and future.

The UN warns that as much as 97 percent of the Afghan population is at risk of sinking below the poverty line by the middle of next year. It says prompt action is needed to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

KABUL (Sputnik) - The Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan has congratulated the country with the new government, Taliban* spokesman Mohammad Naeem said on Tuesday.


The Taliban intensified its offensive against Afghan government forces a month ago and entered Kabul on 15 August.

On 31 August, the US military left the Kabul airport, bringing an end to the nearly twenty-year American military presence in Afghanistan. On 6 September, the Taliban stated that it had gained control of Panjshir, the last of 34 Afghan provinces not under their yoke. The next day, the Taliban announced the composition of the interim government of Afghanistan. It is headed by Mohammad Hasan Akhund, who served as a foreign minister during the first Taliban rule. Akhund has been under UN sanctions since 2001.

Tajikistan Summons US Ambassador Over Joe Biden's Remarks on 9/11 Anniversary

19 hours ago
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The Biden administration has been lambasted by Republicans and Democrats alike because of its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. According to a survey published by the Pew Research Center on 31 August, 42 percent of the American respondents believe that the Biden administration has done a “poor” job in handling the withdrawal process.

Tajikistan has taken strong exception to US President Joe Biden's remarks on the 9/11 attacks anniversary. The Central Asian nation’s Foreign Ministry on Tuesday summoned the American Ambassador to Dushanbe, John Mark Pommersheim, to protest formally against the controversial comments.

“A verbal note of protest was conveyed to the US Ambassador in connection with the statements by the President of the United States of America Mr. Joe Biden during his visit to a fire station in Pennsylvania,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. “The verbal note stated that such statements do not correspond to the spirit of friendly relations and partnership,” it added.

Giving the Taliban International Legitimacy Would Be a Disastrous Mistake

by Con Coughlin
September 14, 2021 at 5:00 am

- European plans to forge closer ties with Kabul are, though, being severely undermined by the conduct of the new Taliban regime which, rather than living up to its promise to mend its ways, instead appears to be reverting to its old, uncompromising approach.
- Recent reports claim that at least four elite Afghan counterterrorism agents have been hunted down and killed by the Taliban during the past three weeks, in one case pulling out all the victim's fingernails before shooting him.
- "We have to stop pretending that the Taliban have changed," warned Mr McMaster. "Our self-delusion has led many to embrace an Orwellian reversal of morality in which they view jihadist terrorists as a partner.... The Taliban are determined to impose a brutal form of sharia on the Afghan people and are intertwined with terrorists determined to continue their jihad..." — HR McMaster, former US National Security Advisor, The Sunday Times, September 12, 2021.
Naïve attempts by a number of leading Western powers to foster relations with the newly-installed Taliban regime in Kabul are being undermined by the uncompromising attitude the new Islamist regime.

Following the Taliban's dramatic seize of control of Afghanistan last month, a number of prominent Western leaders have indicated their willingness to work with the new Afghan regime, following claims by some Taliban leaders that they want to establish a more moderate form of government than the former Taliban regime that terrorised the country in the late 1990s.

In the aftermath of the Islamist movement's takeover of the country, Taliban leaders were at pains to stress their plans to establish a more moderate approach. In their first press conference after seizing control of the country, the movement's leaders promised to protect women's rights, guarantee media freedom, and offered a nationwide amnesty for government officials and military personnel in the former government of President Ashraf Ghani, which collapsed in disarray following US President Joe Biden's decision to end US military support.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the armed group's spokesman, also said the Taliban wished for peaceful relations with other countries, and that no group will be allowed to use Afghan territory for attacks against any nation.

"I would like to assure the international community, including the United States, that nobody will be harmed," Mujahid said. "We don't want any internal or external enemies."

https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/17761/taliban-international-legitimacy
Joe Biden’s Afghan Failure Will Echo For Ages

By Mora Namdar
Published 4 hours ago

Don’t let the official talking points coming out of the White House fool you. With its recent, disastrous execution of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is becoming abundantly clear that the Biden administration is adrift in the greater Middle East – and those missteps will have lasting consequences for both U.S. national security and global human rights norms.

The irony is palpable. In his August 26th address to the nation, Biden styled himself as a “student of history” who understood the price of conflict and the necessity of ending “endless” wars. Yet his administration’s haphazard exit from Afghanistan cost 13 American service members their lives, left hundreds of Americans stranded, gifted the Taliban over $60 billion-worth of American taxpayer-funded military equipment, and abandoned allies on the ground in an episode that has mirrored not only the fall of Saigon but also Jimmy Carter’s failure in the 1979 Islamic revolution and ensuing hostage crisis in Iran.

Biden’s failure in Afghanistan does not stem from disagreement over whether prolonged war is a bad idea. Rather, the Biden administration’s failure lies in the execution of the exit from Afghanistan itself – a hasty, uncoordinated retreat that has created unnecessary crisis and lasting harm. The consequences are deeply detrimental for American credibility and strategic interests, as well as for Afghan refugees, women and vulnerable populations trapped in a
country that is rapidly reverting back to Islamic dictatorship.

At the same time, America’s retraction of power has created a political power vacuum that is already being filled by enemies and strategic competitors, to our lasting disadvantage. China is already rumored to be offering huge economic incentives to take over control of the Bagram air base in a not-so-subtle encroachment on American power.

It is also apparent that China’s interest in Afghanistan is partially fueled by Beijing’s desire to monopolize the global supply of rare earth minerals – necessary for almost every piece of modern technology – of which Afghanistan has an abundance.

Fears China will play games with the 2022 Winter Olympics

COLIN PEEBLES CHRISTENSEN

Beijing’s practice of arbitrary arrest and “hostage diplomacy” is prompting a backlash that may lead to a boycott.

Erin O’Toole, the leader of Canada’s Conservative party, warned in August that Canadian citizens might not be safe at the winter Olympics to be hosted next year in Beijing. Canada is especially aggrieved over what is widely seen as China’s practice of arbitrary arrest – although in truth “arbitrary” is a word that masks what appears a tactic of deliberate political retaliation.

Three Canadians presently held in China are seen as pawns in a broader geopolitical contest following the 2018 arrest in Vancouver of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou after an extradition request to the United States. Canadian Robert Schellenberg, held in
China in a drugs case, now faces the death penalty. Meanwhile Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, “the two Michaels”, were accused of espionage shortly after Meng’s arrest. Spavor has been subsequently sentenced to 11 years, while Kovrig is yet to be sentenced despite being held for 1000 days.

China’s practice of “hostage diplomacy” violates a number of human rights laws as it often includes lengthy episodes of solitary confinement and torture. It is seen as a bid to coerce foreign governments to bend to China’s will.

O’Toole, although focused on Canada, gave voice to fears that Beijing could use the Olympics as an opportunity to target citizens of countries that dare challenge its interests. This is prompting new voices to join calls for boycott and adding safety concerns over arbitrary punishment to existing human rights grievances.

Nationals of at least 12 countries or regions have been detained in China in recent years, including from the United States, Australia, Canada, Japan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Ireland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Taiwan, Belize and Hong Kong. Many are accused of national security crimes. They include British and Swedish citizens Lee Bo and Gui Minhai, booksellers who disappeared in 2015; Australians Yang Hengjun and Cheng Lei, arrested in 2019 and 2020; as well as Americans Victor and Cynthia Liu who were held hostage under an exit ban in 2018 after an attempt to get to their father. China has similarly prevented Irish businessman Richard O’Halloran from leaving the country for two years – not for crimes he committed, but over fraud allegations directed at the Chinese owner of the Ireland-based leasing company he worked for.

These are high-profile cases, but many more remain unknown. Canadian authorities have estimated that at least 13 Canadians have been detained since Meng’s arrest, and at least two dozen US citizens have been barred from leaving China over the last three years.

On Geoeconomics

There's a shift underway that could change the rules in the global system.

By Antonia Colibasanu

September 14, 2021

Last week, I spoke and moderated at several conferences in person – a rare thing since the pandemic began – whose topics ranged from defense and security to regional commerce to European affairs. The common denominator, of course, was geopolitics, but what struck me most about my conversations was that, rather than the withdrawal from Afghanistan or the elections in Germany, nearly everyone was concerned foremost by inflation and the green economic shift underway in Europe.

In fact, nearly every conversation had one thing in common: Our society’s economic challenges in light of the pandemic. Until August, inflation was generally triggered by the energy sector and by a narrow set of goods such as semiconductors whose price increases were linked to the supply chain crisis. But, as evidenced by recent upticks in food and services prices, it seems as though the effects are widening. Bad weather conditions, unusual droughts and floods that destroyed harvests, often cited as the collateral damage of climate change, have contributed to an increase in food prices.
And though that was the case even before the pandemic started, the pandemic has indeed exposed the vulnerabilities in the food system, impacting production, supply and delivery. Increased ocean freight rates, higher fuel prices and a shortage of truck drivers are pushing up the cost of transportation services. Moreover, the pandemic created difficulties for producers to access the labor force they need to get crops delivered in due time (to say nothing of the workers needed to deliver and distribute other goods). Such was the case for tomatoes, oranges and strawberries producers in Europe in 2020. In Australia, industry groups fear that pandemic-related challenges could derail what is expected to be a stellar crop of winter grains this season.

The food industry is hardly the only industry grappling with these kinds of challenges. An explanation put forward by HR specialists cites the fact that there seems to be a mismatch between the industries hiring and those seeking jobs, a development apparently borne out by the uneven recovery in different industries. Another explanation refers to the fact that, during the pandemic, many workers moved away from the cities where they worked, leaving their jobs unfilled until there is a better sense of when the pandemic may subside. This speaks to the importance for the workforce to be able – and willing – to migrate from one place to another.
For the first time, we’re seeing both high unemployment and high inflation – something that is abnormal when economies are recovering from recession, and just generally abnormal. Inflation typically comes alongside recovery and growth, which typically lowers unemployment. The problem is that inflation is unbalanced: There are too many jobs and too few people willing to take them.

https://geopoliticalfutures.com/on-geoeconomics/

**Calm down: DND allays public fears on Japan's terror alert**

Published September 15, 2021, 7:40 AM by Martin Sadongdong

The Department of National Defense (DND) called for calm Tuesday night, September 14, as it said it would validate the threat alert issued by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Philippines and five other Southeast Asian countries due to possible terrorist attacks.

DND spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said the department “appreciates” and “takes cognizance” of the recent terrorism advisory issued by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its citizens who are residing in the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar.

“As with all reports concerning the safety and security of our communities, the aforementioned advisory will be subjected to the process of validation,” he said.

The DND and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have been on a constant state of heightened alert for terrorist activities since the Marawi City siege in 2017, according to Andolong.
The DND and AFP have also been working closely with other concerned agencies such as the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) to continuously monitor and assess terror threats within the country’s borders all year round, he added.

Prior to this, the AFP said they have not yet received the threat alert from Japan although they would work with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to validate the information.

The Japanese Embassy in the Philippines has confirmed that their government issued a threat alert against terrorism to their citizens living in the six Southeast Asian countries.

There are little to no details of the potential terror activity monitored by Japan although it warned its citizens to stay away from religious facilities and other crowded areas due to the possibility of “increased risks” of terror attacks “such as suicide bombings.”

The threat alert was met with utmost concern on social media, with the hashtags “Stay safe everyone” and “Japan” on the trending list as of Wednesday morning, September 15.

as much as possible avoid going out, and if its necessary, avoid crowded places. its not yet confirmed but its better be safe than sorry right? also pray too, prayers are powerful. stay safe everyone!

— ; ciara day ! (@supersunoo) September 14, 2021

One netizen tweeted: “[A]s much as possible avoid going out, and if [it’s] necessary, avoid crowded places. [It’s] not yet confirmed but [it’s] better be safe than sorry right? [A]sso pray too, prayers are powerful. [S]tay safe everyone!”

Another one urged the public to pray and stop making jokes about the security concern.

The least thing we all can do is to keep updated about the news. Also pls stop making jokes about it and step aside your jokes coz this is a very serious matter. If you feel anxious pls take a deep breath. Stay safe everyone!

— dery (@wayvisuIs) September 14, 2021

“The least thing we all can do is to keep updated about the news. Also [please] stop making jokes about it and step aside your jokes [because] this is a very serious matter. If you feel anxious, [please] take a deep breath. Stay safe everyone!”
PH Fleet holds series of warfighting exercises

By Priam Nepomuceno  September 14, 2021, 10:22 am

ENHANCING CAPABILITIES. Officers of the Philippine Fleet lead the launch of the "Exercise Pagbubuklod" at Sangley Point in Cavite on Monday (Sept. 13, 2021). The exercise aims to further enhance the interoperability and readiness of Philippine Navy units in order to address traditional and non-traditional threats. (Photo courtesy of Philippine Fleet)

MANILA – The Philippine Fleet, the primary unit of the Philippine Navy (PN), will hold a series of exercises aimed at boosting its warfighting capabilities.

In a statement Monday night, Lt. Commander Ryan Luna, Philippine Fleet spokesperson, said the "Exercise Pagbubuklod" officially opened on Monday and will be held at the Sangley Point and Ternate, Cavite and the approaches of Manila Bay until Sept. 17.

"These forces will conduct joint Amphibious Planning and Field Training exercises (FTX) on land and at sea. 'Exercise Pagbubuklod' focuses on the Command's thrust of validating organizational structure, concepts of operations, and published doctrines to address the current and future scenario in the operational areas," he added.
"Exercise Pagbubuklod" is an annual maritime exercise conducted by the Philippine Fleet aimed at further enhancing the interoperability and readiness of PN units in order to address traditional and non-traditional threats.

Among the major exercises which will be conducted are the maritime interdiction operation with high angle sniping, amphibious air support, maritime air surveillance/intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance, maritime search and rescue, and high-risk visit, board, search and seizure.

Also included are amphibious assault/raid, insertion/extraction, amphibious sealift, tactical sealift, force protection capability, support and sustainment, afloat command and control, gunnery exercise, shipboard helicopter operations (HELOPS), and casualty evacuation operation (CASEVAC).

He added that all face-to-face activities during the "Exercise Pagbubuklod" will be carried out with strict adherence to health protocols set by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Luna said participants were also tested and certified as free from Covid-19 by authorized medical professionals and units prior to the start of all activities.

He added that all medical interventions and health protocols will be implemented during the conduct of the exercise.

"Medical services will also be provided to all personnel of the different component forces. Those who will manifest Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) symptoms will be immediately pulled out from the exercise to be evacuated to the nearest military treatment facility for evaluation," Luna said. (PNA)
The imperative of protecting trade lanes on the high seas is fueling maritime competition, especially between the U.S. and China.

Even for those transfixed by grand strategy, Alfred Thayer Mahan’s “The Influence of Seapower Upon History” (1890) is a slog. In more than 500 pages of often turgid prose, Mahan, who twice served as president of the U.S. Naval War College, examined how maritime strength shaped war between 1660 and 1783. “The necessity of a navy,” he wrote, “springs … from the existence of a peaceful shipping.” He concluded that a large merchant fleet and a strong navy with bases allowing it to operate far from home were vital to protect the U.S. economy and maintain foreign trade in times of war. “In order to do this,” he added, “the enemy must be kept not only out of our ports, but far away from our coasts.”

In “To Rule the Waves,” Bruce D. Jones attempts to adapt Mahan’s thinking to the 21st century. In prose much livelier than his predecessor’s, Mr. Jones places the oceans at the center of modern globalization. They took on
such importance, he writes, amid “relative comity between the world’s most populous nations,” a time of “deepening economic integration, and a sense of shared stakes and even a shared fate in the evolution of the natural world.” But Mr. Jones warns that in the years ahead, the oceans will lie at the heart of a much more contentious relationship among the great powers.

‘To Rule the Waves’ Review: The Necessity of a Navy - WSJ

Why Nothing Can Replace Large-Deck, Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carriers In U.S. Strategy

Loren Thompson
Senior Contributor
Aerospace & Defense

I write about national security, especially its business dimensions.

On the day that America observed the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, its most potent tool for responding to future such assaults was operating near the places they are most likely to originate.

The USS Ronald Reagan, hosting 90 strike fighters and other combat aircraft, was underway in the North Arabian Sea, near the mouth of the Persian Gulf and within easy reach of Afghanistan.

Accompanied by two guided-missile warships and continuously updated by overhead intelligence, the Reagan could have answered any terrorist provocations within hours.

Meanwhile, a second Nimitz-class carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, was underway in the other area of greatest concern to U.S. military planners: the South China Sea.
The USS Ford (foreground) abreast of the Nimitz-class carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the North ... [+]

WIKIPEDIA

It too hosted 90 combat aircraft that could have responded within hours to Chinese military moves around Taiwan or elsewhere in the region.

Relatively few Americans outside the naval community likely were aware that the carriers and their escorts were forward-deployed near potential aggressors.

Why Nothing Can Replace Large-Deck, Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carriers In U.S. Strategy (forbes.com)
FRANCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: A CREDIBLE STRATEGY IN THE MAKING?

WRITTEN BY ANTOINE BOND AZ

14 September 2021

A few days before President Emmanuel Macron’s trip to Japan and French Polynesia in July 2021, the French government published its “Indo-Pacific Strategy”. This 66-page document is without an equivalent in Europe and confirms France as being at the forefront of conceptualising and implementing its own strategy in this region. Following the creation of the position of Ambassador for the Indo-Pacific in September 2020, (filled by the former Ambassador to Malaysia and Australia, to better coordinate the actions of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, and more broadly, the government) this document further affirms France’s commitment to the region. Yet, if France is the European country with the most accomplished strategy, it is also perhaps the one with the most misunderstood one.

French sovereignty interests in the region: Unique for an EU member state

The first elements of a strategy for the Indo-Pacific were presented by the President of the Republic as early as spring 2018, during a visit to Australia. It must be recognised that the security, and even military, dimension was omnipresent at the time. One can think of the choice to deliver this founding speech on the Garden Island naval base in front of helicopters and armoured vehicles. The Ministry of the Armed Forces was the first ministry, before the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, to present a Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific in a remarkable setting. Indeed, Minister Florence Parly presented the strategy at the
2019 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, while the French naval air group, including the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, made a port call in the City-State.

France differs from the other member states of the European Union because it has sovereignty interests in the region. More than 1.6 million French citizens live in overseas territories in the Indo-Pacific, while three-quarters of France’s exclusive economic zone — the second largest in the world — are located in the region. France is not a spectator in the Indo-Pacific, it is a resident power. The power projection to French Polynesia in less than 40 hours, for the first time in June 2021, of three Rafales, two A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport and two A400M Atlas, is the essence of this.

The possibility of renaming the Directorate of Asia and Oceania of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, which includes the sub-directorates of South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Far East, to the Directorate of the Indo-Pacific should be considered.

However, it would be wrong to think that French interests in the region can be summed up solely in terms of security interests. Indeed, there is a significant bias in the perception of this strategy, in France and abroad, due to several factors. The Ministry of the Armed Forces was the first to conceptualise and publicly use the Indo-Pacific concept, as the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs had no official documents on the subject for a long time, let alone its own strategy. In addition, the emerging public debate at the level of think-tanks and to a lesser extent universities has focused on security, especially the issue of maritime security, which although essential, is only one of the issues in the area. Finally, one must recognise a certain Chinese obsession in any discussion of the Indo-Pacific. But while the Indo-Pacific strategy is partly about China, it is neither solely about China or against China.

France in the Indo-Pacific: a credible strategy in the making? — 9DASHLINE
Departing from Portsmouth Naval Base on 7 September, HMS Spey and HMS Tamar are, following a short stopover in Falmouth, sailing west to the Pacific Ocean via the Caribbean and the Panama Canal. The two ships – both adorned in an eye-catching Dazzle camouflage scheme – are expected to remain in the region for at least five years as part of the UK government’s post-Brexit ‘Global Britain’ strategy.

Originally built to bridge gaps in industrial loading at BAE Systems’ shipbuilding operation on the Clyde, the five B2RC offshore patrol vessels – HM Ships Forth, Medway, Trent, Tamar and Spey – now find themselves in the vanguard of the Royal Navy’s efforts to re-establish a forward presence in the world’s most important maritime regions. Forward presence requires that vessels are stationed in or adjacent to the theatre of operations for an extended period – rather than returning home to the UK after each deployment – with crews being rotated from the UK.

Adapted from a 90 metre OPV export design originally developed by what was VT, the B2RC vessels are intended to contribute to constabulary tasks worldwide, such as counter-narcotics, counter-piracy, fishery protection and humanitarian operations. The intention is that these vessels will offer a platform for persistent engagement and protection of UK interests, and at the same time free up frigates and destroyers from less-demanding tasks.

Forth, the first of the five B2RC vessels, has been deployed to the South Atlantic since January 2020 and serves as the permanent Falkland Islands guard ship. Trent is based in...
Gibraltar for operations in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Guinea, while Medway is supporting the Atlantic Patrol Task (North) in the Caribbean. Prior to sailing, BAE Systems delivered mission-critical equipment and capability enhancements to Spey and Tamar, including upgrading the ships’ generator cooling systems for warm weather conditions. Under a contracting for availability arrangement, BAE Systems will manage whole ship support for both ships while deployed.

US Aircraft Carrier Commander Asserts Freedom To Navigate South China Sea
September 14, 2021  BenarNews  0 Comments

By BenarNews
The commander of a U.S. aircraft carrier deployed in the South China Sea has told BenarNews it aims to ensure the “freedom of all nations to navigate in international waters” – a mission that saw it pass 50 nautical miles from a Chinese survey ship operating in Indonesia exclusive economic zone (EEZ) this weekend.

Global marine traffic records show the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) sailing in the Natuna Sea off Indonesia early Sunday near where the Chinese survey ship Haiyang Dizhi 10 has been operating since late August.

Unusually, the U.S. super carrier also broadcast its location, a move that analysts say would be intended to show that it is operating freely in international waters. China claims most of the South China Sea for itself.

In an exclusive interview with BenarNews on Saturday, the commander of the Carl Vinson Strike Group, Rear Adm. Dan Martin, said: “Our operations in the region are really the expression of our willingness to defend both our interests and the freedoms enshrined in international laws.”

The carrier strike group including the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and three other military vessels entered the South China Sea last week to conduct “maritime security operations.”

Just a few days earlier, the Chinese Maritime Safety Administration announced that all foreign ships, including aircraft carriers entering what China considers to be its territorial waters had to notify Beijing and submit to Chinese supervision.
Under international law, territorial waters are the 12 nautical miles of sea extending from a country's terrestrial territory. But China also includes waters around its newly reclaimed artificial islands in its maritime jurisdiction despite protests from other countries in the region.

“Any coastal state law or regulation must not infringe upon navigation and overflight rights enjoyed by all nations under international law,” Martin said.

US Aircraft Carrier Commander Asserts Freedom To Navigate South China Sea – Eurasia Review
After South China Sea Incidents, US Needs ‘Sustained’ Pacific Presence, Lawmaker Says

Rep. Elaine Luria and analysts say the US Navy must a play the long game when it comes to confronting China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea.

WASHINGTON: A recent contentious run-in between the US Navy and the Chinese military in the South China Sea was just the latest in a string of incidents that highlight a fundamental question for US operations in the contested waterways: How long can the status quo be maintained, and to what end?

The answer, according to a US lawmaker and analysts who spoke to Breaking Defense, is for the Navy look beyond the status quo altogether to the long game by increasing its presence in the South China Sea and standing ready to counter militia forces if the Chinese government becomes more overtly aggressive towards US and allied ships, creatively, if need be.

“It is a very serious issue that we need to approach aggressively in the sense that we have to react back and show that we [the US or its allies] are not going to ... accept China or any other country making unbased maritime claims,” Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, told Breaking Defense in an interview today.

The US needs to maintain a “sustained and deliberate and presence in the Pacific,” said Luria, who was a Navy officer prior to being elected to the House of Representatives.
“The US goes in sporadically [and] comes out ... but it’s transiting from point A to point B and it’s not a persistent presence,” she said.

Brent Sadler, a fellow at the Heritage Foundation, agreed.

“The end game of freedom of navigation operations and forward presence is a state of acceptance of US presence where international law and customary naval precedent allows — so it isn’t a goal that is achieved but rather a condition,” Sadler said. “We will need to keep up a steady presence and [freedom of navigation operation] routine in East Asia for the long haul.”

In the latest incident, the Navy’s Benfold (DDG-65) was transiting near the Spratly Islands in waters the Navy says no country is entitled to claim as its territory under international law. Following the transit, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army claimed it had expelled the US warship and admonished Washington for threatening China’s “national sovereignty and security.” The US Navy followed up with its own statement, disputing the notion its ship was expelled and emphasized that China’s territorial claims are baseless.

“The PLA(N)’s statement is the latest in a long string of [People’s Republic of China] actions to misrepresent lawful U.S. maritime operations and assert its excessive and illegitimate maritime claims at the expense of its Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea,” according to a Sept. 8 statement from US 7th Fleet.

Now, there is reason to believe these public disputes may pick up in pace and intensity: The Chinese government recently reportedly passed legislation, effective Sept. 1, that requires maritime vessels transiting its territorial seas to report aspects of their passage, such as the last and next time they will make a port of call.

In the meantime, the Navy continues to experiment with and tout its premiere concept of operation known as distributed maritime operations. Historically, one of the Navy’s concerns when attempting to combat China’s territorial claims is a need to respond without escalating the situation, a delicate task proven difficult when Navy destroyers heavily outgun the smaller Chinese patrol boats attempting to expel them.
“Distributed maritime operations is geared to combat, but the fleet it requires does provide more options and greater number of ships to cover more areas which is important in these grey zone operations at sea,” said Sadler. “That said, commanding officers need more non-lethal options and training for interactions with Chinese maritime militia and coast guard.”

Breaking Defense - Defense industry news, analysis and commentary
US Momentum Grows For Push To Start Strategic Talks With China

"It is going to take us 10 to 15 years to modernize 400 silos that already exist. And China is basically building almost that many overnight. So the speed of difference in that threat is what really concerns me most," Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs says.

By COLIN CLARK on September 13, 2021 at 7:49 PM

Gen. John Hyten (file)
WASHINGTON: Just days after President Biden initiated a 90-minute call to Chinese President Xi Jingping, the Vice Chairman off the Joint Chiefs of Staff pushed for broader and lower-level talks with the Peoples Liberation Army,

“I know the president — President Biden — and President Xi have talked a couple times this year. That’s important, but I hope we can broaden that conversation all the way down to the military-to-military level as well,” Gen. John Hyten said this afternoon.

His comments went further than those of a top Air Force officer last month, who also called for talks. Hyten is one of America’s top military officers and former head of Strategic Command, so his comments carry greater weight.

While he did not connect all the dots, Hyten made it clear that China’s ability to build new weapons such as long-range hypersonic missiles much more quickly than the US, combined with its recent construction of several hundred new ICBM silos, poses serious questions the US must address.
As an example, Hyten pointed to America’s program to modernize one part of its nuclear triad, the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, and how slowly America is moving relative to China.

“It is going to take us 10 to 15 years to modernize 400 silos that already exist. And China is basically building almost that many overnight. So the speed of difference in that threat is what really concerns me most,” the former head of US Strategic Command said. “And when you look at that nuclear capability, and you look at China’s declared no-first-use policy, and what they have nuclear weapons for, you have to ask yourself, why are they building that enormous, enormous nuclear capability faster than anybody in the world. That’s what really concerns me.”

Illustrating the balancing act that old arms control negotiators will remember all too well from their work with the Soviet Union, Hyten and other senior military commanders want to reach out and negotiate with China, America’s “pacing threat,” while simultaneously building the best and most lethal weapons possible as quickly as possible to deter China.

US Momentum Grows For Push To Start Strategic Talks With China - Breaking Defense

General Milley Should Be Fired for Holding Secret, Personal Talks with China

By DAN MCLAUGHLIN
If we did not already have **enough reasons** to believe that General Mark Milley has no business serving as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, today’s **blockbuster story in the Washington Post**, excerpted from the Bob Woodward/Robert Costa book *Peril*, should confirm this. Any Congress worthy of the name in a democracy would open an investigation of General Milley and push for his removal; any president who took his oath seriously would fire him immediately.

Here is what Woodward and Costa report, apparently from General Milley’s own mouth as one of their principal sources for the book:

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**General Milley Should Be Fired for Holding Secret, Personal Talks with China | National Review**

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**US Spy Chief Admits Greater Terror Threats Emerging in Yemen, Syria & Iraq Than Afghanistan**

*24 hours ago*

© REUTERS / STRINGER
The greatest terror threats to the US are now emerging in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Somalia - not Afghanistan, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines has revealed.

The revelation emerged Monday during the annual Intelligence and National Security Summit, which kicked off in the Washington suburbs and is expected to come to a close on Tuesday.

Although US intelligence officials are keeping close tabs on the developments unfolding in war-torn Afghanistan, Haines admitted during the event that greater terror threats are actually emerging in countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

"In terms of the homeland, the threat right now from terrorist groups, we don't prioritize at the top of the list Afghanistan," Haines told event attendees. "What we look at is Yemen, Somalia, Syria and Iraq for [Daesh]. And that's where we see the greatest threat."

It was during the Kabul exit that 13 US soldiers were killed by a suicide bombing that was later claimed by Daesh-K, an off-shoot group of the Daesh militant group.

Haines later followed up her remarks by underscoring during the speaking event that intelligence agencies are still placing a "big focus" on the potential resurgence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

"Our intelligence collection is diminished [in Afghanistan] and that is something that we have to prepare for and that we have been preparing for, frankly, quite some time," she added, acknowledging that the troop withdrawal and swift takeover by the Taliban* has made counterterrorism operations somewhat more challenging.

Turning the attention to domestic terrorism as well, Haines further indicated that such matters are a "growing and concerning threat" for officials.
Haines' comments come on the heels of remarks from top US Gen. Mark Milley, who recently warned that a "likely" civil war in Afghanistan could lead to the "reconstitution of al-Qaeda." Sounding off alarms, Milley speculated that such infighting in the region could unfold "within 12, 24, 36 months."


US Think Tank Claims Iran Could Have Enough Weapons-grade Uranium for Nuke in a Month

16 hours ago
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Ilya Tsukanov
All materialsWrite to the author

US and Israeli officials have spent much of the past decade claiming that Iran is on the brink of achieving nuclear weapons capability, alleging that the Islamic
Republic may be just “months” or “weeks” away from building a nuke. Tehran denies having any intention to obtain nuclear arms, or weapons of mass destruction of any kind.

Iran will have enough highly enriched uranium to build a nuclear weapon in just a month’s time, claims a new report by the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), a Washington-based think tank focusing on nuclear non-proliferation.

“A worst-case break-out estimate, which is defined as the time required to produce enough WGU [weapon-grade uranium] for one nuclear weapon, is as short as one month. Iran could produce a second significant quantity of WGU in less than three months after break-out commences. It could produce a third quantity in less than five months, where it would need to produce some of the WGU from natural uranium,” the report warns.

The document points to a recent estimate by the International Atomic Energy Agency which says that as of 30 August, Iran had produced 10 kg of "near 60 percent enriched uranium", with a "significant quantity" of that allegedly enough to build a nuclear explosive, according to ISIS. “As this stock grows, Iran can also more quickly produce WGU for a nuclear explosive,” the paper suggests.

Nuclear experts deem weapons-grade uranium to be material with an enrichment rate of 90 percent. The nuclear bomb the US dropped on Hiroshima in 1945 (one of the two nuclear weapons ever used in wartime and against people) had an enrichment level of 80 percent.


Congress wants answers on how DoD is solving a hypersonic weapons detection gap
By Jen Judson

Sep 14, 03:55 AM

The Avangard hypersonic vehicle blasts off during a test launch at an undisclosed location in Russia. The U.S. is developing ways to better detect and track hypersonic missile threats. (RU-RTR Russian Television via AP)

WASHINGTON — Concerned with a gap in the military’s ability to detect low-flying hypersonic weapons, lawmakers want the Pentagon to deliver a progress report on
efforts to fill it, particularly through commercial solutions, according to the House Armed Services’ markup of the fiscal 2022 defense policy bill.

If the defense policy bill passes, the Defense Department would be required to deliver a report in a few short months — by the end of November — on the status of its efforts to develop the ability to detect low-flying hypersonic weapons using radar.

“The committee is concerned about the inability of current radar systems to detect, track, engage and defeat emerging threats from hypersonic weapons,” an amendment added to the HASC markup states. “As identified by the National Defense Strategy, the Department of Defense has an immediate need to reinforce efforts to counter these weapons.”

Lawmakers want the Air Force and the Missile Defense Agency to examine current missile defense efforts and decide if the agencies are “taking into account innovative and cost-effective solutions available commercially.”

Congress wants answers on how DoD is solving a hypersonic weapons detection gap (defensenews.com)

Missile defense booster test may pave way for 'shoot-assess-shoot' capability

By

Sommer Brokaw
Sept. 13 (UPI) -- The U.S. Missile Defense Agency advanced missile defense capability in a successful flight test that could pave the way for systems to engage with incoming threats multiple times, officials said over the weekend.

Sunday's test included a three-stage booster in two-stage mode, which allowed the Ground-Based Interceptor missile to release a Raytheon-designed mockup of an Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle, or EKV, earlier in the flight than using the standard three stages.

"This was the first flight test of the new selectable stage booster configuration in two-stage mode," MDA Director Vice Admiral Jon Hill said in a statement.

The new selectable stage booster, along with future upgrades to sensing and tracking abilities, will provide the warfighter with "robust" ability to assess the threat after initial engagement and retain the time to engage again if needed, MDA said in the statement. "This is our first step toward a robust 'shoot-assess-shoot' capability," Hill added.

The MDA launched the GBI missile, which is an element of the nation's Ground-based Midcourse Defense, or GMD, System, from North
Vandenberg on Sunday, along with officials for Space Launch Delta 30 based at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. and U.S. Northern Command.

"Today was another milestone in the longstanding partnership between Space Launch Delta 30 and the Missile Defense Agency," Col. Robert Long, Space Launch Delta 30 commander, said in a press release."Once again, the combined team displayed their hallmark professionalism and 'can do' attitude in making this a successful test," Long said.

The GMD is part of the U.S. ballistic missile defense system which allows commanders to target and eliminate ballistic missile threats in space, and it aims to protects the homeland from intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from hostile nations, Defense News noted.

MDA tests two-stage missile defense booster, may pave way for 'shoot-assess-shoot' capability - UPI.com

The future of special operations may look a lot different than the GWOT aesthetic we’ve come to know
By Meghann Myers
Sep 15, 01:35 AM
The days of the burly, bearded dude in Oakleys as the face of special operations might be waning. Special operations forces need a different focus, the director of strategy, plans and policy for Special Operations Command Central said Monday.

That look may have helped recruit a certain type of service member, Army Lt. Col. Katie Crombe said during the New America Future Security Forum, but it’s only a piece of the puzzle.

“...I kind of went back to what we feel about the posters and the stamps, or the branding, of special operations — you know, the night vision goggles and the operator with all of the gear going into a building,” she said. “And I thought, you know, that’s that’s not what we need to be advertising fully right now, for us.”

While there is a place for the door-kicker aesthetic, she added, “the people, and the mindset, and the creativity that we’re trying to recruit right now is much different than that.”

Part of that might look like more of a focus on the civil affairs and psychological operations parts of SOCOM, the organizations that do more of the “hearts and minds” work before a conflict gets to the point where operators are going after high-value targets in the middle of the night.

The other part could reflect SOCOM’s recent commitment to diversity and inclusion, which most notably, aims to recruit more women and minorities into SOF organizations.

“... but I think it is difficult for them to promote and bring on talent that looks different than them,” Crombe said of existing leadership, who came up not only in the time of the burly, bearded operator, but in a time where combat deployments meant more than any other measure of skill or leadership.
When someone has taken time out of the deployment churn to further their education or take a position outside the prescribed pipeline, “it just, it doesn’t compute somehow in these [selection and promotion] boards,” she said.

Crombe offered her fellow panel participants as an example. The discussion was moderated by Joint Special Operations University president retired Col. Isaiah Wilson III, who is Black, and included Indian-American Marine Maj. Akhil Iyer and Army Capt. Shaye Haver, one of the first women to graduate Ranger school.

The future of special operations may look a lot different than the GWOT aesthetic we’ve come to know (armytimes.com)
Army refuses to say whether officer’s resignation letter citing ‘Marxist takeover of the military’ is real

"I regretfully — yet resolutely — tender my resignation."

After a supposed resignation letter from an Army lieutenant colonel criticizing the U.S. military’s vaccine mandates and related “ideologically Marxist takeover of the military” made the rounds on social media and was viewed by tens of thousands of people, the Army has decided to say nothing about it.

“I am incapable of subjecting myself to the unlawful, unethical, immoral, and tyrannical order to sit still and allow a serum to be injected into my flesh against my will and better judgement,” Lt. Col. Paul Hague, a signal officer assigned to the Army Reserve Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, wrote in a resignation letter posted to Twitter by his wife last week. “It is impossible for this so-called ‘vaccine’ to have been studied adequately to determine the long-term effects.”

The claim that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines haven’t been thoroughly tested is false and one of many popular conspiracy theories and myths about the vaccines that continue to spread in the ranks. More than 178 million Americans are now fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A CDC study published in August found that unvaccinated people were 29 times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than people who were fully vaccinated.
New F-35 Sustainment Deal Creates Path To Lockheed Multi-Year PBL Contract

The cost per flight hour of the F-35A, the most common of the three F-35 variants, will drop from $33,600 to $30,000 over the contract.

By AARON MEHTA and THERESA HITCHENS on September 13, 2021 at 9:00 PM

Lockheed Martin is one step closer to an F-35 PBL for sustainment. (File)
WASHINGTON: The Pentagon has granted a new F-35 sustainment contract with Lockheed Martin, one which the F-35 Joint Program Office says lays the groundwork to move towards a performance-based logistics (PBL) agreement with the world’s largest defense company.

The agreement covers fiscal year 2021, with options for 2022 and 2023. Should all the options be picked up, the contract will have a $6.6 billion price tag, according to a Defense Department press release. Cost per flight hour for the global fleet should drop by 8% over that three-year period, from $36,100 in 2020 to $33,400 in 2023; the cost per flight hour of the F-35A, the most common of the three F-35 variants, will drop from $33,600 to $30,000 during that time period.

“Working together with our Industry Partner, the F-35 Joint Program Office team negotiated aggressive cost savings and performance targets that will benefit the global F-35 sustainment enterprise, and all F-35 customers,” Lt. Gen. Eric Fick, program executive officer of the F-35 Joint Program Office, said in a statement. “The JPO remains committed to working with industry partners and F-35 stakeholders to deliver the capabilities our warfighters require at a cost our taxpayers can afford. This ’21-23 sustainment contract agreement is a positive step in securing affordable lifecycle costs for our customers.”
The F-35 statement specifically states that this agreement “lays the groundwork for a transition to a supply support and demand reduction performance based logistics (PBL) contract in the future.” PBLs are contracts that commit suppliers to delivering the reliability and availability of a system at certain agreed-to levels, over a several year period.

Lockheed has said doing an F-35 sustainment PBL will save significant money for the government, but the department has been skittish over concerns that the savings would not come as promised — while getting locked into a multi-year deal, as opposed to annual agreements that has been the norm.
Project Kaiju: The U.S. Air Force’s Desperate Bid To Protect Big, Slow Planes From Fast, Smart Chinese Missiles

David Axe

U.S. Air Force F-15C Eagles assigned to the 44th Fighter Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, F-16 ... [+]

U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN AARON LARUE GUERRISKY

The U.S. military absolutely depends on the Air Force’s lumbering aerial tankers to extend the range of short-range fighters so they can travel the many hundreds of miles from the Pentagon’s Pacific bases to likely battle zones around, say, Taiwan.

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army knows this. And it’s working hard to develop new ways of shooting down the tankers. Knocking out the refueling planes and other so-called “high-value airborne assets” is one of the PLA’s top priorities.

And it’s a top priority of the U.S. Air Force to stop the PLA from taking out HVAAs. To that end, the Air Force Research Laboratory has launched a new program. It’s got an, ahem, interesting name.

AFRL’s initial solicitation to industry for Project Kaiju dropped Thursday. HVAA such as tankers “are necessary for mission success and are historically provided natural protection due to their operational distance being far enough outside the immediate battlefront,” the lab noted.

“With adversaries understanding the importance of HVAA to mission success, as well as their vulnerabilities, HVAA may become a likely target for emerging longer-range advanced threats.”

In particular, the Air Force is worried about new, long-range surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles featuring “multi-mode” seekers. Traditionally, a missile has just one kind of seeker. Infrared, radar or radar-homing.

Project Kaiju: The U.S. Air Force’s Desperate Bid To Protect Big, Slow Planes From Fast, Smart Chinese Missiles (forbes.com)
US Navy, Boeing conduct first-ever refueling between unmanned tanker, F-35C

By Megan Eckstein

Sep 15, 04:43 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Navy’s MQ-25 Stingray unmanned tanker conducted its first aerial refueling with an F-35C Joint Strike Fighter, the third aircraft type to take fuel from the Navy’s first unmanned system designed to deploy in a future carrier strike group.

Boeing’s T1 test aircraft and an F-35C from the Navy’s Air Test Wing and Evaluation Squadron 23 conducted a three-hour mission on Sept. 13, taking off from the MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah, Ill., and then going through a methodical process of linking up and refueling in this test environment. The Navy pilot conducted surveys and evaluations of the unmanned aircraft and the air around it before connecting with its drogue at 225 knots and 10,000 feet altitude. An air vehicle operator at the ground control station then initiated the fuel transfer from T1’s aerial refueling store to the F-35C.

“Every T1 flight with another Type/Model/Series aircraft gets us one step closer to rapidly delivering a fully mission-capable MQ-25 to the fleet,” Navy program manager Capt. Chad Reed said in a news release. “Stingray’s unmatched refueling capability is going to increase the Navy’s power projection and provide operational flexibility to the carrier strike group commanders.”

The latest refueling follows a six-hour test flight on Aug. 18, when the MQ-25 refueled an E-2D Advanced Hawkeye for the first time. The E-2D was not
originally built to receive fuel in-air but was modified to add the aerial refueling capability in 2019.

“Once operational, the MQ-25 will refuel every receiver-capable platform including E-2,” Reed said in a separate news release on the August flight test between T1 and the Navy’s Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Two Zero (VX) 20. “This flight keeps us on a fast track to getting the Stingray out to the fleet where its refueling capability will greatly increase the range and operational flexibility of the carrier air wing and strike group.”

US Navy, Boeing conduct first-ever refueling between unmanned tanker, F-35C (navytimes.com)
U.S., Thailand expand maritime partnership with CARAT Exercise

By Lt.Cmdr. Lauren Chatmas, Command Destroyer Squadron 7 Public Affairs

GULF OF THAILAND –

U.S. and Royal Thai navies conducted maritime training during the 27th annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise, Sep. 6-10.

Taking place virtually and in the Gulf of Thailand, the contactless exercise featured cooperative evolutions that highlight the ability of U.S. and Thailand to work together towards the common goal of ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific maritime security environment.

“The 27th iteration of CARAT Thailand represents the longstanding partnership and alliance between the people of Thailand, the United States, and like-minded allies and partners,” said Capt. Tom Ogden, commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7. “While this exercise was contactless with the Royal Thai Navy, the opportunity to sail our ships and operate aircraft together as a unified force was impactful and developed mutual trust and further operational capability of both our nations.”

The countries demonstrated their ability to work together through numerous events including divisional tactics designed to enhance communication as ships sail together in complex maneuvers; maritime domain awareness (MDA) tracking exercise with the P-8 aimed at increasing both navies’ ability to track and pursue targets beyond visual range through the coordinated deployment of surface ships and maritime patrol aircraft; helicopter cross deck landings; and search and rescue exercises.

The virtual subject matter expert exchanges featured a variety of joint training opportunities, to include submarine search and rescue, diving operations, replenishment at sea best practices, Women Peace & Security symposium, MDA, anti-submarine warfare, diving operations, and maritime patrol aircraft integrated operations.

For the first time, intergovernmental organization personnel from the European Union’s Critical Maritime Routes Indo-Pacific (EU-CRIMARIO) initiative provided subject matter expertise. EU-
CRIMARIO hosted a virtual expert exchange on boarding operations in the high seas and a short brief on MDA. The inclusion of non-uniformed organizations in the CARAT series aids in understanding of the operational environment and U.S. 7th Fleet desires to continue this approach in future iterations.

The at-sea phase took place in territorial and international waters near Sattahip and Ko Samui, where USS Green Bay (LPD 20) and a P-8A Poseidon aircraft assigned to Commander, Task Force (CTF) 72 joined with ships and aircraft from Thailand for allied training, focused on building interoperability and strengthening relationships. Royal Thai Navy ships at-sea included the Naresuan-class frigates HTMS Naresuan (FFG 421), HTMS Taksin (FFG 422) and HTMS Bhumibol Adulyadej (FFG 471).

“The COVID 19 pandemic made 2021 a challenging year because of the health restrictions imposed to control the spread of the virus,” said Capt. Anurak P, chief of staff, Frigate Squadron 2, Royal Thai Navy during a virtual ceremony. “Despite the impedances, we still manage to successfully finish the plan which shows the hard work and professionalism we devoted for this exercise.”

U.S. personnel participating in CARAT Thailand include staff from CTF 72, CTF 73, CTF 74, CTF 76, Commander, DESRON 7, U.S. 7th Fleet, and Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) Thailand.

Beginning in 1995, CARAT builds upon other engagements in South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. Each CARAT exercise features professional symposia and a robust at-sea phase that incorporates complex evolutions that increase combined operations. Both feature a broad range of naval competencies ranging from explosive ordnance disposal and live-fire gunnery exercises to search and rescue and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

As the U.S. Navy’s destroyer squadron forward-deployed in Southeast Asia, DESRON 7 serves as the primary tactical and operational commander of littoral combat ships rotationally deployed to Singapore, ESG 7’s Sea Combat Commander, and builds partnerships through training exercises and military-to-military engagements.

Part of CTF 76/Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 7, Green Bay is forward deployed to Sasebo,
Japan. CTF 76 is assigned to U.S. 7th Fleet and operates in support of security and stability in the region, and work alongside allied and partner navies to provide maritime security and stability, key pillars of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Under Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with 35 maritime nations in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

U.S., Thailand expand maritime partnership with CARAT Exercise > Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet > Display (navy.mil)
The Marine Corps’ top modernization priority is fulfilling the requirement for a ground-based anti-ship missile capability.

The operational requirement for this ship-killing capability is a relatively new development stemming from the Commandant’s Planning Guidance and the Corps’ Force Design 2030 efforts.

“As the Marine Corps’ first Ground Based Anti-Ship Missile capability, the Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System is a force modernization priority central to the Marine Corps’ contribution to the Naval expeditionary force’s anti-surface warfare campaign,” said Lt. Col. John Fraser, Fires branch head at Marine Corps Combat Development Directorate, Combat Development and Integration.

When integrated into sensor and communication networks supporting a naval or maritime kill chain and synchronized with the employment of other missile systems, the Marine Corps’ medium-range missile battery will serve as a component of the Naval expeditionary force’s stand-in force in support of the naval sea control effort, said Fraser.

MCSC plays a critical role in equipping Marines with the next-generation, modernized capabilities needed to meet and defeat an evolving threat. In two years, the Long Range Fires program office at MCSC has acquired NMESIS, an anti-ship missile capability meeting the GBASM requirement.

Medium-range missile batteries serving as part of Marine Littoral Regiments conducting expeditionary advanced base operations will employ NMESIS, said Fraser.
Research Service https://crsreports.congress.gov RL33153

In an era of renewed great power competition, China’s military modernization effort, including its naval modernization effort, has become the top focus of U.S. defense planning and budgeting. China’s navy, which China has been steadily modernizing for more than 25 years, since the early to mid-1990s, has become a formidable military force within China’s near-seas region, and it is conducting a growing number of operations in more-distant waters, including the broader waters of the Western Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and waters around Europe. China’s navy is viewed as posing a major challenge to the U.S. Navy’s ability to achieve and maintain wartime control of blue-water ocean areas in the Western Pacific—the first such challenge the U.S. Navy has faced since the end of the Cold War. China’s navy forms a key element of a Chinese challenge to the long-standing status of the United States as the leading military power in the Western Pacific. Some U.S. observers are expressing concern or alarm regarding the pace of China’s naval shipbuilding effort and resulting trend lines regarding the relative sizes and capabilities of China’s navy and the U.S. Navy. China’s naval modernization effort encompasses a wide array of ship, aircraft, and weapon acquisition programs, as well as improvements in maintenance and logistics, doctrine, personnel quality, education and training, and exercises. China’s navy has currently has certain limitations and weaknesses, and is working to overcome them. China’s military modernization effort, including its naval modernization effort, is assessed as being aimed at developing capabilities for addressing the situation with Taiwan militarily, if need be; for achieving a greater degree of control or domination over China’s near-seas region, particularly the South China Sea; for enforcing China’s view that it has the right to regulate foreign military activities in its 200-mile maritime exclusive economic zone (EEZ); for defending China’s commercial sea lines of communication (SLOCs), particularly those linking China to the
Persian Gulf; for displacing U.S. influence in the Western Pacific; and for asserting China’s status as the leading regional power and a major world power. Consistent with these goals, observers believe China wants its navy to be capable of acting as part of a Chinese anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) force—a force that can deter U.S. intervention in a conflict in China’s near-seas region over Taiwan or some other issue, or failing that, delay the arrival or reduce the effectiveness of intervening U.S. forces. Additional missions for China’s navy include conducting maritime security (including antipiracy) operations, evacuating Chinese nationals from foreign countries when necessary, and conducting humanitarian assistance/disaster response (HA/DR) operations. The U.S. Navy in recent years has taken a number of actions to counter China’s naval modernization effort. Among other things, the U.S. Navy has shifted a greater percentage of its fleet to the Pacific; assigned its most-capable new ships and aircraft and its best personnel to the Pacific; maintained or increased general presence operations, training and developmental exercises, and engagement and cooperation with allied and other navies in the Indo-Pacific; increased the planned future size of the Navy; initiated, increased, or accelerated numerous programs for developing new military technologies and acquiring new ships, aircraft, unmanned vehicles, and weapons; begun development of new operational concepts (i.e., new ways to employ Navy and Marine Corps forces) for countering Chinese maritime A2/AD forces; and signaled that the Navy in coming years will shift to a more-distributed fleet architecture that will feature a smaller portion of larger ships, a larger portion of smaller ships, and a substantially greater use of unmanned vehicles. The issue for Congress is whether the U.S. Navy is responding appropriately to China’s naval modernization effort.
PLA warships reportedly sail near Alaska, 'display of far-sea capabilities or countermeasure against US provocation'

By Liu Xuanzun
Published: Sep 14, 2021 12:26 AM

Photo taken on Jan. 12, 2020 shows the ceremony of the commissioning of the Nanchang, China's first Type 055 guided-missile destroyer, in the port city of Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province. The commission of Nanchang marks the Navy's leap from the third generation to the fourth generation of destroyers, according to a statement from the Navy. Photo: Xinhua

A website affiliated with the US Defense Department reported on Sunday that a naval flotilla of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), featuring one of China's most powerful warships, recently sailed in international waters near Alaska. However, the report was deleted for unknown reasons on Monday.

If the report is true, activities by Chinese warships are likely a normal far-sea training amid the PLA Navy's rapid development of such capabilities, Chinese analysts said on Monday, noting that this could also be seen as a countermeasure against US military provocations on China's doorsteps in the name of freedom of navigation.
A four-ship PLA Navy task force, including a guided missile cruiser, a guided missile destroyer, a general intelligence vessel and an auxiliary vessel sailed in international waters inside the US Exclusive Economic Zone, off the coast of the Aleutian Islands in Alaska, on August 29 and 30, the US Department of Defense reported on Sunday on the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) website citing a release from the US Coast Guard District 17.

While the DVIDS report did not name the four PLA vessels, military observers said they are likely of the same flotilla that sailed east through the Soya Strait into the Pacific Ocean on August 24, as the timing and location would logically fit together.
China’s most powerful warship enters the US exclusive economic zone

A group of four Chinese warships, including the country’s one of the most powerful destroyers, the Type-052D, have entered the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around the Aleutian island chain off the coast of Alaska.

The US Coast Guard recently announced that the Legend-class Bertholf coast guard ship followed a group of four Chinese warships, which were entering the US EEZ around the Aleutian island chain off the coast of Alaska. The incident occurred on August 29 and 30, but was only announced on September 12 by the website of the Defense Imaging Information Coordination Service (DVIDS).

Independent observers have also previously noted that Japanese officials said they had detected four Chinese warships, including a Type 052D-class destroyer, a Type 903 supply ship, and an intelligence reconnaissance ship, and a cruiser sailing east to west through the Soya Strait on August 24, heading for Alaskan waters.

US cost guard Legend-class cutter

Initial information shows that the captain of the US coast guard Bertholf, Tim Brown, had “direct, safe and professional communication with the Chinese warships, in accordance with international standards”.

Observers said that China’s reckless sending of a powerful fleet of warships into the US EEZ to probe Washington’s response, thereby making plans to deal with the US fleet operating in international waters economy, where Beijing is making illegal claims.

**Type 052D** is a multi-purpose missile destroyer equipped with a new vertical missile launch system, a single 130 mm canon, a modern integrated command combat system, a long-range air defense missile system Hq-9SAM, YJ-18 cruise missiles, long-range anti-ship missiles and active phased array radar systems. This is considered the most powerful battleship of China after Type 055 destroyer.

*China’s most powerful warship enters the US exclusive economic zone - Defence View*
The PLA Air Force’s Efforts Toward Agile Combat Employment

By Derek Solen

September 14, 2021

Early July 2021, it was reported that the Western Theater Air Force of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force (PLAAF) had “recently” conducted a combat support exercise in northwestern China.[1] Although much of the exercise resembled other combat support exercises, it is notable because of its unusual stated purposes. Those purposes indicate that the PLAAF lacks the capability to operate outside its network of airbases, but they may also indicate that the PLAAF has set about emulating the U.S. Air Force’s newest operational concept.

The Exercise

As usual, details about the exercise are sparse, but it seems to have been relatively small, involving an air defense element as well as some aircraft (at least one Y-20 transport and at least two J-16 fighters) and their crews in addition to a great variety of combat support elements, from engineering to medical and even food service elements (Chinese Military Television Online, June 22; Chinese Military Online, July 14). The exercise began with the participating combat support elements deploying to an unspecified place in northwestern China by road, rail, and air (Chinese Military Television Online, June 22). After assembling at their destination, the participants unloaded materiel from a train and established a bivouac and a motor pool (Chinese Military Television Online, June 22).

“Several” aircraft then landed at an “unfamiliar” (陌生, mosheng) airfield that was presumably nearby (Chinese Military Television Online, June 22; Military Report, July 8). The PLA refers to an airfield from which a unit does not ordinarily operate as an “unfamiliar” airfield. The term encompasses civilian as well as military airfields. Immediately after the aircraft landed, the airfield was “attacked” from the air (Military Report, July 8). Elements of an engineering and logistics group removed unexploded ordnance and then worked with a local civilian construction company to repair the runway (Xinhua, July 7). The airfield’s fuel tank farm was also “destroyed” in the attack, so a fuel support element established a new “field fuel farm” (Chinese Military Television Online, June 22).
China Begins Landmine Removal Operation Along Border With Myanmar

The landmines were reportedly planted to target civilians moving back and forth across the 2,000-kilometer mountainous border informally.

By Qiao Long
2021-09-13

Chinese authorities have begun removing landmines along the border between southwestern Yunnan province and Myanmar, according to ethnic Chinese living on the Myanmar side.

A committee that runs the Kokang Autonomous Region in northern Myanmar, an ethnic Chinese enclave just across the border from Yunnan, warned local residents that China would be carrying out demining operations, starting Sept. 1.

The area being demined is on the Chinese side of the No. 121-122 boundary markers near Yunnan's Nansan township, and near the No. 112-113 boundary markers behind Bengkong village, Mengdui township, the notice said.

"Please don't panic if you hear explosions," the committee's notice said. "In order to avoid accidents, please stay away from the above-mentioned areas."

A Twitter post from ethnic Chinese residents of Kokang also carried the warning, saying the operations would continue through Oct. 31.

The demining operations came after Chinese authorities closed the border as part of efforts to halt the spread of COVID-19. China has built a barbed-wire fence spanning around 1,000 km (620 miles) between Ruili, Lijiang, and the Gaoligong mountains in Yunnan, seen as a bid to stem the free flow of goods and people between the two countries.

Repeated calls to the Zhenkang county government stability maintenance bureau
and the township government in Nansan rang unanswered during office hours on Monday.

An employee who answered the phone at the Nansan No. 1 Guesthouse said that military personnel are currently engaged in demining operations in the area, however.

"Yes," the employee said, when asked to confirm the reports, but had no further information to offer.

China Begins Landmine Removal Operation Along Border With Myanmar — Radio Free Asia (rfa.org)
Taiwan kicked off its 37th annual Han Kuang exercise on Monday, conducting simulations to prepare the island for a potential Chinese attack.

Taiwan’s Central News Agency reported on the event’s opening, which will last for five days. Taiwan defense forces simulated several attack scenarios and responses in various parts of the island.

Biological containment troops responded to a mock attack in Tainan, south Taiwan, then rushed the “victims” to a hospital. Following that, decontamination teams drilled in cleanup measures.

Navy warships practiced defense against attacks on military bases.

An upcoming exercise in the southern county of Pingtung will have F-16 fighters practicing takeoffs and landings on regular roads in a mock incident of enemies attacking and destroying their airbase.

Taiwan’s annual Han Kuang exercises are broken up into two types of training.

The Command Post Exercise structures simulations to practice responses to realistic potential conflicts, while Field Training Exercises are a computer-simulated series of war games.

The 2021 edition of the exercise was originally slated for July, but due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases was postponed.

It was not until August when military officials announced the tentative September schedule, with the scale and scope of some activities modified from original plans.
Taiwan lands fighters on highway as annual drills reach peak

By Reuters

TAIPEI, Sept 15 (Reuters) - Taiwanese fighter jets landed on a makeshift runway on a highway strip on Wednesday overseen by President Tsai Ing-wen as annual drills reached their peak, skills that would be needed in the event China attacks and targets Taiwan's vulnerable air bases.

China has been ramping up its military pressure against the island it claims as "sacred" Chinese territory, hoping to force the democratically elected government to accept Beijing's sovereignty, including with repeated exercises near Taiwan.

Tsai, re-elected by a landslide last year on a pledge to stand up to China, has made modernising Taiwan's mainly U.S.-equipped military a priority, turning it into a "porcupine", both highly mobile and hard to attack.

Three fighters - an F-16, French-made Mirage and a Ching-kuo Indigenous Defence Fighter - plus an E-2 Hawkeye early warning aircraft landed in rural southern Pingtung county on a highway strip specially designed to be straight and flat for rapid conversion from a road into a runway.
"Such splendid combat skills and rapid and real actions come from solid everyday training and also demonstrate the confidence of the Republic of China Air Force in defending its airspace," Tsai wrote on Facebook, referencing Taiwan's formal name.

Taiwan has five emergency highway runways across the island which can be pressed into service in the event a Chinese attack takes out air force bases, meaning the air force will still be able to operate.

The majority of Taiwan's air bases are on its flat west coast, facing China, and would likely come under almost immediate heavy missile and aerial bombardment in case of war.

Taiwan's mountainous east coast is home to two other air bases, with hangers hewn deep into the rock, providing much more solid protection.

The week-long Han Kuang drills are taking place around Taiwan, with other exercises to practise repelling a Chinese invasion, protecting critical infrastructure and night operations, though the highway drills are the most dramatic.

Taiwan's air force scrambles on an almost daily basis to intercept Chinese aircraft that fly into the island's air defence zone, mostly close to the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands at the top part of the South China Sea.
Janes Defence Budgets forecasts that South Korea will increase funding for military procurement by about USD1 billion over the coming five years. (Janes Defence Budgets)

South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) has disclosed to Janes details about a new industry policy that will shape the way it engages with foreign contractors.

DAPA said its Korea Defense Capability (KDC) programme will prioritise local sourcing through industrial co-operation projects linked to defence contracts.

The objective of the plan is to spur local industrial capability and enhance the supply of equipment and services to the Republic of Korea (RoK) Armed Forces.

In comments to Janes, DAPA compared the new policy to the US' Buy American Act, Canberra's Australian Industry Capability (AIC) scheme, and New Delhi's 'Make in India' initiative.

Like in India, South Korea's KDC policy will operate alongside the country's existing defence offset guidelines, which were most recently updated in March 2020.
Earlier this year, a Chinese company won a contract to establish hybrid wind and solar energy projects in Delft, Nainativu and Analativu islets in the Palk Strait off the Jaffna Peninsula.

Unable to make any incursion across the Line of Actual Control in the north where India’s military might is on full display, China has turned its attention to coastal Tamil Nadu in the south, using Sri Lanka as its launching pad. Earlier this year, a Chinese company won a contract to establish hybrid wind and solar energy projects in Delft, Nainativu and Analativu islets in the Palk Strait off the Jaffna Peninsula. These islets are hardly 20 nautical miles from Rameswaram, a 30-minute boat ride from the Indian coast. The Chinese are also eyeing Kachchativu, an integral part of the erstwhile Ramanathapuram zamindari which former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 without the approval of Parliament, as required by Indian Constitution. It is just 10 nautical miles from Rameswaram. Kachchativu island is strategically important for the defence of the Indian Ocean Region.

In May 2019, India and Japan jointly agreed to develop the strategic deep sea East Container Terminal of the Colombo Port. India contributes more than 70 per cent of Colombo’s transhipment business. President Gotabaya Rajapakse reneged on the agreement and is getting the project developed jointly with China Merchants Port Holdings Company. Adjacent to the port, China has developed the most modern Colombo Port City from land reclaimed from the sea. In Parliament 149 out of 225 members voted in favour of the controversial Colombo Port City project. In the Southern Province of Sri Lanka, Gotabaya has leased the Chinese-built Hambantota Port to China for 99 years and ruled out any Indian involvement in the development of the Mattala airport in the province.
Indian air force will show Japan how to “catch cards” of Chinese fighters

The Japanese air force is eager to exercise against India’s Su-30MKI, to let Japanese pilots know the capabilities of the Russian-origin Su-30 fighter, which is currently the main fighter in the Chinese Air Force.

The Japan Air Self-Defense Force, which is actively preparing for joint training activities with the Indian Air Force in the coming months, will involve combat aircraft units from both sides, including the 6 most powerful fighters of the Indian Air Force, the Su-30MKI.

During the first ‘2+2’ meeting involving the foreign and defence ministers of India and Japan in late 2019, the two nations agreed to hold a military exercise involving their fighter aircraft.

It would have been the first such training venture between the two countries, which have held drills involving warships, land-based forces and transport aircraft of their air forces. The fighter exercise, proposed to be held in mid-2020, would have involved the Indian Air Force deploying its Russian-designed Su-30MKI fighters to the Komatsu airbase to train with the US-designed F-15J fighters operated by the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

For the Japanese Air Force units, the opportunity to train against the Su-30 is highly appreciated, as it provides perhaps the closest simulation of the capabilities of the Chinese air force. Japan has to face the J-16 if there will be a conflict between the two countries and Japan can’t afford to lose from China.

Su-30MKI is a 4+ generation aircraft: This is an improved version of the Soviet Union’s leading air superiority fighter, the Su-27 Flanker, developed by Russia specifically for India. The Su-30MKI has been in service with the Indian Air Force (IAF) since 2002.
Su-27 Flanker variants are also the backbone of the PLA Air Force; however, the Chinese versions of the Su-30MKK and Su-30MK2, are considered less modern than the Indian version of the MKI.

China, after mastering technology from Russia, has begun to “copy” versions of Su-27 such as J-11BG, J-15B and J-16, which are considered superior in combat performance compared to the previous original version. In addition, China also owns two squadrons of Su-35 purchased directly from Russia, which is considered the most modern variant of the Su-27 series.

**J-16 fighter of China**

Japan’s main fighter formation today is the F-15J Eagle, which first entered service in 1980 and currently has about 200 F-15Js in service. The Japanese F-15J Eagle was formerly considered the undisputed number 1 air superiority fighter in East Asia; but then its capabilities were surpassed by the more advanced Korean F-15Ks, purchased about 20 years later.

[Indian air force will show Japan how to "catch cards" of Chinese fighters - Defence View](https://example.com)
In September last year, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh-headed Defence Acquisition Council had given clearance for the procurement of additional 72,400 assault rifles from the US.

**New Delhi:** The Indian Army will have to wait for at least one and half years to get the second lot of over 72,000 US-made assault rifle Sig Sauer 716 as the cost is still being negotiated. “Cost is being negotiated and then order will be placed. It would take at least one year after the contract is signed,” a source in the defence establishment said.

In September last year, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh-headed Defence Acquisition Council had given clearance for the procurement of additional 72,400 assault rifles from the US.

The Indian Army had received the previous order of same quantity that was signed in 2019 at around Rs 700 crore, have been provided to troops deployed on borders, involved in counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations.

These assault rifles will replace the obsolete Indian Small Arms System (INSAS) 5.56x45mm rifles, which were inducted two decades back.

Last month, India and Russia had inked a pact to procure 70,000 AK-203 rifles. The two countries had also formed a joint venture to manufacture AK-203 assault rifles at Korwa in 2019. However, the production is yet to start.

As per the reports, India is keen to procure around 7.5 lakh AK-203 rifles to do away with shortage of guns for the troops.
Earlier, the government had ordered for procurement of 16,500 Light Machine Guns from Israel. Out of which, 6,000 have been delivered to India.

India has speeded up its procurement and modernisation drive amidst border standoff with China in the eastern Ladakh since May last year. Though, the disengagement has taken place at several friction points but still a large number of China’s PLA troops are present in the depth areas.
The longstanding bilateral defence partnership between Singapore and Australia was again on display during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2021 (IPE21).

The cooperative activity, held on September 1, continued a long history of exercising together, which has built trust, precision and technical skill.

This year’s activity combined elements from Mine Warfare Team 16, Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG), air and marine capabilities.

A precision ‘at sea’ landing of a Republic of Singapore Air Force Boeing CH-47 on the flight deck of HMAS Canberra, handled by RAN Commander Josh Carey’s flight team, was one of the highlights of the activity.

Given the longstanding partnership between the two countries, it was of no surprise to Commander Carey that it ran smoothly.

“It was an excellent opportunity for us, once again in the region, to show our presence, and to show how interoperable we are with our regional partners,” Commander Carey said.

Part of the flight team is Seaman Tristan Forkin, a young sailor on his first deployment, and on whom the importance of the situation was not lost.
‘New battleground’: Cyber attackers targeting Australia’s health system

By Anthony Galloway
September 14, 2021 — 10.00pm

View all comments
A cyber attack is being reported in Australia every 7.8 minutes as sophisticated hackers, including foreign governments, target the nation’s critical infrastructure and essential services such as hospitals, food distribution and electricity systems.

The wave of hacks last financial year included a significant ransomware attack against a Victorian public health service in March, which affected four hospitals and aged care homes and resulted in the postponement of elective surgeries.

Cyber attackers targeting Australia’s health system: ACSC (smh.com.au)
‘Lost the plot’: How an obsession with local jobs blew out Australia’s $90 billion submarine program

By Anthony Galloway
SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Australia’s program to build an attack-class submarine fleet has been plagued by cost blowouts and delays. CREDIT: NAVAL GROUP
Nick Minchin isn’t surprised Australia’s future submarines are arriving later than expected and $40 billion more expensive. He has seen it all before.

As finance minister for six years in the Howard government, Minchin was responsible for the taxpayer-funded company ASC, which built Australia’s six Collins-class submarines between 1990 and 2003.

Australia’s $90 billion submarine program blown out by an obsession with local jobs (smh.com.au)
DSEI 2021: SEA wins communications system upgrade for RNZN ANZAC frigates
14 SEPTEMBER 2021

by Richard Scott

HMNZS Te Kaha on post-refit trials. Te Kaha and sister ship HMNZS Te Mana are to receive a major communications upgrade. (RNZN)

SEA, a subsidiary of the UK-based technology group Cohort, has been contracted by the New Zealand Ministry of Defence as prime integrator for the first phase of a communications upgrade on the Royal New Zealand Navy's (RNZN's) two MEKO 200ANZ ANZAC frigates.

Valued at GBP4.6 million (USD6.3 million), this initial contract increment covers the design of the communication system to be implemented on HMNZS Te Kaha and HMNZS Te Mana under the Frigate Sustainment Phase 1 (FSP1) – Communications Project. The contract represents first of the two planned project phases, which will deliver new capability from 2024.

Last month, the New Zealand government approved the NZD21.2 million external communications upgrade, which covers the introduction of a new communications control system, and modern radios for data and voice communication. The upgrade is designed to ensure the ships can handle the increasing volume of data generated by modern communications systems, and operate with other New Zealand Defence Force capabilities and coalition partners.
Russia’s T-62 Tank Reportedly to Remain in Service With Russian Army Until 2030

Yesterday

The T-62 tank, originally manufactured in the Soviet Union from 1961 to 1975, will remain a part of the Russian Army, in a limited capacity, until 2030, according to reports.

While the tank was quickly surpassed by more sophisticated and economic tanks developed for the Soviet Army, thousands remain in active service in militaries across the globe.

The T-62 will likely remain in service in the Russian Army through 2030. Many have remained in warehouses throughout Russia, with plans to update and export their remaining inventory. The Cold War-era tank has been predominantly deployed throughout the Middle East over the past decade, and has been used by Ethiopia in the Tigray Civil War.

The T-62 tank was originally designed by the Soviet Union to replace their T-55 tank, which fell behind the armory of Western tanks, and proved unable to sufficiently support a cannon capable of piercing their frontal armor.

The T-62 maintained a similar design to the T-55, but proved to be large enough to carry newer armor-piercing weaponry. Production began in 1961 in Kharkiv and stopped in 1973, with 20,000 units being produced. Production ultimately ceased in 1975 in the Soviet Union.
Cyber arms dealer exploits new iPhone software vulnerability – researchers

September 14, 2021 | 2:24 pm

A cyber surveillance company based in Israel developed a tool to break into Apple iPhones with a never-before-seen technique that has been in use since at least February, internet security watchdog group Citizen Lab said on Monday.

The discovery is important because of the critical nature of the vulnerability, which requires no user interaction and affects all versions of Apple’s iOS, OSX, and watchOS, except for those updated on Monday.

The tool developed by the Israeli firm, named NSO Group, defeats security systems designed by Apple in recent years.

Apple said it fixed the vulnerability in Monday’s software update, confirming Citizen Lab’s finding. [https://citizenlab.ca/2021/09/forcedentry-nso-group-imessage-zero-click-exploit-captured-in-the-wild](https://citizenlab.ca/2021/09/forcedentry-nso-group-imessage-zero-click-exploit-captured-in-the-wild)

“After identifying the vulnerability used by this exploit for iMessage, Apple rapidly developed and deployed a fix in iOS 14.8 to protect our users,” said Ivan Krstić, head of Apple Security Engineering and Architecture, in a statement. “Attacks like the ones described are highly sophisticated, cost millions of dollars to develop, often have a short shelf life, and are used to target specific individuals.”

“While that means they are not a threat to the overwhelming majority of our users, we continue to work tirelessly to defend all our customers, and we are constantly adding new protections for their devices and data,” he added.

An Apple spokesperson declined to comment on whether the hacking technique came from NSO Group.

In a statement to Reuters, NSO did not confirm or deny that it was behind the technique, saying only that it would “continue to provide intelligence and law enforcement agencies around the world with life-saving technologies to fight terror and crime.”

[Cyber arms dealer exploits new iPhone software vulnerability - researchers - BusinessWorld (bworldonline.com)](bworldonline.com)
Since my new book, “Humane: How the United States Abandoned Peace and Reinvented War,” came out last week, it’s had its ups and downs. But it was my colleague and friend John Fabian Witt who penned the best confrontation with my historical argument so far, and it deserves a reaction.

Witt is the master of American legal history in general, and the history of the laws of war in particular. His acclaimed “Lincoln’s Code: The Laws of War in American History” set the bar for the field—one that I wasn’t foolish enough to try to reach. It has been my good fortune to learn from him, and to get his thoughts on my work. Yet for all the personal generosity of Witt’s essay, it also obfuscates a few things.

Let me get a big distraction out of the way first. Witt writes that legalization of war—and possible legitimation through law—goes all the way back. But I never denied it. (The syllabus from our co-taught class from 2007 that Witt mentions started with “Deuteronomy”—which I assigned.) Indeed, my central claim in “Humane” is not that there were no laws of war, but that the modern cause of “humanity” barely affected them for a long time.

While I don’t deny the ancient and modern legalization of war, I did mean to critique Witt’s own treatment of the actors, causes and timing of the humanization of the law. In his masterpiece, Witt disguises the fact that Americans were never much concerned with humanizing their wars—even when they legalized them in new ways—by citing Civil War-era adviser Francis Lieber’s passing assurances that brutality itself in “short and sharp” wars would be more humane indirectly, in consequence of their brevity. But not only was Lieber’s view faulty (since brutal wars can last a long time). Lieber’s star turn gives Americans a role in the coming of more humane war by changing the definition of it—to include some of the most permissive standards in the laws of war ever penned. And with Lieber’s version of “humanity” getting Americans in on the ground floor of what became international humanitarian law, Witt can achieve Solomonic wisdom: There is nothing new under the sun of the laws of war, with an eternal oscillation in the regulation over time between concerns for maximizing force and minimizing suffering. Both of these are all-American from the start, Witt believes, like Jekyll and Hyde in the American or modern or even human spirit.
Introduction
It took the Taliban just three and a half months to undermine a 20-year international effort to build a competent Afghan military, a defeat already compared to the Bay of Pigs debacle in 1961 and the fall of Saigon in 1975.

The Afghanistan National Army (ANA) collapsed once it was clear the U.S. was pulling out ground troops and ceasing air support operations after two decades of training and sustainment that cost the American taxpayer approximately $83 billion. When required to stand alone, against a Taliban force, the ANA failed unequivocally. Building the ANA as a mirror image of the U.S. military was strategically and operationally flawed. If they are designed to fight like the U.S. but cannot fight in the absence of U.S. forces, they are ineffective. What lessons should we learn from this and how could our approach be different in the future?

A brief history
Between 2001 and 2021 the U.S. lost 2,448 military service members, an undisclosed number of CIA officers, and 3,846 contractors in Afghanistan. During those years, troop levels fluctuated, peaking in 2009 with the U.S. surge that put 130,000 service members on the ground in direct combat operations.
Since 2009, the number of service members in Afghanistan declined substantially, to approximately 2,500, when President Joe Biden announced the U.S. was pulling out all forces. At that point, very few were involved in direct combat operations and the corresponding risk to U.S. service members was low. U.S. military leaders estimated 5,000 troops were needed to remain in Afghanistan to preserve the gains fought for in that country, as well as to provide regional stability.

The withdrawal of U.S. forces is cast as ending a “forever war.” Yet, almost every war the U.S. has fought could arguably be characterized as ongoing. We typically “end wars” yet leave U.S. service members in those regions. Since World War II, we have had troops stationed in Germany, Italy, and Japan. As a result of the Korean War, we currently have 28,500 service members in the Demilitarized Zone between South and North Korea. Do we consider World War II and the Korean War as ongoing “forever wars?” No. We are also still deployed to Kosovo, Syria, and several other countries. Yet none of those are termed “forever wars.”

Having 5,000 service members deployed to Afghanistan is a very small number in comparison to our footprint in Europe and Korea. If the number of service members deployed isn’t an issue, is the financial investment the deciding factor?

Budget dust: Better approaches for security and sustainability — lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan | Middle East Institute (mei.edu)
Losing Small Wars: Why US Military Culture Leads to Defeat

Andrew Milbur

“Sir – it’s the TEA”

The Target Engagement Authority was a US one star who sat in the joint operations center in Erbil, with the task of approving and controlling all Coalition fires in Northern Iraq. I took the headset, preparing myself for the argument that I knew was coming.

“Andy, are you firing mortars”

“Yes sir”

“What the hell is going on?”

“Sir, the Pesh are getting mortared in the breach. I’ve got an OP less than 500 meters away.”

“Are US personnel taking fire?”

“Not yet, sir”

“Then you’re not authorized to make that decision”

“Sir – it’s a matter of one correction before our guys get hit too -- I’m not going to wait for that to happen”

“That’s not up to you Colonel, that’s my decision -- cease fire now”

The incident caused me to fume, ponder, and ultimately to write this article. I argue here that the General’s reaction was no anomaly, but rather a symptom of a culture within the US military at conflict with our professed doctrine of mission command; and that unless determined effort is made to change that culture, mission command will never be anything more than an aspirational concept -- officially embraced but shunned in practice. The ramifications go beyond leadership and doctrine to the very ability of the Joint Force to defeat adversaries – both conventional and irregular -- in a multi-domain environment.

Mission Command is a philosophy of decentralized decision making. Plans and orders are simply starting points, likely to soon become irrelevant amidst the fog and friction of war – what really matters is the intent of the higher commander which is linked to the overarching purpose of the operation. A subordinate is expected to be able to think on his feet, work out the best way to follow that intent, and adapt his actions to changing circumstances. As a method, mission command has ample precedence as a highly evolved philosophy of command and control that can produce disproportionate combat results. But while we understand the buzz words, we fail to understand the changes required in personnel management, education, and training in order to make it a cultural reality.
Theories of Afghan withdrawal failures emerge as Blinken defends chaotic exit

Republicans and Democrats clash over GOP contention Trump's Taliban deal played no role in deadly U.S. exit

Secretary of State Antony Blinken admitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Biden administration took 'risks' with its Afghanistan exit plan.

(Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call)

By Rachel Oswald

Posted September 14, 2021 at 4:14pm

ANALYSIS — Senators on Tuesday began what likely will be a long and laborious process of probing what went wrong in the planning and execution of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Several arguments emerged among Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill as both chambers began seeking answers — when members were not trying to merely score political points, that is.

A hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with Secretary of State Antony Blinken was much less acrimonious than a House Foreign Affairs Committee session the previous day. What's more, there was more bipartisan criticism of withdrawal-related decisions made by both Trump and Biden administration officials.

"The execution of the U.S. withdrawal was clearly and fatally flawed. ... There has to be accountability," Chairman Bob Menendez, D-N.J., said after gaveling in the Foreign Relations hearing. "This rapid collapse [of Afghanistan’s central government] laid bare a fundamental fact: that successive administrations lied to the Congress over the years about the durability of Afghan military and governing institutions."

But despite the more civil tenor of the Senate hearing, few concrete answers were forthcoming from Blinken about the many tactical and strategic decisions made over the months and weeks that produced such a disastrous, deadly and chaotic end to the 20-year U.S. military presence in Afghanistan.
NAVCENT Stands Down Task Force Supporting Afghanistan Evacuation

NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY BAHRAIN - On Sept. 14, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) stood down a task force established last month to temporarily assist the safe evacuation of personnel from Afghanistan.

Task Force 58 helped facilitate the safe transit of more than 7,000 U.S. citizens and evacuees traveling from Afghanistan through Bahrain. The task force included more than 1,400 U.S. and coalition personnel from various units operating in the 5th Fleet area of operations.

"This has been a huge team effort by service members from different ships, commands and branches," said Hospital Corpsman First Class Lauren Cooper, assigned to amphibious transport dock ship USS San Antonio (LPD 17). "I think seeing our teamwork on display and knowing we could make a difference was the most satisfying thing about all of this."

Cooper and other U.S. service members worked alongside U.S. Embassy and Bahraini counterparts to provide travelers meals, short-term lodging and medical services around the clock before departing.

NAVCENT established the task force Aug. 19 and immediately began constructing temporary processing and lodging facilities.

"Setting up all these facilities was done in just 12 hours," said Lt. Kelly Ray, assigned to NAVCENT. "But judging by the comments from our guests, we were successful. We have a lot to be proud of."

"It was a lot of hard work and long nights, but we were all up to the task," said Electrician's Mate First Class Daniel Cotter, assigned to U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia. "I joined the Coast Guard to help people and make a difference. I think that's what we accomplished."

In addition to staff from NAVCENT's headquarters, 10 standing task forces and subordinate task groups, the following commands also supported the mission with personnel and equipment:
Taliban Denies War Crime Allegations After Damning Watchdog Report

KABUL (Sputnik) - The Taliban* denies all accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Information of Afghanistan Zabiullah Mujahid said on Tuesday.

"We strongly deny the Human Rights Watch report, which says that the Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are committing war crimes. This organization should not be a victim of enemy disinformation and should not prepare such false reports based on it. They should carefully study everything on the ground and ascertain the facts independently," Mujahid stated on Twitter.

On Monday, Human Rights Watch sent a letter to the Indian Foreign Minister with an appeal to take urgent steps to address the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Afghanistan. The letter noted that the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan should share information with international bodies investigating war crimes in the country.

In August, the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch released a report, which stated that the Taliban had summarily executed detained soldiers, police, and civilians allegedly linked to the Afghan government without due process of law.

The Taliban intensified its offensive against Afghan government forces a month ago and entered Kabul on 15 August. On 31 August, the US military left the Kabul airport, bringing an end to the nearly twenty-year American military presence in Afghanistan. On 6 September, the Taliban stated that it had gained control of Panjshir, the last of 34 Afghan provinces not under their yoke. The next day, the Taliban announced the composition of the interim government of Afghanistan. It is headed by Mohammad Hasan Akhund, who served as a foreign minister during the first Taliban rule. Akhund has been under UN sanctions since 2001.
On September 7, 2021, the Taliban announced its 33-member Interim Government. At least 17 of these 33 members are individuals included in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Consolidated List. Of these 17, three belong to the Haqqani Network, a UNSC-listed terrorist formation headed by Sirajuddin Haqqani, a top Taliban leader. A fourth Haqqani Network member is part of the Cabinet, but is not listed.

UNSC listed terrorists include Prime Minister Mullah Mohammed Hasan Akhund, his two deputies Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and Mawlavi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Foreign Minister Mawlavi Amir Khan Muttaqi, Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, Finance Minister Mullah Hidayatullah Badri, Minister of Economy Qari Din Hanif, Defence Minister Mawlavi Mohammed Yaqoob, Deputy Defense Minister Mullah Mohammad Fazil, Interior Minister Mullah Sirajuddin Haqqani, Minister of Information and Culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, Minister for Mines and Petroleum Mullah Muhamad Essa Akhund, Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs Mullah Noorullah Noori, Minister of Water and Energy Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, Minister of Civil Aviation and Transport Mullah Hamidullah Akhundzada, Minister of Higher Education Abdul Baqi Haqqani, Minister of Telecommunication Mawlavi Najibullah Haqqani, and Director of Intelligence Mullah Abdul Haq Wasiq.

At least 13 members of the Interim Government were part of the first Taliban Government, at the Centre or at the Provincial level, which ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001.

Prime Minister Akhund was the Foreign Minister and was the brain behind the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamyan, the giant cliff statues blown up by the Taliban in 2001. After the fall of the Taliban Government in end-2001, he started operating mostly from exile in Pakistan, giving 'spiritual and religious guidance' to the Taliban.

Deputy Prime Minister Baradar, a co-founder of the Taliban, served as deputy to Mullah Omar during Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001. He was the Defense Minister when the Taliban was ousted from power. He assumed the position of de facto leader after Omar’s death. The other newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Hanafi, was deputy minister of education in Taliban’s first Government.
The Taliban’s rapid takeover of Afghanistan has raised fears that the country will once again become a safe haven for Islamist militants intent on perpetrating acts of international terrorism. In light of the Taliban’s history of harboring such radical groups, these fears are justified. But the two movements vying for influence in the country, al Qaeda and the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), both face serious obstacles in their quest to use Afghanistan as a platform to bolster their strength and launch a new wave of terrorist attacks.

These groups are themselves bitterly divided over what role a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan will play in the global jihadi landscape. For al Qaeda, the Taliban’s victory is an epic triumph—the fulfillment of God’s promise to give victory to the believers over the unbelievers. For ISIS, it is not a triumph at all but rather further evidence of the Taliban’s willingness to collaborate with the Americans.
No IATF decision yet on Covid-19 booster shots for health workers

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos  September 14, 2021, 2:55 pm

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(File photo)

MANILA – The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has yet to decide on the proposal to give medical front-liners a booster shot for an added protection against the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), Malacañang said Tuesday.

In a virtual presser, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said the Vaccine Expert Panel (VEP) only made a recommendation to provide Covid-19 booster shots to medical front-liners amid the spike in coronavirus infections in the country.

Roque, also acting as IATF-EID spokesperson, said the VEP’s proposal still needs to undergo a thorough study.

“Lilinawin lang po natin. Wala pa pong desisyon na magkaroon ng Covid-19 booster shots para sa mga healthcare workers. Meron lang pong recomendasyon pa lang ang Vaccine Expert Panel or VEP (We will just clarify. There is no decision yet on the proposed Covid-19 booster shots for healthcare workers. The Vaccine Expert Panel or VEP only made a recommendation). And it is still up for review,” he said.

Roque issued the clarification a day after he issued a statement on Monday that the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) already gave the greenlight to give a third shot to medical front-liners.

The VEP has recommended to make booster shots available to health workers following the allegedly waning immunity of some Covid-19 vaccines.

The Department of Health, however, clarified Monday that its All Expert Group is still deliberating on the VEP’s proposal.

The national government has included in its proposed 2022 budget the allotment of PHP45.3 billion fund for the procurement of Covid-19 vaccine booster shots.
National Task Force Against Covid-19 chief implementer and vaccine czar Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. on September 11 said the government's negotiating team for vaccine procurement is working to buy reformulated booster jabs that are recommended amid the prevailing pandemic.

Galvez said the next-generation vaccine boosters will extend the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine.

As of September 11, around 38,746,501 individuals have been inoculated against Covid-19 in the Philippines, according to the data released by the NTF Against Covid-19.

About 21,951,956 of the 38,746,501 vaccinated individuals have already been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, while the remaining 16,794,545 have received the first dose. (PNA)

No IATF decision yet on Covid-19 booster shots for health workers | Philippine News Agency (pna.gov.ph)
The Philippines will receive additional 10 million coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine doses from the global vaccine sharing platform COVAX facility, an official of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday, Sept. 14.

“We are looking at increasing vaccine allocations for the Philippines. Actually, we have some good news this morning—COVAX has allocated further 10 million doses to come to the Philippines within the next few weeks,” said WHO Country Representative to the Philippines Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe.

Abeyasinghe did not specify the timeline of the delivery of these vaccines.

“We expect much larger consignments to come within this third and fourth quarters to the Philippines and to many other countries who are recipients of COVAX vaccines,” the WHO official said.

The Philippines has so far received 4,584,000 AstraZeneca vaccine doses, 2,660,580 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine doses, 3,000,060 Moderna vaccine doses, and 3,240,850 Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine doses from the COVAX facility.
The mu and lambda COVID-19 variants hit the U.S. earlier than previously thought

The mu and lambda COVID-19 variants hit Los Angeles. Here’s why they didn’t spread far

By Herb Scribner@HerbScribner Sep 13, 2021, 8:30pm MDT

Catherine Jeppsen helps her daughter as she attempts to collect saliva for a COVID-19 test outside of the Mount Olympus Senior Center in Millcreek on Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2021. Kristin Murphy, Deseret News Purchase Photo

The mu and lambda variants of the coronavirus were spreading in the U.S. earlier than previously thought, but the delta variant might have stopped them from spreading.

Are the mu, lambda variants in Los Angeles?

Los Angeles public health officials told KTLA that the lambda and mu variants were spreading in the city back in the summer. However, the variants didn’t spread far because the delta variant was already in Los Angeles.

RELATED

*The mu variant is not an ‘immediate threat’... yet, Dr. Fauci says*

- Barbara Ferrer, the county’s public health director, told KTLA the delta variant “crowded out all of the other previously circulating strains.” The delta variant now accounts for 100% of all cases in Los Angeles, she said.
- But some sequenced cases — which are COVID-19 test cases that are reviewed and inspected by scientists for potential variants — were sequenced back in the early part of summer, with results appearing only recently. The cases showed the mu and lambda variants were spreading. Right now, Los Angeles has identified 232 cases of the mu variant and 28 cases of the lambda variant, according to KTLA.
ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Alaska’s largest hospital has begun rationing care, saying it has been overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients.

Providence Alaska Medical Center said Tuesday it will prioritize resources and treatment to those patients who have the potential to benefit the most.

Dr. Kristen Solana Walkinshaw is chief of staff at the hospital and says that “we are no longer able to provide the standard of care to each and every patient who needs our help,”

Alaska, like other places, has seen a surge in COVID-19 cases driven by the delta variant of the coronavirus.

Providence is one of only three hospitals in Anchorage, a city of 300,000 people. Walkinshaw says Providence’s emergency room is overflowing and patients have to wait for hours in their cars to see a doctor for emergency care.
England is set to start administering coronavirus vaccines to children aged 12 to 15.

The UK Chief Medical Officers said on Monday that children in this age group should be given one shot to prevent infections from spreading in winter and reduce education disruption.

British Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said in a statement on Monday that he has accepted the recommendation.

Children in England whose parents or guardians give consent will be given a dose of the Pfizer vaccine from next week at schools where the new term has begun.

The government says it has yet to decide whether a second shot will be necessary.

Earlier this month, Britain's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization said the vaccine should be given to 12- to 15-year-olds with underlying health conditions. The experts of the committee had said that they do not necessarily recommend vaccinating healthy children in this age group, in view of the marginal benefits and rare reports of heart inflammation as an adverse reaction.
UK recommends COVID-19 booster shots for over 50s

by: DANICA KIRKA, Associated Press

Posted: Sep 14, 2021 / 06:46 AM EDT / Updated: Sep 14, 2021 / 08:02 AM EDT

Chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) Professor Wei Shen Lim, left, Britain’s Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Jonathan Van-Tam and Chief Executive of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) June Raine, right, attend a media briefing on the latest COVID-19 update at Downing Street, central London, Tuesday Sept. 14, 2021. (Justin Tallis/Pool via AP)

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. said Tuesday it will offer a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to everyone over age 50 and other vulnerable people after an expert panel said the boosters were needed to protect against waning immunity this winter.

Health Secretary Sajid Javid told lawmakers that the government had accepted the recommendation of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization and would start offering booster shots next week. The World Health Organization has asked wealthy nations to delay booster shots until every country has vaccinated at least 40% of their populations.

“The JCVI is advising that a booster dose be offered to the more vulnerable, to maximize individual protection ahead of an unpredictable winter,” Professor Wei Shen Lim, the panel’s chair, said during a media briefing. “Most of these people will also be eligible for the annual flu vaccine and we strongly advise them to take up this offer as well.”

The JCVI said booster shots were needed to ensure vulnerable people are protected against COVID-19, because studies have shown that the immunity conferred by vaccines weakens over time. The panel recommended that everyone over 50, as well as health care workers, people with underlying health conditions and those who live with people who are immunosuppressed get a booster shot at least six months after they received their second dose of vaccine.

The move comes despite the WHO’s appeal to delay booster doses amid global shortages of vaccine. The agency said that COVID-19 would continue to threaten people everywhere until all countries vaccinate enough people to head off potentially dangerous new variants.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reiterated the call last week after an earlier appeal was widely ignored.
“I will not stay silent when companies and countries that control the global supply of vaccines think the world’s poor should be satisfied with leftovers,” he said Sept. 8. “Because manufacturers have prioritized or been legally obliged to fulfill bilateral deals with rich countries willing to pay top dollar, low income countries have been deprived of the tools to protect their people.”

England’s deputy chief medical officer, Jonathan Van Tam, said at least nine countries have already announced booster programs and 18 others are considering doing so.
## Tracking Covid-19

- **Vaccine Tracker**
- **Global Cases**
- **U.S. Cases**
- **U.S. Regions**

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<td>25,402</td>
<td>415.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>13,130</td>
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<td>13.1</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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</table>

Testing data as of September 15, 2021, 12:34 AM GMT+8

Sources: OECD for number of hospital beds ([2016 for the U.S., 2017 for other countries](https://www.oecd.org)), government agencies and the COVID Tracking Project via [Our World in Data](https://ourworldindata.org) for testing data ([various recent dates](https://ourworldindata.org/covid-testing)) (reported in the past 45 days) and the U.S. Census Bureau for population figures ([2019](https://www.census.gov)).

The world is bracing for a new wave of Covid-19 infections, as the coronavirus pandemic has infected more than 225 million people and killed more than 4.6 million globally since late January 2020. Efforts many countries took to stamp out the pneumonia-like illness led to entire nations enforcing lockdowns, widespread halts of international travel, mass layoffs and battered financial markets. Recent attempts to revive social life and financial activities have resulted in another surge in cases and hospitalizations, though new drugs and improved care may help more people who get seriously ill survive.
Getting to a Flatter Curve

The first 606 days with more than 100 confirmed cases

- Asia

- Other

Show deaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days since 100 confirmed cases</th>
<th>Mainland China</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>U.K.</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>India</th>
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<th>New Zealand</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cases

- 225,823,037 Confirmed cases worldwide
- 4,649,577 Deaths worldwide

Jurisdictions with cases confirmed as of September 15, 2021, 2:21 PM GMT+8

- 1–99
- 100–999
- 1,000–9,999
- 10,000–99,999
- 100,000–999,999
- 1,000,000–9,999,999
- 10 million or more

Where deaths have occurred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where deaths have occurred</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>663,936</td>
<td>41,365,255</td>
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</table>

Note: JHU CSSE reporting began on January 22, 2020, when mainland China had already surpassed 500 cases.

Source: Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where deaths have occurred</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>21,019,830</td>
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<td>India</td>
<td>443,497</td>
<td>33,316,755</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>269,016</td>
<td>3,528,972</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>198,840</td>
<td>2,162,294</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
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<td>7,072,825</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>85,548</td>
<td>4,918,526</td>
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</table>

Note: Totals for Denmark, France, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S. include overseas territories and other dependencies. Cases and deaths for cruise ships have been separated in accordance with JHU CSSE data.

More Coverage From Bloomberg

- Sign up for our daily coronavirus newsletter
- Stories about the coronavirus outbreak from Bloomberg News
- Virus Update from Bloomberg News
- The Future of Travel in the Covid Era
- How Covid Is Shifting Human Behavior Around the World
- The Covid Resilience Ranking

The epicenter of the pandemic has continued to shift throughout the year, from China, then Europe, then the U.S., and now to developing countries like Brazil. Cases globally
surpassed 10 million in late June, but ever since infections have been multiplying faster. The U.S. and India have the most infections, accounting for more than a third of all cases combined.

Global Cases Added Per Day

New cases: 508,403

Jan 21, 2020

Sep 14, 2021

U.S.

New cases: 143,675

Jan 21, 2020

Sep 14, 2021

U.K.

26,763

Iran

22,329

Russia

17,529

France

14,456

Brazil

13,406

Germany

8,840

Mainland China

73

India

0

Note: On February 14, 2020, Hubei officials changed their diagnostic criteria, resulting in a spike in reported cases.

Countries took drastic measures to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 on their homefront—with varying degrees of success. More than 140 governments placed blanket bans on incoming travelers, closed schools and restricted gatherings and public events, according to data compiled by Oxford University’s Blavatnik School of Government and Bloomberg reporting.
As countries loosen lockdowns in an effort to reboot their economies, many have seen a resurgence of infections. The number of new daily cases in the U.S. rose to record highs after some states relaxed social distancing requirements. Even places that successfully contained infections earlier in the year, like China and South Korea, have seen cases bubble back up. Theories that warmer weather in the Northern Hemisphere would bring relief appear to be unfounded.

How the Outbreak Spread Country by Country

Seven-day rolling average of new deaths and cases

- Asia
- Other

Show cases

Mar 2020 Jan 2021 Sep 1400.5K1.0K1.5K2.0K2.5K3.0K3.5K4.0K New deaths by day U.S. India U.K. Russia

Note: Shown are the 15 places with the highest totals of confirmed cases, as of September 14. Negative values resulting from governments revising their totals have been excluded from rolling average calculations.

The “worst is yet to come” given a lack of global solidarity, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said at a briefing in Geneva on June 29.

In May, the WHO emphasized the need for a plan that includes testing for the virus and its antibodies, effective contact tracing and isolation, and community education. Antibody tests on the market that could potentially indicate a person’s immunity have been unreliable so far. Researchers and drugmakers are racing to develop treatments that could hold the key to recovery.

Gilead Sciences Inc.’s antiviral remdesivir is one of the first widely used drugs for Covid-19. It received an emergency use authorization from U.S. regulators in May, after a trial found it sped recovery by about four days in hospitalized patients. It was also part of U.S. President Donald Trump’s treatment after he tested positive for the coronavirus in early October, along with Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc.’s antibody cocktail and the generic drug dexamethasone.

Vaccines are also in development, though the study of one leading candidate from the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca Plc is on hold in the U.S. while regulators investigate a potential safety issue.

By: Cedric Sam, Chloe Whiteaker, Hannah Recht, Demetrios Pogkas, Paul Murray, Dean Halford and Eric Bryant

Sources: Bloomberg reporting, National Health Commission of the PRC and Johns Hopkins University
Note: Historical data from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering. Europe includes all EU and Schengen Area member-states, territories with open borders with Schengen, and the U.K.


Coronavirus: Mapping Covid-19 Confirmed Cases and Deaths Globally (bloomberg.com)
The US, India and Brazil have seen the highest number of confirmed cases, followed by the UK, Russia and France. Very few places have been left untouched.
In the table below, countries can be reordered by deaths, death rate and total cases. In the coloured bars on the right-hand side, countries in which cases have risen to more than 10,000 per day are those with black bars on the relevant date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Death rate</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>656,748</td>
<td>200.8</td>
<td>40,759,541</td>
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Source: Johns Hopkins University, national public health agencies
Figures last updated 13 September 2021, 09:05 BST
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Death rate*</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
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<td>Death rate*</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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This information is regularly updated but may not reflect the latest totals for each country.

** The past data for new cases is a three day rolling average. Due to revisions in the number of cases, an average cannot be calculated for this date.

Source: Johns Hopkins University, national public health agencies and UN population data
Figures last updated: 13 September 2021, 09:05 BST

Note: The map, table and animated bar chart in this page use a different source for figures for France and the UK from that used by Johns Hopkins University. US figures do not include Puerto Rico, Guam or the US Virgin Islands.
More Than 5.79 Billion Shots
Given: Covid-19 Tracker
In the U.S., 381 million doses have been administered
Updated: September 15, 2021, 8:29 AM GMT+8

Vaccine Tracker
- Global
- U.S.
- U.S. Vaccine Demographics
- FAQ
- Covid-19 Tracker

The biggest vaccination campaign in history is underway. More than 5.79 billion doses have been administered across 184 countries, according to data collected by Bloomberg. The latest rate was roughly 34.9 million doses a day.

In the U.S., 381 million doses have been given so far. In the last week, an average of 779,698 doses per day were administered.

World Map of Vaccinations
More than 5.79 billion doses have been administered—enough to fully vaccinate 37.7% of the global population
- of population covered
Note: “Population covered” divides the doses administered for each vaccine type by the number of doses required for full vaccination. Data gathered from government agencies, public statements, Bloomberg interviews and the World Health Organization and Johns Hopkins University.

Bloomberg Travel Tracker
- Find out where in the world you are free to travel—and which destinations are still sealed off. . .

Enough doses have now been administered to fully vaccinate 37.7% of the global population—but the distribution has been lopsided. Countries and regions with the highest incomes are getting vaccinated more than 20 times faster than those with the lowest.

Uneven Access to Vaccines
Least wealthy
The least wealthy 52 places have 3.3% of the vaccinations...

Vaccines

India
Mainland China
U.S.

Population

India
Mainland China

...but 20.5% of the world’s population

Note: Vaccine access calculations account for the number of doses needed for full protection; some vaccines require a two-dose regimen while others require just a single dose. Countries and regions are ordered by GDP per capita (PPP).

When will life return to normal?

While the best vaccines are highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death, it takes a coordinated campaign to stop a pandemic. Infectious-disease experts say that vaccinating 70% to 85% of the U.S. population would enable a return to normalcy.

On a global scale, that’s a daunting level of vaccination. At the current pace of 34.9 million a day, the goal of high levels of global immunity remains a long way off. Manufacturing capacity, however, is steadily increasing, and new vaccines by additional manufacturers are coming to market.

*The Path to Immunity Around the World*

Globally, the latest vaccination rate is 34,909,220 doses per day, on average. At this pace, it will take another 5 months to cover 75% of the population.

Average daily rate estimate
Pandemic of the Unvaccinated

Israel was first to show that vaccines were bending the curve of Covid infections. The country led the world in early vaccinations, and by February more than 84% of people ages 70 and older had received two doses. Covid cases declined rapidly, and a similar pattern of vaccination and recovery repeated across dozens of other countries.

This progress is under threat. New strains, led by the highly transmissible delta variant, have caused renewed outbreaks. It’s now a life-and-death contest between vaccine and virus. Unvaccinated people are more at risk than ever, leading U.S. health officials to dub it a “pandemic of the unvaccinated.”

Even among those who are vaccinated, the delta variant may lead to mild cases, and those who get sick are able to spread the disease to others, according to the latest data. The vaccines remain effective at preventing hospitalization and death.

Vaccinations vs. Cases

Vaccines have helped reduce case numbers in the places where they’ve been deployed most widely. Currently, 40 places have administered enough shots to cover at least 60% of the population.

United States (59.6% covered)
Jan. 25  
March 24  
May 21  
July 18  
Sept. 14  
People covered: 75%  
50  
25  
0  
• Seven-day average  
Jan. 25  
March 24  
May 21  
July 18  
Sept. 14  
New cases per million: 1,000  
800  
600  
400  
200  
0  
0  
Note: “People covered” divides the doses administered for each vaccine type by the number of doses required for full vaccination. Vaccine data from Bloomberg’s Covid-19 Tracker. Cases data: Johns Hopkins University.

A Change to Our Data Sources  
• **Behind the data:** After more than 240 straight data shifts, we’re taking the next step and will now be relying on a combination of automated scrapers and third-party data sources. . .

Since the start of the global vaccination campaign, countries have experienced unequal access to vaccines and varying degrees of efficiency in getting shots into people’s arms. Before March, few African nations had received a single shipment of shots. In the U.S., 114.9 doses have been administered for every 100 people.
Delivering billions of vaccines to stop the spread of Covid-19 worldwide is one of the greatest logistical challenges ever undertaken.

*Race to End the Pandemic*

The Maldives leads the world, with enough vaccinations to cover 94.5% of its population.
Aus.
Aus.
Austria
Austria
Azer.
Azer.
EU
EU
Belgium
Belgium
Benin
Benin
B. Faso
B. Faso
Bang.
Bang.
Bulg.
Bulg.
Bahrain
Bahrain
Baha.
Baha.
Bosnia
Bosnia
Belarus
Belarus
Belize
Belize
Bermuda
Bermuda
Bol. 
Bol. 
Brazil 
Brazil 
Barb. 
Barb. 
Brunei 
Brunei 
Bhutan 
Bhutan 
Bots. 
Bots. 
C.A.R. 
C.A.R. 
Canada 
Canada 
Switz. 
Switz. 
Chile 
Chile 
Mainland China 
Mainland China 
Iv. Coast 
Iv. Coast 
Camer. 
Camer. 
DR Congo 
DR Congo 
Rep. Congo 
Rep. Congo
Col.
Col.
Comoros
Comoros
C. Verde
C. Verde
Co. Rica
Co. Rica
Cuba
Cuba
Curaçao
Curaçao
Cayman
Cayman
Cyprus
Cyprus
Cz. Rep.
Cz. Rep.
Germany
Germany
Dji.
Dji.
Domca.
Domca.
Den.
Den.
Alg.
Alg.
Ecuador
Egypt
Spain
Est.
Est.
Ethio.
Ethio.
Finland
Fiji
Fiji
France
France
Micronesia
Micronesia
Gabon
Gabon
Georgia
Ghana
Ghana
Guinea
Gambia
Gambia
Guinea-Bis.
Guinea-Bis.
Eq. Guinea
Eq. Guinea
Greece
Greece
Grenada
Grenada
Greenland
Greenland
Guat.
Guat.
Guyana
Guyana
H.K.
H.K.
Honduras
Honduras
Croatia
Croatia
Haiti
Haiti
Hungary
Hungary
Indon.
Indon.
Is. Man
Is. Man
India
India
Ireland
Ireland
Iran
Iran
Iraq
Iraq
Iceland
Iceland
Israel
Israel
Italy
Italy
Jamaica
Jamaica
Jordan
Jordan
Japan
Japan
Kazak.
Kazak.
Kenya
Kenya
Kyrg.
Kyrg.
Camb.
Camb.
St. Kitts
St. Kitts
S. Korea
S. Korea
Kuwait
Kuwait
Turkey
Taiwan
Tanzania
Uganda
Ukraine
Uruguay
Kosovo
Uzbek.
St. Vincent
Vietnam
Samoa
Yemen
S. Africa
Zambia
Note: “People covered” divides the doses administered for each vaccine type by the number of doses required for full vaccination. Data from Bloomberg’s Covid-19 Vaccine Tracker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries and regions</th>
<th>Doses administered</th>
<th>Enough for % of people</th>
<th>% of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>given 1+ dose</td>
<td>fully vaccinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Total</td>
<td>5,790,614,207</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland China</td>
<td>2,152,520,000</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>78.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>758,800,361</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>41.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>550,383,522</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>66.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>381,453,265</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>212,799,091</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>145,790,344</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>63.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>116,282,397</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>104,377,833</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries and regions</td>
<td>Doses administered</td>
<td>Enough for % of people given 1+ dose</td>
<td>% of population fully vaccinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>103,031,234</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>92,567,446</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>92,080,595</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>91,481,145</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>86,448,145</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>81,349,838</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>68,619,581</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>68,227,337</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>54,587,025</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>54,465,040</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>47,303,563</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Population coverage accounts for the number of doses required for each vaccine administered. The daily rate is a 7-day average; for places that don’t report daily, the last-known average rate is used.

‘Galunggong’: Poor man’s fish no more

BY BUSINESSMIRROR

SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

3 MINUTE READ
Galunggong or round scad, which used to be the poor man’s fish, is now more expensive than dressed chicken, based on the latest data released by the Department of Agriculture. In a report dated September 13, the DA said the average prevailing price of galunggong in Metro Manila wet markets has reached P220 per kilogram, P60 higher than a kilo of dressed chicken. Round scad retailed at P200 to P230 per kilo in six of the big Metro Manila wet markets surveyed by the DA.

As pork—the favorite protein source of Filipinos—remained expensive due to the onslaught of the African swine fever, consumers have shifted to fish products, such as galunggong and alumahan or Indian mackerel. Pork kasim and liempo retailed at P300 and P340, respectively, according to data from the DA. The arrival of pork imports has yet to make a significant dent in meat prices. Pork was still one of the main drivers of inflation in August, based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (See, “Inflation seen to hit growth, poverty goal,” in the BusinessMirror, September 8, 2021).

‘Galunggong’: Poor man’s fish no more | BusinessMirror

Politics and scandal

By: Ambeth R. Ocampo - @inquirerdotnet

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 04:07 AM September 15, 2021

Politicians live in glass houses. When one of them starts to throw stones, as the President has been doing to distract the public from the current Senate blue ribbon committee investigation into the acquisition of overpriced medical supplies and
equipment, the public is in for some entertainment. If the President did have the goods on his opponents, dishing out some blind items would be more effective than the rambling rants and curses that we have grown tired of after five years. Anyone holding dirt on politicians now is saving it for next year’s elections when the true value of scandal will be at its peak.

The present political sideshow reminded me of many lurid stories from the past that continue to haunt today’s politicians. All the leads are provided in Alfred W. McCoy’s “Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State” (2009). Going by the index alone, Panfilo Lacson, who has thrown his hat in the ring as contender for the presidency in 2022 has more citations than Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. McCoy should make us rethink the way the 20th century has been presented in classroom history. Take for example the Conley Case, that led to a showdown between Leonard Wood and Manuel Luis Quezon. Conley was a policeman whose campaign against vice was bad for most but good for the few gambling operators he favored. Quezon and the Filipinos wanted him fired, Wood refused. Conley was accused of corruption, but pinned in court on concubinage. He retired and returned to the US with a clean slate and pension. Conley was merely a sidelight in the bigger picture of Leonard Wood, a Republican governor general (1921-1927), trying to arrest the progress of Filipinization initiated by the outgoing Democratic governor Francis Burton Harrison and enjoyed by Quezon. Wood also followed the leads of Harrison’s indiscretions and womanizing, keeping documentation for future use.

When William Cameron Forbes and Wood arrived in Manila on a fact-finding mission in 1921 they came prepared, fully briefed with intelligence information gathered by the Philippine Constabulary a decade before. Armed with the dirt and scandal on prominent Filipinos one could literally say that knowledge was power indeed. What they did not realize was that Quezon was also adept at the game.

When Quezon and Forbes met in July 1921, the former governor-general was disarmed by Quezon paying him a long overdue debt of P3,050 before dropping snippets of information against his enemies. Quezon quoted an American justice saying: “I am not a clean man myself, but I want the judges of the Supreme Court to be clean men.”
Forbes’ diaries must make for engaging reading and I now regret not dipping into them decades ago when I had the chance. Quezon caused Forbes to unfriend, as we would say today, Jaime C. de Veyra, Philippine resident commissioner in Washington by producing a copy of De Veyra’s cable that said: “I have done everything possible to eliminate Forbes…” At that point, Forbes remembered regretfully that he had lent Mrs. Sofia de Veyra a thousand dollars to keep her father’s home from foreclosure.
THE blue ribbon did live up to its billing. Some of the notorious dramatis personae involved in the questionable personal protective equipment (PPE) procurement deal showed up via Zoom occasioned by threats of Senate contempt and arrests. Virtually present were the Pharmally Pharmaceutical Corp. (PPC) executives and their padrino Michael Yang. This shadowy figure, not even a Filipino, was privileged an appointment as President Rodrigo "Deegong" Duterte's "economic adviser" and escorted the Pharmally International Holding (PIH) executives to Duterte in China in 2015 and in Davao in December 2017 - caught in a video clip that went viral. Such an escort service is known by many labels - consultant, facilitator, bagman, pagador or locally, as bugaw (pimp), depending on the package offered and bought. Those identified in the video were a veritable rogues’ gallery: Huang Wen Lei (Tony Huang), his son and PPC Philippine subsidiary Director Huang Tzu Yen and Zhang Bingquiang, all wanted in Taiwan for financial crimes. The PIH's Philippine subsidiary cabal completes the Chinese connection - Linconn Ong, Huang Tzu Yen, Rose Lin and a host of Chinese names further obscured by aliases.

What came out in the hearing is a shocking possibility that the undercapitalized Pharmally that bagged P8.68 billion in government contracts with zero track record may have been a conduit of drug money laundered through these transactions. The Senate is now enlarging the hearings to include the Anti-Money Laundering Council.

The Chinese connection | The Manila Times

Hell-bent on engagement

The tests of advanced cruise missiles by North Korea last weekend pose a serious threat to our security. Nevertheless, our military intelligence authority could not detect any sign before or even after the tests. The brass became aware of the missile tests only after North Korea’s state mouthpiece announced them. If the missiles had been launched in a real battle, they would have dealt a critical blow to South Korea. Given the missiles’ shooting range of 1,500 kilometers (932 miles), they could strike the entire area of South Korea and reach as far as U.S. bases in Japan.
In January, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un specifically mentioned cruise missiles in the Workers’ Party Congress in which he vowed to ratchet up the country’s nuclear capabilities and develop tactical nuclear weapons. His mentioning of the word “nuclear” 36 times in a speech to the congregation led to the completion of the cruise missile in eight months. That suggests gradual advancement of its nuclear capability according to its timetable. Despite the frequent accentuation of Pyongyang’s determination to denuclearize by President Moon Jae-in and his aides, the way North Korea behaves points in exactly the opposite direction.

A bigger worry comes from the Moon Jae-in administration’s careless attitude towards North Korea. The reaction government officials showed after the missile tests dumbfound us. Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong linked the missile tests to the need for Seoul to resume talks with Pyongyang. He appears to use a brazen provocation by North Korea as an excuse for dialogue. Earlier, First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun made stunning remarks suggestive of a nonchalant embrace of the recalcitrant regime in Pyongyang. “The reactivation of the Yongbyon nuclear facility does not constitute a violation of the agreement between the two leaders.” How can we expect a reasonable strategy for denuclearization from such officials?

National Intelligence Service (NIS) chief Park Ji-won also took a very inappropriate action. As the press reported the tests by North Korea, he was busy answering questions from a number of media outlets about his potential involvement in attacking the opposition People Power Party (PPP) over former Prosecutor General Yoon Seok-youl’s alleged role in helping the PPP file a complaint against pro-Moon figures with the prosecution. Does the spy chief really prioritize his support for the ruling Democratic Party (DP) ahead of the next presidential election over gathering intelligence on North Korea?

Park did not make any protest against the North’s missile launches last weekend. Despite the obvious need for the president to hold a National Security Council meeting to deal with the missile launches, his officials were engrossed with downplaying the provocation. “That is not a violation of UN Security Council resolutions,” they said. A government official even translated the absence of Kim Jong-un at the site of the missile test into his intention to resume dialogue with South Korea. Our biggest security risk comes from the government’s relaxed attitude toward Pyongyang. It must not forget that North Korea has not given up its ambition to become a nuclear power.

Hell-bent on engagement (joins.com)
Why US is afraid to go to war with China

By  
Hu Xijin

Published: Sep 14, 2021 11:09 PM

Illustration: Liu Rui/GT

General John E. Hyten, vice chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Monday, "Our goal should be to never go to war with China, to never go to war with Russia. Because that day is a horrible day for the planet, and a horrible day for our countries." Retired US admiral and former head of US Pacific Command Harry Harris also said that "it's very important that we do everything that we can to prevent an escalation and open warfare" with China.
Recently, there have been more voices in the US emphasizing that the US should not have military conflicts with China. This is obviously because the tensions in the relations between the two countries have been escalating. The frontline troops are getting closer and closer, and the US has had real worries of accidental and serious confrontation between the two militaries and even accidental discharge of fires.

*Why US is afraid to go to war with China - Global Times*