

# China Warns Against Meddling After Trump Threat



Police speak with protesters in Hong Kong.

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- China will take necessary countermeasures to foreign interference regarding the new Hong Kong security legislation being deliberated, the foreign ministry said on Wednesday.

Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian made the remarks during a daily briefing in response to a question about U.S. President Donald Trump's comments that Washington is working on a strong response to the legislation that will be announced before the end of the week.

Asked if he was going to impose sanctions on China over its actions in Hong Kong, Trump told reporters at the White House: "We're doing some-

thing now. I think you'll find it very interesting. But I won't be talking about it today."

"It's something you're going to be hearing about ... before the end of the week - very powerfully I think," Trump said in response to a second question.

Threats by the U.S. won't stop China from enacting the national security law in Hong Kong, analysts said on Wednesday.

"No, it won't work, it won't change China's general approach to Hong Kong ... it certainly won't change the approach to national security legislation," Tim Summers, a senior consulting fellow at British think tank, Chatham House, told CNBC's "Street

Signs Asia."

China last week announced a draft national security law for Hong Kong, aimed at prohibiting secession, subversion of state power, terrorism activities and foreign interference — but U.S. officials and Congress members have criticized Beijing's move, with some threatening sanctions.

"We've already got a draft decision from the National People's Congress that will be approved tomorrow," he said referring to China's parliament, which kicked off its annual meeting last Friday. "Those comments, those threats from the U.S. are not going to change Beijing's mind on that act."

In a post on Twitter late Tuesday, Republican Senator Marco Rubio said if China's "rubber stamp legislature moves forward on Thursday," the U.S. State Department "will have no option" but to certify that Hong Kong "is no longer autonomous" and "sanctions should follow."

Rubio is the acting chairman of the influential Senate Intelligence Committee. Approval of the law will also be a threat to the "one country, two systems" framework, Rubio suggested.

Hong Kong, a former British colony which returned to Chinese rule in 1997, is ruled under the "one country, two systems" policy. It gives the city self-governing power, a largely separate legal and economic framework from mainland China.

# Spike in South Korea Virus Cases Shows Reopening Risks



In a photo taken on May 24, 2020, people wearing face masks amid concerns of Covid-19 walk along a bridge across the Han River in Seoul.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea announced a spike in new infections Wednesday and considered reimposing social distancing restrictions, revealing the setbacks ahead for others on the road to reopening.

The European Union was unveiling a huge stimulus package for the bloc's ailing economies, as European nations scrambled to emulate South Korea's widely praised strategy of tracing, testing and treating coronavirus victims, which tamed its outbreak and made it a model for the world.

The EU's economics commissioner, Paulo Gentiloni, called the 750 billion-euro (\$825 billion) recovery fund "a European turning point to face an unprecedented crisis."

Across the Atlantic, the pandemic was claiming new victims as the confirmed U.S. death toll approached 100,000 — the highest by far in the world — and nations from Mexico to Chile to Brazil struggled with surging cases and overwhelmed hospitals.

In South Korea, 40 newly confirmed cases — the biggest daily jump in nearly 50 days — raised alarms as millions of children returned to school Wednesday.

All but four of the new cases were in the densely populated Seoul region, where officials are scrambling to stop transmissions linked to nightclubs, karaoke rooms and a massive e-commerce warehouse. All were reopened last month when social distancing measures were relaxed.

The country's top infectious disease ex-

pert said South Korea may need to reimpose social distancing restrictions because it's becoming increasingly difficult for health workers to track the spread of COVID-19 amid warmer weather and eased attitudes on distancing.

Seoul and nearby cities in recent weeks have re-closed thousands of bars, karaoke rooms and other entertainment venues to slow the spread of the virus.

Britain, which has recorded more deaths than any other European country — over 37,000 — was announcing the details of its own "test and trace" plans, which will send out 25,000 workers to find the contacts of those who test positive. Germany said it would extend pandemic-related restrictions on personal contacts until June 29 as it cautiously lifts lockdown measures.

Poland is lifting limits on the number of customers in shops, restaurants and hairdressers on Saturday, allowing any number to attend church services and authorizing open-air gatherings of up to 150 people.

As many countries in Asia and Europe make progress in containing the pandemic, reversing its devastating economic fallout becomes a top priority.

Even as the 27-nation EU unveiled its recovery plan, the bloc remained deeply divided over what strings should be attached to the funds, with frugal members such as Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden pushing for loans rather than grants to form the backbone of the package.

# Situation 'Stable' After China-India Border Tension



Indian and Chinese border guards at the Nathu La border crossing between India and China in the northeastern Sikkim state on July 10, 2008.

SRINAGAR, India (Dispatches) — Indian and Chinese soldiers are in a bitter standoff in the remote and picturesque Ladakh region, with the two countries amassing soldiers and machinery near the tense frontier, Indian officials said.

The standoff began in early May, triggering a yelling match, stone-throwing and even fist fights in at least one place along Pangong Lake, the site of several such confrontations in the past.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Wednesday that the situation on the China-India border was "generally stable and controllable."

The sides were communicating through both their front-line mili-

tary units and their respective embassies to "properly resolve relevant issues through dialogue and consultation," Zhao said at a news conference in Beijing.

China is committed to abiding by agreements signed by the sides and to "maintaining peace and stability in the border area between China and India," Zhao said.

The Chinese and Indian soldiers also faced off along a frontier in India's northeastern Sikkim state in early May.

Indian media quoted Gen. Manoj Mukund Naravane, the country's military chief, as saying the incidents in Ladakh and Sikkim had led to injuries caused by "aggressive behavior on both sides."

Though skirmishes aren't new, the standoff has escalated in recent weeks at Ladakh's Galwan Valley, where thousands of soldiers from the two countries have camped just a few hundred meters from each other, the Indian officials said.

India is building a strategic road through the Galwan Valley connecting the region to an airstrip.

The China-India border dispute covers nearly 3,500 kilometers (2,175 miles) of frontier that the two countries call the Line of Actual Control. The countries fought a bitter war in 1962 that spilled into Ladakh.

The most serious dispute is over China's claims that India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh is part of Tibet, which India rejects.

China claims about 90,000 square kilometers (35,000 square miles) of territory in India's northeast, while India says China occupies 38,000 square kilometers (15,000 square miles) of its territory in the Aksai Chin plateau in the Himalayas, a contiguous part of the Ladakh region.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level security meeting this week to assess the situation along the tense frontier.

India unilaterally declared Ladakh region a federal territory while separating it from disputed Kashmir in August 2019. China was among the handful of countries to strongly condemn the move, raising it at international forums including the UN Security Council.

# Trump Threatens Social Media for Fact-Checking Him

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened social media companies with new regulation or even shuttering a day after Twitter added fact checks to two of his tweets.

The president can't unilaterally regulate or close the companies, which would require action by Congress or the Federal Communications Commission. But that didn't stop Trump from angrily issuing a strong warning.

Claiming tech giants "silence conservative voices," Trump tweeted, "We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen."

And he repeated his unsubstantiated claim — which sparked his latest showdown with Silicon Valley — that expanding mail-in voting "would be a free for all on cheating, forgery and the theft of Ballots."

Trump and his campaign angrily lashed out Tuesday after Twitter added a warning phrase to two Trump tweets that called mail-in ballots "fraudulent" and predicted that "mail boxes will be robbed," among other things. Under the tweets, there is now a link reading "Get the facts about mail-in ballots" that guides users to a Twitter "moments" page with fact checks and news stories about Trump's unsubstantiated claims.

Trump replied on Twitter, accusing the platform of "inter-

fering in the 2020 Presidential Election" and insisting that "as president, I will not allow this to happen." His 2020 campaign manager, Brad Parscale, said Twitter's "clear political bias" had led the campaign to pull "all our advertising from Twitter months ago." Twitter has banned all political advertising since last November.

Trump did not explain his threat Wednesday, and the call to expand regulation appeared to fly in the face of long-held conservative principles on deregulation.

But some Trump allies, who have alleged bias on the part of tech companies, have questioned whether platforms like Twitter and Facebook should continue to enjoy liability protections as "platforms" under federal law — or be treated more like publishers, which could face lawsuits over content.

The protections have been credited with allowing the unfettered growth of the internet for more than two decades, but now some Trump allies are advocating that social media companies face more scrutiny.

"Big tech gets a huge handout from the federal government," Republican Sen. Josh Hawley told Fox News. "They get this special immunity, this special immunity from suits and from liability that's worth billions of dollars to them every year. Why are they getting subsidized by federal taxpayers to censor conservatives, to censor people critical of China."

# Russia Slams U.S. 'Disinformation' About Jets in Libya



Libyan transport minister Milad Matouq walks as he inspects damages at Tripoli's Mitiga airport after it was hit by shelling in Tripoli, May 10, 2020.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) — Russia has dismissed "disinformation" by the United States which says Moscow has deployed fighter planes to Libya to support its "mercenaries" in the North African country.

Andrey Krasov, the deputy head of the defense committee of Russia's State Duma, told Interfax that the claim "does not correspond to reality."

"Russia's position is well known: we are in favor of ending the bloodshed in Libya, we urge all parties to the conflict to refrain from using weapons and sit at the negotiating table," Krasov said.

He made the comments in response to a statement by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) earlier Tuesday that Russian military aircraft had arrived in Libya from an airbase in Russia via Syria, where they were allegedly repainted to camouflage their Russian origin.

U.S. Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, the commander of AFRICOM, claimed that they "watched as Russia flew fourth-generation jet fighters to Libya — every step of the way". AFRICOM alleged that the aircraft

were likely to provide close air support for the Russian mercenaries who it claimed were fighting alongside rebel forces under the command of Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Russia denies military presence in Libya.

Libya has been in chaos since 2011, when a popular uprising and a NATO intervention led to the ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

Since 2014, two rival seats of power have emerged in Libya, namely the internationally-recognized government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, and another group based in the eastern city of Tobruk, supported militarily by Haftar's rebels.

Haftar, who is primarily supported by the UAE, Egypt, and Jordan, launched an offensive to capture Tripoli, the seat of the government, in April last year. His forces have been bogged down on the city's outskirts.

Government forces, backed by Turkey, recently liberated several key towns that had been occupied by the rebels in the northwest. Haftar's rebels have been intensifying a pushback by escalating attacks on the capital.

# News in Brief

PARIS (Dispatches) — The French government on Wednesday banned treatment of Covid-19 patients with hydroxychloroquine, a controversial and potentially harmful drug that U.S. President Donald Trump has said he is taking preventively. The move came after two French advisory bodies and the World Health Organization warned this week that the drug, a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, had been shown to be potentially dangerous in several studies. The urgency of the coronavirus outbreak has prompted some doctors to prescribe the drug despite a lack of research to demonstrate its efficacy against the virus. British medical journal The Lancet has reported that patients getting hydroxychloroquine had increased death rates and irregular heartbeats, adding to a series of other disappointing results for the drug as a way to treat COVID-19. Trump and others have pushed hydroxychloroquine in recent months as a possible coronavirus treatment.

BERLIN (AP) — The European Union's top diplomat has called for the bloc to have a "more robust strategy" toward China amid signs that Asia is replacing the United States as the centre of global power. EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell told a gathering of German ambassadors that "analysts have long talked about the end of an American-led system and the arrival of an Asian century." "This is now happening in front of our eyes," he said. Borrell said the pandemic could be seen as a turning point in the power shift from West to East, and that for the EU the "pressure to choose sides is growing." He said the 27-nation bloc "should follow our own interests and values and avoid being instrumentalized by one or the other." But while China's rise was "impressive," Borrell said current relations between the Brussels and Beijing weren't always based on trust, transparency and reciprocity.

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Russian President Vladimir Putin has received an invitation from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to take part in a summit on the coronavirus vaccine, but no decision has been made yet on participation, the Kremlin said on Wednesday.

On June 4, the British government will hold the Global Vaccine Summit 2020 to mobilize resources needed to ensure universal availability of the vaccine against the novel coronavirus. Russia said on Wednesday 161 people with the coronavirus had died in the past 24 hours, bringing the nationwide death toll to 3,968. Officials reported 8,338 new cases on Wednesday, pushing Russia's overall case tally to 370,680.

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbian authorities have banned Montenegro's national carrier from operating flights out of Belgrade after the small nation's government excluded Serbia from a list of countries with which Montenegro will reopen its borders after declaring an end to its coronavirus outbreak. The Serbian Civil Aviation Directorate said Montenegro Airlines planes cannot land at Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport as of Wednesday. The aviation agency said unrestricted travel between the two countries has been "seriously violated" by Montenegro's decision to ban Serbs from entering Montenegro. The flight ban comes amid deepening tensions between the former Balkan allies, which existed as one state before Montenegro split off through a 2006 referendum. Montenegro Airlines planned to resume flights to the Serbian capital on June 1. Air Serbia, still has plans to fly to two destinations in Montenegro starting June 7.

ABUJA (Reuters) — The Nigerian military are unlawfully detaining boys and men at a rehabilitation centre for alleged members of the Takfiri militant group Boko Haram, Amnesty International said in a report released on Wednesday. In the latest allegations of rights abuses since Boko Haram began its insurgency in Nigeria's northeast, Amnesty criticized Operation Safe Corridor, a program that receives financial and technical support from the European Union, Britain, the United States and the UN International Organization for Migration. "For almost everyone held (at Safe Corridor) to date, it amounts to unlawful detention," Amnesty said of the program which is based in Gombe state and aims at reintegrating former militants into their communities. "Many people there are not former fighters who committed crimes, much less were charged or convicted of any crime," it said in a report that also listed alleged rights abuses by Boko Haram and criticized conditions at other military detention centers.

BERLIN (Reuters) — The number of anti-Semitic crimes committed in Germany rose last year by 13%, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said on Wednesday, laying the blame squarely on right-wing radicals. Overall, the number of politically motivated crimes rose by 14% last year to 41,177, more than half of which were committed by far-right radicals. Crimes, mostly vandalism, committed by left-wing militants by 23%, said Seehofer. There have been several high profile attacks in the last year. In February a racist gunman killed nine migrants near Frankfurt before killing his mother and himself. In June 2019, pro-migrant politician Walter Lübcke was found shot dead at close range at his home in Hesse state. A far-right radical confessed to the crime, though later retracted his statement. Police have also warned that thousands of protesters at rallies opposing lockdown measures against the coronavirus are in large part driven by far-right sympathizers.