

# China Urges Biden to Lift Sanctions, Stop U.S. Meddling



**Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, has urged Washington to abandon its irrational suppression of China's tech industry at a U.S.-China forum in Beijing.**

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- China's foreign minister has urged Washington to lift sanctions and to stop interfering in the country's internal affairs and suppressing its tech sector, in his first big speech on U.S.-China relations since Joe Biden's inauguration.

Wang Yi called on Washington to "abandon irrational suppression of China's technological progress" at a U.S.-China forum in Beijing on Monday.

He also insisted that the U.S. stop meddling in its domestic issues, saying that "a good-mannered gentleman

never thrusts his knife and fork into the food on someone else's plate".

The demands followed a series of frosty exchanges between Beijing and Washington in the early weeks of the Biden administration, with the U.S. president stressing that he would continue to speak out on human and civil rights.

Biden used his first call with Chinese president Xi Jinping to raise concerns over the treatment of the Uighurs, which U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has described as "genocide".

The Biden administration has sig-

naled that it had no intention of rolling back tariffs in the near term. One senior U.S. official recently said that the White House did not want to give up the leverage the measures provided, particularly before it had talked widely with U.S. allies and come up with a strategy to deal with China.

The administration has also made clear it intends to restrict the export of sensitive technology to China, but will do so in a more coordinated manner with its allies than occurred during the Trump administration.

Biden told the Munich Security Conference last week that the U.S. and its allies "must prepare together for a long-term strategic competition with China".

Shi Yinrong, an international relations professor at Renmin University in Beijing and a government adviser, said Wang's speech "drew the bottom lines for Sino-U.S. relations and shows that the Chinese side will not make concessions first".

Wang said the main reason for the deterioration of relations was that "the United States basically cut off bilateral dialogue at all levels", and urged the resumption of exchanges in areas such as academia.

The remarks came three weeks after Yang Jiechi, China's top foreign policy official, blamed for the strained U.S.-China relationship on the Trump administration.

Virunga spokesman Oliver Mukisa said there were no indications yet of who was behind the attack, nor was there any immediate claim of responsibility.

"I promise the Italian government that my country's government will do everything to discover who is behind this awful murder," Congo's foreign minister Marie Ntumba Nzeza said.

WFP said the delegation was on its way to visit a school feeding program in Rutshuru. It said the road had previously been cleared for travel without security escorts.

Photos shared on social media showed Attanasio lying in the arms of a man in the back of a park authority jeep and the broken window of a WFP vehicle. Reuters has not verified the images.

"It was with great shock and immense sorrow that I learned of the death today of our Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo and of a Carabinieri policeman," Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said in a statement.

"The circumstances of this brutal attack are still unclear and no effort will be spared to shed light on what happened."

Di Maio was in Brussels for a European Union meeting when he heard the news and cut short his visit to head back to Italy.

## Italy's Ambassador Killed in Attack in DR Congo



**A general view of the locked entrance to the Level III Indian Field Hospital, where the dead body of Italian Ambassador Luca Attanasio lies, in Goma, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo February 22, 2021.**

GOMA, Democratic Republic of Congo (Reuters) -- Italy's ambassador to Democratic Republic of Congo, his bodyguard and a driver from the World Food Programme were killed on Monday when their convoy was attacked in the east of the country, Italy and the United Nations said.

The convoy was attacked at about 10:15 a.m. (0815 GMT) in an attempted kidnap near the town of Kanyamahoro, about 25 km (15 miles) north of the regional capital Goma, a spokesman for the Virunga National Park told Reuters.

The deaths of the ambassador, Luca Attanasio, 43, Italian military policeman Vittorio Iacovacci, 30, and a

Congolese driver, whose name has not been released, were confirmed by the Italian government in a statement.

The driver was working for the UN World Food Programme, it said in the statement, adding that a number of other passengers were injured.

Dozens of armed groups operate in and around Virunga, which lies along Congo's borders with Rwanda and Uganda. Park rangers have been repeatedly attacked and six were killed in an ambush last month.

The governor of North Kivu province, Carly Nzanzu Kasivita, told Reuters the assailants stopped the convoy by firing warning shots. They killed the

## Brits Involved in Aiding Libya's Renegade Commander

LONDON (Middle East Eye) -- British citizens, including a Dubai-based businesswoman, were involved in a failed attempt to provide support to Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar, a UN investigation has found.

Amanda Kate Perry, co-manager of Opus Capital Management, was listed alongside two former Royal Marines as part of Project Opus, an attempt by private security contractor Erik Prince to deploy a force of foreign mercenaries and weapons in 2019 to strongman Khalifa Haftar, who has fought to overthrow the UN-backed Libyan government.

In a report detailed by U.S. media on Friday, UN investigators said Prince - an ally of former U.S. President Trump - had violated a UN embargo on Libya for the \$80 million operation, which included plans to form a hit squad to track and kill Libyan commanders opposed to Haftar, including some who were also European Union citizens.

The plot failed after promised equipment failed to materialize and the group were forced to make a night-time evacuation.

According to details from the report listed in the Times, Opus Capital Management coordinated the operation. Documents in the report noted that the company said attempts to buy "air ammunition, ground weapons, ground

ammunition and night vision" equipment was blocked by the government of Jordan.

Prince, a former Navy SEAL and the brother of Trump's education secretary Betsy DeVos, gained infamy as the head of the Blackwater private security firm, whose contractors were accused of killing unarmed Iraqi civilians in Baghdad in 2007.

Four who were convicted were pardoned by Trump last year.

The accusation exposes Prince to possible UN sanctions, including a travel ban, the Times said.

Prince did not cooperate with the UN inquiry and his lawyer declined to comment to the New York Times, it added.

Oil-rich Libya has been torn by civil war since the toppling and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The country has in recent years been split between a Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, and an eastern-based administration, backed by Haftar, who has eastern charges of war crimes.

In 2019, Trump praised the strongman for his role in "fighting terrorism" in Libya.

A new interim executive for the country was chosen on February 5 by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Switzerland, comprising 75 participants selected by the UN to represent a broad cross-section of society.

## FM's Agree on New Sanctions on Russia EU Takes Leaf Out of U.S. Book on Sanctions



**A man holds a placard reading "One for all, all for one" during a rally in support of jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Moscow, January 23, 2021.**

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) -- EU foreign ministers were expected on Monday to greenlight the preparation of new sanctions against Russia over the jailing of Western-backed blogger Alexei Navalny, according to several diplomats.

Such sanctions would come on top of the ones already imposed last year after Navalny, according to the European governments, was poisoned by a military-grade nerve agent and had to be treated in Germany. Navalny and Western nations blamed Russian agents for the poisoning, which the Kremlin has repeatedly denied.

The blogger was then arrested and sentenced to more than two years in prison earlier this month shortly after he arrived back in Moscow from Germany, charged with violating probation.

Navalny's arrest has sparked protests in Russia that have been cheered and encouraged by the U.S. and the Europeans. The European Court of Human Rights, the international court of the Council of Europe, this week demanded his release, arguing his life was at risk. Moscow dismissed that request as "unlawful".

Support for new EU sanctions against Russia has grown since a recent disastrous Moscow visit by the EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, during which he failed to push back against Russian

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who accused EU leaders of lying about the poisoning and called the bloc an "unreliable partner."

According to three senior diplomats, none of the countries who spoke during Wednesday's meeting objected to allowing preparation to move forward for possible sanctions, nor did anyone oppose the notion of using for the first time a new so-called EU Magnitsky Act -- a mechanism agreed last December that offers more powers to punish individuals involved in human rights violations.

One diplomat said there are already some indications of possible names to target under the new sanctions floating around.

Russia was also be one of the topics to be discussed with new U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who took part in the Monday meeting via video link.

EU ambassadors on Thursday held a lunch with Borrell and according to one of the participants, the foreign affairs chief said he expected ministers would give the green light for the sanctions. During the lunch, "there was no harsh criticism" of Borrell because participants felt the need to show unity and to avoid doing anything that could offer Russia an advantage.

"We know how it went but it's time to turn page," said one of the diplomats.

## Huge Crowd Gathers in Myanmar Amid Fear of Violence



**A flag is waved as demonstrators protest against military coup in Yangon, Myanmar, February 22, 2021.**

NAYPYITAW (Reuters) -- A general strike against military rule shut businesses in Myanmar on Monday and huge crowds gathered peacefully despite fears of violence after authorities warned that confrontation could be deadly.

Three weeks after seizing power, the junta has failed to stop the daily protests and a civil disobedience movement calling for the reversal of the Feb. 1 coup and release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Hundreds of thousands gathered in cities and towns across the country, from the northern hills on the border with China to the central plains, the Irrawaddy river delta and the southern tip of the panhandle, social media images showed.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, where the military is headquartered, a police water cannon truck and a fleet of other vehicles closed in to break up a procession of chanting protesters who scattered when police on foot rushed in, wrestling several to the ground.

The response of security forces this month has been less deadly than in earlier bouts of turmoil in almost half a century of direct military rule but three protesters have been killed - two shot dead in Mandalay on Saturday, and a

woman who died on Friday after being shot more than a week earlier in Naypyitaw.

The army has said one policeman died of injuries sustained during the protests.

Many civil servants have been staying away from work as part of the civil disobedience campaign and government services have been crippled. The military has accused protesters of intimidation and provoking violence.

Late on Sunday, state-owned media MRTV warned that confrontation could cost lives.

"Protesters are now inciting the people, especially emotional teenagers and youths, to a confrontation path where they will suffer loss of life," the broadcaster said.

Facebook said on Monday it had removed MRTV's pages for violations of its standards, including its violence and incitement policy. On Sunday, it deleted the military's main page for the same reason.

Later, riot police lined up, apparently preparing to disperse protesters from outside a UN office, but the crowd broke up after singing a festive song that features the line: "Goodbye, we're going".

Crowds elsewhere in Yangon melted away by late afternoon.

## News in Brief

ALGIERS (Reuters) -- Thousands of demonstrators defied a heavy police presence in Algiers on Monday for a march to mark the second anniversary of a mass protest movement that convulsed Algeria before the COVID-19 pandemic forced it off the streets. Chanting "A civilian state not a military state!", "Enough is enough!" and "The people want independence!", protesters walked through the center of the capital, waving national flags, watched by large numbers of police. Some of the protesters hope to revive the twice-weekly protests that surged through Algerian cities from February 2019 for more than a year, regularly bringing tens of thousands of people to the streets until the global pandemic began. Though the 2019 protests led the army to push veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika from power after two decades in office and jail many senior figures for corruption, many of the demonstrators wanted a more thorough change.

BRUSSELS (Reuters) -- The European Commission on Monday announced three flagship projects - in drone technologies, space communication and space traffic management - aimed at giving the 27-country bloc a competitive edge in these new fields. Called the Action Plan on Synergies between the civil, defense and space industries, the scheme's objective is to harness research and innovation in the three sectors for the projects and other ventures. The EU executive said the drone project would reinforce the competitiveness of EU industry in this key area with a strong defense dimension, while space communication would provide for a resilient and high-speed connectivity in Europe based on quantum encryption. It said space traffic management was required to avoid collisions resulting from the proliferation of satellites and space debris, while ensuring autonomous EU access to space. EU industry commissioner Thierry Breton said the projects would help the bloc stand on its own feet instead of relying on other countries.

CANBERRA (Reuters) -- Australia will quickly deliver the result of a planned independent inquiry into parliament's workplace culture, the government said on Monday, as pressure grows after a newspaper published a third accusation of rape. Two female employees of Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Liberal party said last week they had been raped by the same man in 2019 and 2020. Both have yet to make a formal police complaint, but Brittany Higgins, who has spoken publicly about her alleged rape, said last week that she would do so, though it is unclear if she has lodged one with police. Fueling pressure on Morrison, the Australian newspaper published on Monday the account of a third woman, who said she had also been raped by the unnamed former Liberal party worker on the night of June 29 and the morning of June 30 in 2016. Already dogged by accusations of improper behavior towards women, Morrison's Liberals face a barrage of criticism about the way it handled Higgins' internal complaint to Linda Reynolds, who is now defense minister.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday paved the way for a New York City prosecutor to obtain former President Donald Trump's tax returns and other financial records as part of a criminal investigation, a blow to his quest to conceal details of his finances. The justices rebuffed Trump's request to put on hold an Oct. 7 lower court ruling directing the former Republican president's longtime accounting firm, Mazars USA, to comply with a subpoena to turn over the materials to a grand jury convened by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, a Democrat.

GENEVA (Reuters) -- The United Nations refugee agency called on Monday for the immediate rescue of a group of Rohingya refugees adrift in their boat in the Andaman Sea without food or water, many of them ill and suffering from extreme dehydration. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it did not know the exact location of the vessel and understood that some passengers had died. The boat had left southern Bangladesh about 10 days ago and experienced engine failure, it said. At least eight people had died on the boat, according to Chris Lewa, director of the Arakan Project, a group that monitors the Rohingya crisis. According to UNHCR, the boat set out from the Bangladesh coastal district of Cox's Bazar, where about a million Rohingya live in dire conditions in sprawling refugee camps. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled to Bangladesh after a deadly crackdown by security forces in Myanmar in 2017.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Chinese spies used code first developed by the U.S. National Security Agency to support their hacking operations, Israeli researchers said on Monday, another indication of how malicious software developed by governments can boomerang against their creators. Tel Aviv-based CheckPoint Software Technologies issued a report noting that some features in a piece of China-linked malware it dubs "Jian" were so similar they could only have been stolen from some of the National Security Agency break-in tools leaked to the internet in 2017. Yaniv Balmal, CheckPoint's head of research, called Jian "kind of a copycat, a Chinese replica." The find comes as some experts argue that American spies should devote more energy to fixing the flaws they find in software instead of developing and deploying malicious software to exploit it.