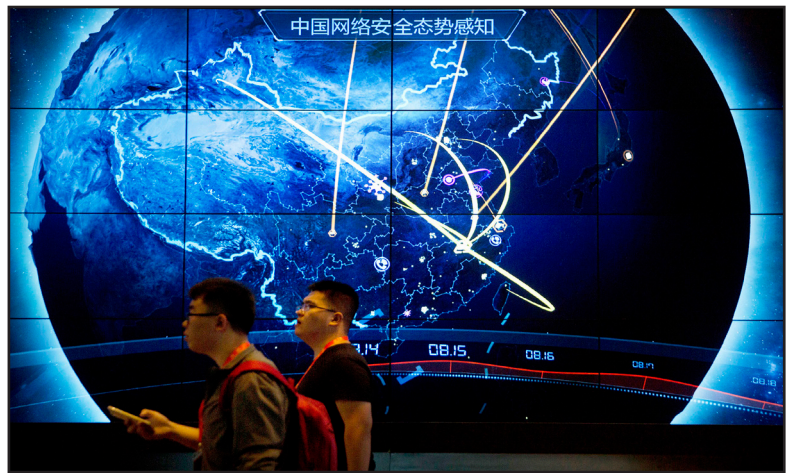


China: U.S. Launched ‘Tens of Thousands’ of Cyberattacks



Attendees walk past display showing recent cyberattacks in China at the China Internet Security Conference in Beijing on September 12, 2017.

BEIJING (AFP) -- Beijing on Monday accused the United States of launching “tens of thousands” of cyberattacks on China and pilfering troves of sensitive data, including from a public research university.

Washington has accused Beijing of cyberattacks against U.S. businesses and government agencies, one of the issues over which ties between the two powers have nosedived in recent years.

China has consistently denied the claims and in turn lashed out against alleged U.S. cyber espionage, but has rarely made public disclosures of specific attacks.

But a report released Monday by its National Computer Virus Emergency

Response Center (CVERC) accused the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) of carrying out “tens of thousands of malicious attacks on network targets in China in recent years”.

It specifically accused the NSA’s Office of Tailored Access Operations (TAO) of infiltrating the Northwestern Polytechnical University in the city of Xi’an.

The university is funded by China’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and specializes in aeronautical and space research.

CVERC alleged that TAO infiltrated the university’s networks and took “control of tens of thousands of network devices” including servers, rout-

ers and network switches.

Using dozens of cyber weapons and exploiting previously unknown flaws in the SunOS operating system, the unit gained access to “core technical data” including passwords and the operations of key network devices, the report said.

TAO has “stolen over 140 gigabytes of high-value data” in recent years and received assistance from groups in Europe and South Asia, CVERC said in the report, which was co-authored by the private Chinese cybersecurity firm Qihoo 360.

The foreign ministry in Beijing on Monday condemned the alleged hack, saying it “seriously endangers China’s national security and users’ personal data security”.

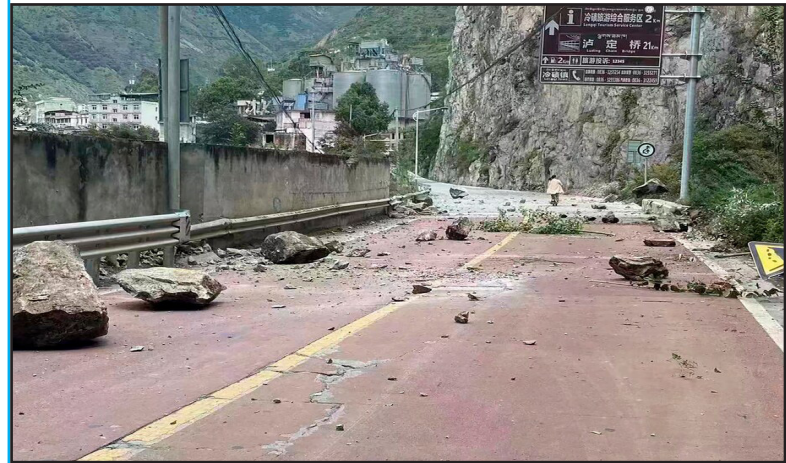
“We ask the US to provide an explanation and urge them to stop immediately this illegal move,” Mao Ning, a spokeswoman for the foreign ministry, said at a regular press conference.

The NSA did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

In June, Xi’an authorities said they had launched an investigation into a reported cyberattack at Northwestern Polytechnical University that carried the hallmarks of “overseas hacking groups and unlawful elements”.

The attacks “caused significant risks and hidden dangers for normal work and life at our school”, a university cybersecurity official told state broadcaster CCTV in comments published on Monday.

Deadly Quake Strikes China’s Sichuan Province



In this photo provided by China’s Xinhua News Agency, fallen rocks are seen on a road near Lengqi Town in Luding County of southwest China’s Sichuan Province, September 5, 2022.

BEIJING (Reuters) -- A magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck China’s Sichuan province on Monday, the strongest to hit the region since 2017, killing at least 21 people and shaking the provincial capital of Chengdu and more distant provinces.

Some roads and homes near the epicenter were damaged by landslides, while communications were down in at least one area, state television reported.

No damage to dams and hydropower stations within 50 km (31 miles) of the epicenter was reported, although damage to the provincial grid had affected power to about 40,000 end-

users.

The epicenter was at the town of Luding, the China Earthquake Networks Centre said, in the mountains about 226 km southwest of Chengdu.

Earthquakes are common in the southwestern province of Sichuan, especially in its mountains in the west, a tectonically active area along the eastern boundary of the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau.

Laura Luo, who lives in Chengdu, a city of about 21 million people, was on her way to her apartment block when she saw people rushing out of their high-rise homes in panic after getting earthquake warnings on their phones.

“There were many people who were so terrified they started crying,” the international PR consultant told Reuters. “All the dogs started barking. It was really quite scary,” she said, referring to when the quake began.

In Luding, the quake was so strong it was hard for some people to remain standing, while cracks appeared on some houses, the China News Service reported.

Video clips on social media showed lights swinging while people rushed out of buildings into the streets.

Four of the seven people killed were in Luding.

A total of 39,000 people live within 20 km of the epicenter and 1.55 million within 100 km, according to state television.

The quake was Sichuan’s biggest since August 2017, when one of magnitude 7.0 hit the Aba prefecture.

The most powerful Sichuan earthquake on record was in May 2008, when a magnitude 8.0 quake centered in Wenchuan killed almost 70,000 people and caused extensive damage.

Monday’s quake was also felt in the provinces of Yunnan, Shaanxi and Guizhou hundreds of kilometers away, according to state media.

Chengdu resident Samantha Yang, 23, was in bed about to take a nap when the quake struck.

“The building kept shaking, each time more severely than before,” Yang said. “Truly, this was the scariest one since the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake.”

At Least 10 People Killed in Stabbing Spree in Canada

WELDON, Saskatchewan (Reuters) -- Canadian police hunted for two suspects in a stabbing spree that killed 10 people and wounded at least 15 others mostly in a sparsely populated indigenous community early Sunday.

The stabbings across 13 crime scenes were among the deadliest mass killings in modern Canadian history and certain to reverberate throughout the country, which is unaccustomed to bouts of mass violence more commonly seen in the United States.

“I am shocked and devastated by the horrific attacks today,” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a statement. “As Canadians, we mourn with everyone affected by this tragic violence, and with the people of Saskatchewan.”

Police named the two suspects as Damien Sanderson, 31, and Myles Sanderson, 30, providing photos and descriptions but no further details about their motive or the victims.

In May, Myles Sanderson was listed as “unlawfully at large” by Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers, a program that encourages the public to cooperate with police. There were no further details about why he was wanted.

The two men were seen traveling in a black Nissan Rogue

and spotted in the city of Regina, about 320 km (200 miles) south of the attacks in the James Smith Cree Nation and the village of Weldon, police said.

“It appears that some of the victims may have been targeted, and some may be random. So to speak to a motive would be extremely difficult at this point in time,” Rhonda Blackmore, commanding officer of the Saskatchewan Royal Canadian Mounted Police, told a news conference.

There may be additional injured victims who transported themselves to various hospitals, police said.

James Smith Cree Nation is an indigenous community with a population of about 3,400 people largely engaged in farming, hunting and fishing. Weldon is a village of some 200 people.

The nation’s elected elders declared a state of emergency “in response to the numerous murders and assaults on members of the James Smith Cree Nation,” and established two emergency operations centers, the nation said in a statement.

Indigenous people account for less than 5% of Canada’s population of about 38 million and suffer from higher levels of poverty, unemployment and a lower life expectancy than other Canadians.

Kherson Officials Halt Plan for Vote on Joining Russia



Russian soldiers stand guard on the Dnieper river near Kherson, a new area of heavy fighting in the six-month war.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- A Russian-installed official in Ukraine’s Kherson region said on Monday that plans for a referendum on joining Russia had been “paused” due to the security situation, the Russian state-owned news agency TASS reported.

Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russian-appointed military-civilian regional administration, also said the vital Antonivskiy road bridge, which crosses the Dnipro river near Kherson city, was impassable to cars after weeks of Ukrainian shelling.

Russian-installed officials had previously suggested that referendums on joining Russia would be held in September in Kherson, as well as in neighboring Zaporizhzhia region and the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, to coincide with local elections in Russia.

Almost all of Kherson region was taken by Russian forces in March, and Kherson city remains the only Ukrainian regional capital captured by Russia since it sent armed forces into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

In recent weeks, Russia’s hold on Kherson, a land-bridge for Russian forces to get to and from Crimea, has appeared increasingly shaky.

A string of assassinations of Russian-installed officials in the region culminated on Aug. 30 with the shooting of Alexei Kovalev, a former lawmaker for Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky’s party who had joined the Russian-backed Kherson administration.

Ukraine said last week that it had launched a counter-offensive aimed at retaking the region after shelling bridges and ammunition depots for weeks.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said Monday that its forces had destroyed one U.S.-supplied HIMARS rocket system in Ukraine’s Kharkiv region, Interfax reported.

The European Union signed a deal with war-torn Ukraine to release a further 500 million euros (\$497 million) in planned aid.

The European Commission announced the package as senior officials hosted a meeting of the EU-Ukraine Association Council with Ukraine’s Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal in Brussels.

Ukrainian forces claimed gains in a counter-offensive against the Russian army in southern Ukraine, saying they have recaptured several areas and destroyed targets including a pontoon bridge.

Ukraine’s southern command said on Facebook that it also hit an ammunition depot and a Russian army control center southeast of Kherson, a city taken by Moscow in the early days of the war.

In his daily message, Zelensky announced the re-capture of two villages in the south and one in the east, without giving their names.

Flood-Hit Pakistan Struggles to Prevent Lake From Bursting



Flash flooding has destroyed thousands of kilometers of roads in Pakistan.

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI (Reuters) -- Pakistani authorities are struggling to prevent the country’s biggest lake bursting its banks and inundating nearby towns after unprecedented flooding, while the disaster management agency on Monday raised its toll of flood deaths by another 24.

Record monsoon rains and melting glaciers in Pakistan’s northern mountains have brought floods that have affected 33 million people and killed at least 1,314, including 458 children, Pakistan’s National Disaster Management Agency said.

The floods have followed record-breaking summer temperatures and the government and the United Nations have both blamed climate change for the extreme weather and the devastation it has brought.

Authorities on Sunday breached Pakistan’s largest freshwater lake, displacing up to 100,000 people from their homes in the hope of draining enough water to stop the lake bursting its banks and swamping more densely populated areas.

But water levels in the lake, to the west of the Indus river in the southern province of Sindh, remain dangerously high.

“The water level at Manchar lake has

not come down,” Jam Khan Shoro, the provincial minister for irrigation told Reuters.

He declined to say if another attempt to drain water from the lake would be made.

The floods are a huge burden for an economy already needing help from the International Monetary Fund.

The United Nations has called for \$160 million in aid to help the victims of the floods but Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said the cost of the damage was far higher than that.

“The total damage is close to \$10 billion, perhaps more,” Ismail said in an interview with CNBC.

“Clearly it is not enough. In spite of meagre resources Pakistan will have to do much of the heavy lifting.”

Nevertheless, help from abroad is arriving.

Relief flights from the United Nations and countries including Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates arrived on Monday, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Elsewhere in the region, floods are also threatening crisis-hit Sri Lanka, while rains have disrupted life in India’s technology hub, Bangalore.

The northern summer is the rainy season across much of Asia.

News in Brief

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- One person was killed and rescue crews were searching for nine others after a small plane crashed along the coast of the U.S. state of Washington on Sunday, the coast guard said. The Coast Guard said it received a report of the crash around 3:11 pm (2211 GMT) and dispatched helicopters and boats to scour the area. Local search and rescue officials were also on the scene. The plane crashed while flying over the Pacific Ocean inlet of Puget Sound while on its way to Renton Municipal Airport near Seattle. Flight tracking website Flight Radar 24 said it was monitoring reports of the crash, and that it had recorded the last signal from a 55-year-old de Havilland Canada DHC-3 Otter -- a single-engine propeller plane -- in the area at 3:08 pm local time at 100 feet (30.5 meters) of altitude. Initially, the Coast Guard’s Pacific Northwest division tweeted that eight adults and one child were on board. It later tweeted an update that they were searching for 10 passengers.

YANGON (Reuters) -- Myanmar’s junta leader was on a visit to Russia on Monday, his second trip there in less than two months, as Myanmar’s ruling military tries to shore up one of its few diplomatic alliances as it comes under growing international pressure. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been barred from representing Myanmar at most international gatherings since leading a coup early last year against an elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi. He first visited Moscow as leader in June last year, when both sides committed to strengthening military cooperation. He also visited in July on what Russia said was a private visit. Russia, a main source of military hardware for Myanmar, was one of the first countries to voice support for the junta after the coup, at a time when it was receiving international condemnation over its use of lethal force against opponents.

TOKYO (Reuters) -- Disapproval of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s cabinet edged above 40% for the first time, propelled by doubts over whether his ruling party would ever be free of ties to the Unification Church, according to a public opinion poll. Revelations of long-running links to the church founded in South Korea in the 1950s and famous for its mass weddings have become a problem for Kishida since July 8, when former prime minister Shinzo Abe was shot and his suspected killer said his mother was bankrupted by the church and blamed Abe for promoting it. Kishida’s support has tumbled and ties to the church have also fanned opposition to a state funeral for Abe to be held on Sept 27. According to a survey by the Yomiuri Shimbun daily, disapproval of Kishida’s cabinet rose to 41% from 34% roughly a month ago, climbing over 40% for the first time since he took office last year, with support holding relatively steady at 50% compared to 51%.

COLOMBO (Reuters) -- Sri Lanka’s Foreign Minister Ali Sabry said on Monday a constitutional amendment bill trimming presidential powers is expected to become law in a couple of weeks. The bill, which will require a two-thirds majority in the house to become law, was proposed to help shore up stability and defuse unrest provoked by the country’s worst financial crisis in decades. The crisis came to a head in July when then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was accused of economic mismanagement, fled the country and resigned, replaced by Ranil Wickremesinghe. The proposed amendment would establish a constitutional council and nine independent commissions to improve governance. The commissions would work to promote human rights, increase audit oversight of government agencies and bolster anti-graft investigations.

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) -- Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has applied for a royal pardon, the speaker of parliament said on Monday, less than two weeks after he was sent to jail for 12 years for corruption. Malaysia’s top court on Aug. 23 had rejected an appeal by Najib, 69, to set aside his conviction on graft and money laundering charges in a case linked to a multibillion-dollar scandal at state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (IMDB). Najib, who has also been fined nearly \$50 million, has consistently denied wrongdoing. According to Malaysia’s constitution, any lawmaker sentenced to more than a year in prison will automatically lose their seat in parliament, unless they apply for a pardon from the monarch within 14 days. Parliament Speaker Azhar Azizan Harun said on Monday Najib will remain a legislator until his petition for a pardon, filed on Friday, was decided on.

NAIROBI (Reuters) -- Famine will occur in parts of Somalia between October and December, the United Nations warned on Monday, as a drought worsens and global food prices hover near record highs. “Famine is at the door,” UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said at a news conference in Somalia’s capital, Mogadishu. The UN humanitarian chief explained he had concrete indications that famine would occur by autumn in parts of south central Somalia. The Horn of Africa is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years, and experts say the region is on track for a fifth consecutive failed rainy season.