



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 24, 2021

Case No. FL-2021-00033

Gary Ruskin
4096 Piedmont Ave. #963
Oakland, CA 94611

Dear Mr. Ruskin:

As we noted in our letter dated May 24, 2021, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State has identified an additional 19 responsive records subject to the FOIA. Upon review, we have determined that the 19 records may be released in part. The processing of your request is ongoing.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each document. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Laurel Lum, Trial Attorney, at laurel.h.lum@usdoj.gov or (202) 305-8177. Please refer to the case number, FL-2021-00033, and the civil action number, 20-cv-08415, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanne Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeanne Miller
Chief, Programs and Policies Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

(b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:

- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
- 1.4(b) Foreign government information
- 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
- 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US; including confidential sources
- 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
- 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction

(b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency

(b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:

ARMSEXP	Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c)
CIA PERS/ORG	Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
EXPORT CONTROL	Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c)
FS.ACT	Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f)
IRAN	Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505

(b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information

(b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product

(b)(6) Personal privacy information

(b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:

- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
- (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
- (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (D) disclose confidential sources
- (E) disclose investigation techniques
- (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual

(b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions

(b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Mon, 19 Oct 2020 07:26:52 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Japan's 17th Annual STS Forum: The COVID-19 Pandemic, Climate Change and the Future of Humankind
Attachments: Statement-2020.pdf

UNCLASSIFIED

SBU



MRN: 20 TOKYO 1784
Date/DTG: Oct 19, 2020 / 190726Z OCT 20
From: AMEMBASSY TOKYO
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, PGOV, PREL, ETTT, TSPA, SHLH, SENV, KNCV, JP, CN, RU, TW, MX, EUN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Japan's 17th Annual STS Forum: The COVID-19 Pandemic, Climate Change and the Future of Humankind

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary:** More than 1,500 global leaders in science and technology, policymaking, business, and media from nearly 120 countries participated in the 17th Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in Society (STS) Forum, which took place virtually from October 3 to 6. Japanese and American voices were prominent in every panel discussion and represented one-third of the registered participants at the invitation-only event. The Forum tackled many challenging substantive topics despite a dramatically streamlined schedule to accommodate time differences and the virtual format. It focused on taking the lessons learned through COVID-19 response and mitigation and applying them to solve other global challenges, such as climate change. Panels also discussed ways that advanced communications are driving societal changes that require stronger data governance. The Forum released a summary statement, which is attached. End summary.

Suga Administration Priorities Highlighted

2. (U) Despite his resignation as prime minister, Shinzo Abe retained his role as honorary chair of the STS Forum, appearing via a pre-recorded video message and welcoming the more than 1,500 registered global participants. Newly-installed Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga delegated the delivery of his opening remarks to Asako Omi, Diet member and daughter of STS Forum founder Koji Omi. The comments emphasized his administration's intention to treat the COVID-19 pandemic and the Japanese people's safety as his number one priority. The remarks

also noted his desire to strengthen Japan's digitalization via a new digital agency. This effort will support implementation of Society 5.0 to tackle domestic issues like Japan's rapid aging and declining population and global problems such as climate change.

U.S. Voices Receive Top Billing

3. (U) U.S. speakers received prominent placement throughout the STS Forum, especially in the first day's line-up, which featured a virtual conversation about COVID-19 between three Americans – National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci, University of Pennsylvania Professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and the moderator, Chairman Emeritus of Pfizer. Hank McKinnell. Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, Science Advisor to the President, highlighted the vibrant bilateral S&T collaboration between the United States and Japan in his pre-recorded opening session remarks. He referenced the December 2019 signing of the Tokyo Statement on Quantum Information Science and Technology Collaboration and applauded the international collaboration in Japan's Moonshot Research and Development Program. Other U.S. government voices included U.S. Department of Energy Under Secretary for Science Paul Dabbar, National Institute of Standards and Technology Director Walter Copan, National Science Foundation (NSF) Director Sethuraman Panchanathan, and National Academy of Sciences President Marcia McNutt.

Global Leaders Emphasize Data Flow, Diversity, and Dialogue

4. (U) Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko in his remarks noted that his country was the first to register and use a safe COVID-19 vaccine, Sputnik V, but neglected to mention the Sputnik V vaccine had not been through a phase three clinical trial. Chernyshenko also highlighted the importance of cross-border data flows with the explosion of data that would be generated by the proliferation of connected devices. The European Union's Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth, noted that correcting inequality in access to S&T benefits required investing in skills and promoting gender equality in STEM to avoid leaving people behind. She also flagged the unparalleled size and outreach of the E.U.'s Horizon R&D program, the open nature of the European data platform, Europe's green deal to achieve climate security by 2050, and the criticality of ocean health to the future of human life on the planet. [Comment: Although Gabriel was the only woman on her panel, overall the forum had better gender and diversity inclusion this year than in previous years. End comment.] Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs Marcelo Luis Ebrard Casaubon spoke on behalf of all Latin American and the Caribbean nations about the increasing importance of the collaboration between the STS Forum for expanding dialogue between scientists and policymakers in the region to accelerate S&T innovation, including a new regional STS meeting that will begin next year.

Industry Embraces Changing Technology, Trust-Building, and Sustainability

5. (U) Takeshi Uchiyamada, Toyota's Chairman of the Board and Chair of Japan's Council on Competitiveness, noted that the COVID-19 pandemic "made obvious Japan's delay in using technology in society," and lamented that "sub-optimized systems had been used for many years." Japan's Society 5.0 vision needs to leverage the pandemic as an opportunity to learn and change, he emphasized. Policymakers must identify privacy solutions and rebuild trust so that information sharing can help sustain lives and economic activity while respecting human freedoms. But beyond COVID-19 changes, he emphasized the importance of climate change

and said developing a decarbonized society based on sustainable energy was also critical to humankind's survival. This response is "even more important than the response to the pandemic," he stressed.

6. (U) Thanks to the virtual setting, the forum's largest financial supporters had a unique opportunity to get their messages out via commercial-style videos that ran between each session. For example, the BristolMyersSquibb CEO's speech targeted Japanese finance and health policymakers who have been cutting costs in the health care system by reducing reimbursements for innovative healthcare solutions with a catchphrase "patients are waiting."

COVID-19: Who Learned What? What's Next?

7. (U) Chien-Jen Chen, distinguished research fellow at the Genomics Research Center, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, noted that all nations failed initially in their response to COVID-19. He called on governments to follow Taiwan's lead of providing information transparently, which gained the public's trust, created a virtuous cycle, and aroused the entire population in solidarity against the virus. He stressed that testing, contact tracing and isolation were the key to mitigating COVID-19 infections.

8. (U) On a separate panel, George Fu Gao, director-general of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (the PRC's CDC), stated that in a world with geopolitical and economic rivalries, scientists who wanted to collaborate globally had to learn to communicate very carefully. "Everything must be science-based, the public must understand all strategies, and the scientists must advise the leaders who have to make the decisions." Population-based medicine or public health is not the same as health care, and needs to be organized by the motto "of the people, by the people, for the people" with data sharing as a key, he said. Gao expressed optimism at the speed of vaccine progress, mentioning that the UAE approved emergency usage of a Chinese-made vaccine candidate, and likened combatting COVID-19 globally to fighting a blaze in an apartment building where "you have to work together, or soon the whole building will be on fire."

9. (U) Expanding on the remarks by Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, Russian panelist Arkady Dvorkovich, Chairman of the Skolkovo Foundation, clarified that two COVID-19 vaccines were being tested in Russia. No mass vaccinations have occurred yet, he clarified, indicating that vaccinations will start in November with doctors and essential workers. "Production is the tough part now," he commented, "and it will be impossible to achieve 100 percent vaccination, especially because the equipment to produce vaccines, primarily sourced from the United States, Germany, and China, is in short supply." "Vaccines should be funded by governments," he assessed, with a smile, "people trust the British vaccine more than the Russian vaccine."

Japanese Experts Address COVID and Digitalization

10. (U) Yoshihide Hayashizaki, Program Director of Preventive Medicine and Diagnosis Innovation Program at RIKEN, Japan, noted that we needed to balance economic easing against the spread of infection until a vaccine is available. He cautioned that governments had lifted restrictions too early while the risk of rapid spread persisted and called on scientists to respond to the "fake information" and errors spread by media. Dr. Jun Murai, from the Keio University Cyber Civilization Research Center, stated that Japan had a clear 2040 digitalization vision that would enable people to do everything from home by 2040. He noted that COVID-19 forced

many companies to achieve that vision within only six months, but public services were the biggest laggard. Noting the importance of security and privacy, Murai called on interested participants and government to establish a new global forum to discuss ideas, data interoperability, and other legal frameworks, similar to ICAO. Dr. Hiroshi Yamakawa, President of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, JAXA, emphasized the importance of space systems supporting digitalization, noting growing interest in satellite-based Internet broadband service. Data links and portable terminals that provide health care and education are essential in bringing society back together to combat COVID-19 and other global challenges, he said.

Need to Focus on Adaptation, as a Climate Change Tipping Point Has Already Been Reached

11. (U) Yuan Tseh Lee, President Emeritus of Academia Sinica in Taiwan and the 1986 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, shared a stark message that the earth had already reached a tipping point and there was a need to chart a new course toward adaptation via global collaboration. Only the most adaptable species will survive, he emphasized, so we need to learn to adapt better and recognize that the planet is “only safe anywhere if it is safe everywhere.” Hakan Bulgurlu, CEO of Arçelik, a leading manufacturer of home appliances, agreed and has focused his company on sustainability, carbon neutrality, and protection of the water supply from microplastics. In response to COVID-19, Arcelik collaborated with aviation companies to build mechanical ventilators, manufacturing 5,000 units in three months, shipping them to countries at cost, and sharing their plans as open source. But he is more concerned about climate change, predicting that more than two billion people who rely on the Everest basin for drinking water will soon face shortages, leading to a mass migration, “the likes of which the planet has not seen before.” “COVID-19 is a pinprick compared to the sledgehammer or nuclear bomb of the coming climate crisis,” he stated.

12. (U) Highlighting action against climate change and the importance of digitalization, METI Vice-Minister for International Affairs Shigehiro Tanaka stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced governments and societies to “accelerate long-needed changes.” The GOJ is fully prepared to make the difficult political decisions to support its climate goals through efforts such as the “connect and manage” scheme, which seeks to allocate one-quarter of Japan’s power grid capacity to renewable energy suppliers, Tanaka added. Makoto Gonokami, President of The University of Tokyo, emphasized the school’s new industry collaboration, the Center for Global Commons, and its issuance of 40-year bonds to promote upfront, innovative investments that will combat the global crises of COVID-19 and climate change.

Comment- The Future of the STS Forum?

13. ~~(SBU)~~ Organizers announced the 18th STS Forum will be held October 3-5, 2021. However, the advanced age of Koji Omi, the forum’s founder and a former finance minister, leaves doubt about whether it can continue to thrive. Omi’s daughter, now a Diet member, has been more of an administrative caretaker of her father’s STS Forum legacy than an S&T influencer in her own right. Organizers hope to return to its usual in-person format and Kyoto venue. But the virtual format might be a positive change for the future, allowing broader participation and sometimes deeper conversations. It could also help encourage a younger generation to pick up the mantle of responsibility for S&T change. As the forum asks how to

expand its influence to new regions of the world and become more accessible to a diverse range of voices and personal circumstances, a hybrid live/virtual session might be its answer. End comment.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Signature: YOUNG

Drafted By: TOKYO;
Cleared By: ECON
ECON
ESTH:
Approved By: ECON
Released By: TOKYO;

(b)(6)

Info: NAGOYA, AMCONSUL *ROUTINE*; SAPPORO, AMCONSUL *ROUTINE*;
NAHA, AMCONSUL *ROUTINE*; FUKUOKA, AMCONSUL *ROUTINE*;
OSAKA KOBE, AMCONSUL *ROUTINE*

Attachments: Statement-2020.pdf

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~~SBU~~

Science and Technology in Society *forum* (STS *forum*)17th Annual Meeting

Kyoto, Japan, October 6, 2020

STATEMENT

1. The 17th Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in Society *forum* took place from October 3 to 6 live online from a base studio in Kyoto, with online participation of about 1,500 global leaders in science and technology, policymaking, business, and media from nearly 120 countries, regions, and international organizations. This meeting is taking place in one of the most challenging periods in history, when a pandemic is devastating the world, and the impacts of climate change require redoubling our efforts at limiting emissions and promoting adaptation and resilience if we are to adhere to a sustainable development path.

COVID-19 Pandemic

2. The COVID-19 pandemic that has forced this change in our format has already infected more than 35 million persons and claimed over a million lives. It has demonstrated the vulnerability of human societies, and underlined the global, regional, and local inequalities among our citizens. The pandemic is not just a public health crisis, an economic crisis, and a social crisis, but also more seriously, a crisis of confidence.

3. The public health crisis has unleashed an economic crisis of unprecedented magnitude, as measures to combat the spread of the disease have impacted economic transactions within and between countries and affected economic growth and jobs. In many countries economic contraction and massive unemployment are the new reality. Entire sectors like travel and hospitality are devastated. Supply chains have been disrupted. Patterns of work have been transformed, with many of those who can do so working from home. Education is facing radical challenges as distance learning supplements, if not replaces, face-to-face instruction. The social and economic impact is enormous and we are facing an uncertain future. The future will depend on science. Young people must not only take up the torch of science, technology, and innovation, but society must also have greater confidence in science. Trust must be rebuilt. This in turn requires more transparency in science and greater, inclusive, multi-faceted public dialogue that rejects disinformation and efforts to politically pressure scientists and censor scientific reports.

4. The pandemic has struck countries around the globe unevenly, and success in coping with COVID-19 has varied enormously, with countries in East Asia doing better than most other countries. We are still trying to develop better tests, therapeutics, and vaccines, which when developed must be shared with all who need them, not just those who can afford them. Developed countries must work with the WHO at sharing information, tracking the spread of the virus, and mapping the measures for its containment as well as ensuring that the best of science and technology, shared throughout the world. A global problem requires a global solution.

5. The pandemic-generated lockdowns and other measures have devastated the economies of many countries. In 2020 the global economy is contracting significantly, with the US and Europe contracting even more. Firms rush to cope with the challenge, by redesigning their supply chains, accelerating digitization, and reducing employment. This has led to tens of millions of unemployed, and the rich countries' governments have adopted enormous stimulus packages in the trillions of dollars to try to avoid or reduce bankruptcies of firms and provide sustenance for those who have lost their employment as a result of the pandemic.

6. Meanwhile, these enormous stimulus packages are also an opportunity to promote a "Green Recovery" where government funding is used to transform the economy, not simply

seek to recreate the past. Thus, this crisis presents a window of opportunity, a historic chance to universally transform all sectors in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. We can rebuild in new ways to make our economies and our societies more resilient to environmental challenges and future health crises such as the current pandemic.

Education

7. Education is being transformed, with the introduction of digital technologies and distance learning, which challenge the conventional models of education systems inherited from the past. Rapid changes in both science and technology mean that lifelong continuous training is needed to avoid the constant social dislocation of older workers. Science and technology are essential for driving innovation but are not enough to solve major and complex challenges like the rise in non-communicable diseases, issues of social inequality, or climate change. To develop solutions that take into account culture, tradition, and geopolitical reality, science and technology must be better integrated with human and social sciences.

Energy and Environment

8. In the wake of this pandemic, society has the opportunity to sustain a significant part of the savings in fossil fuel consumption achieved during the period when travel was restricted in order to accelerate toward a low-carbon future, aiming for a more energy-efficient society. In this context, nuclear energy, including small modular reactors (SMRs), remains a potentially important source for baseload electricity generation, under strict conditions of safety, security, and non-proliferation. Investment is needed in advanced technologies for low-emission energy sources, including hydrogen, reliable energy storage, massive electrification, and negative carbon emissions such as carbon capture and utilization. A proper framework of market-based policies and incentives will be needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and IT-based energy management systems will be essential for efficiently balancing sustainable energy supply and demand with minimum damage to the environment, including protection of biodiversity and movement towards precision agriculture to ensure food and nutrition security for a growing global population undergoing the stresses of climate change.

The ICT Revolution, AI, and Society

9. The ICT revolution continues apace with robotics, AI, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud computing all evolving rapidly. AI builds on the availability of large sets of digital data and profits from the recent conceptual and practical advances in the domain of machine learning. However, AI should neither be reduced to only its technical aspects nor delegated solely to computer scientists and engineers. It is important to address AI from multiple perspectives. All sciences, including the humanities and the social sciences, can contribute to better understanding the possible applications and consequences of AI and ultimately improve the design of tools built from AI. Scientific organizations should contribute to helping decision-makers and the general public understand the implications, benefits, and potential risks of AI.

Global Governance of Information

10. Data is not only a source of corporate and national competitiveness as well as of scientific and medical progress; it is also a force driving economic development. However, problems including growing economic disparity due to huge enterprises' data oligopoly, severe violations of privacy, and promotion of discrimination or biases through intended/unintended misuse of personal information have emerged. Rising anxiety and distrust toward information caused by fake news expanding through media, including social networking services, and so-called "infodemics," which has become evident especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, pose major challenges to fundamental values like stability, mutual trust, and respect for human

dignity. It is important to build a frame of reference enabling ethical, trustworthy, and proportionate use of personal data to address these issues.

Inclusive Participation

11. Inclusive participation in decision-making can be a key enabler to success. But around the world, systemic inequality is prevalent. From an economic standpoint, companies with more diverse leadership have been shown to be more successful. Various barriers, which may include structural challenges, access to services like childcare, access to education, cultural expectations or bias, stand in the way of achieving diversity with inclusivity. Governments and societies should actively work to overcome such barriers. Our discussions at STS on the lights and shadows of science and technology in society help move us in that direction.

12. We look forward to convening again next year in Kyoto and have agreed to hold the 18th Annual Meeting of the STS *forum* from Sunday, October 3 to Tuesday, October 5, 2021.

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Wed, 19 Feb 2020 23:04:50 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: ~~(SBU)~~ Coronavirus Global Response Coordination Unit SitRep No. #19 -
02.19.2020 1600 ET

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~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 STATE 17888
Date/DTG: Feb 19, 2020 / 192254Z FEB 20
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Action: WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON
DC *IMMEDIATE*; WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC *IMMEDIATE*; HQ
USPACOM HONOLULU HI *IMMEDIATE*; CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB
FL *IMMEDIATE*; CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL *IMMEDIATE*; ALL
DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE *IMMEDIATE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: AEMR, AMGT, ASEC, CASC, MARR, PGOV, PREL, PINR, KFLO, JP,
CN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: ~~(SBU)~~ Coronavirus Global Response Coordination Unit SitRep No. #19 -
02.19.2020 1600 ET



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE
**Coronavirus Global Response Coordination Unit/
Diamond Princess Response Task Force**

SITREP No. # 19

February 19, 2020 - 1600 ET

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (SBU//FOUO)~~

1. (U) Latest Update

- (U) There are 75,205 confirmed cases worldwide, 2,014 deaths, and 15,084 recovered patients. (*Johns Hopkins CSSE*)
- (U) The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention has calculated a case fatality rate of 2.3 percent for the novel coronavirus, which is higher than influenza (0.1%) — but far lower than SARS (9.6%) and MERS (35%). (*CNN*)
- (SBU) U.S. Forces Korea announced service members, family members, civilians, and contractors who have attended New World Church in Daegu over the past 10 days must undergo a mandatory self-quarantine. The move comes after South Korea reported 15 confirmed cases of the virus stemming from the church on Wednesday. (*Marine Corps Times*)
- (U) The CDC issued new guidelines for American travelers to Hong Kong. (*CNBC*)

2. ~~(SBU)~~ Global Coronavirus Developments

- (U) South Korea confirmed 22 new cases of the coronavirus, bringing its total to 53, with most new patients traced to church services in the city of Daegu. (*Yonhap*)
- (U) Singapore reported three more confirmed cases, bringing its total to 84, with four in critical condition. (*Channel News Asia*)
- (U) Iranian authorities confirmed two elderly Iranian citizens died of the coronavirus. (*AP*)

3. (U) International Assistance

- ~~(SBU)~~ The WHO-China joint mission conducted a DVC with Wuhan public health staff and clinicians and visited a Beijing infectious disease hospital. (*20 BEIJING 296*)
- (U) On February 18 WHO announced shipment of supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) to 21 countries and stated it would ship to another 106 in coming weeks. (*WHO*)
- (SBU) USAID-funded PPE arrived in Laos on February 6. USAID has two more PPE shipments expected to arrive within the next two weeks in Burma and Thailand, and an additional six shipments in progress to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, and Nepal. (*USAID*)

4. ~~(SBU)~~ Support for U.S. Citizens

- (U) On February 18, U.S. citizens and LPRs remaining on the Diamond Princess received letters from CDC and Embassy Tokyo explaining they were

added to a federal list restricting travel by commercial aircraft to the United States until March 4. **(Embassy Tokyo, CDC)**

- ~~(SBU)~~ Diamond Princess: The 43 U.S. citizens remaining aboard have either tested negative or are awaiting results. Carnival will pay expenses and lodging during a 14-day period, as required by the aforementioned CDC letter. Embassy Tokyo is working on FAQs and instructions for citizens awaiting travel clearance. **(Embassy Tokyo)**
- ~~(SBU)~~ Westerdam: Approximately 280 U.S. citizens remain in Phnom Penh awaiting a charter flight coordinated by Holland America and scheduled to depart on February 20. Sixty-four U.S. citizens departed via commercial flights on February 18. **(Embassy Phnom Penh)**
- ~~(SBU)~~ Travel Advisories: CA added a health indicator and language on the virus to its Travel Advisory for Hong Kong on February 11. **(CA)**

5. Please direct all questions to the Coronavirus Global Response Coordination Unit at (b)(6) or CoronavirusGlobalResponseCoordinationUnit@state.gov.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Signature: Pompeo

Drafted By: Beijing ESTH: (b)(6)

Cleared By: POL (b)(6)

SES (b)(6)

Approved By: POL (b)(6)

Released By: POEMS_S_ES (b)(6)

Info: SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; COMFIFTHFLT IMMEDIATE; COMSIXTHFLT IMMEDIATE; NGA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE; JICPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE; CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE; CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE; DA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; CDR USSTRATCOM OFFUTT AFB NE IMMEDIATE; DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE; HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE; CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE; CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; NMCC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE; ATLANTA GA, CDC IMMEDIATE

XMT: BASRAH, AMCONSUL; CARACAS, AMEMBASSY; SANAA, AMEMBASSY; ST PETERSBURG, AMCONSUL; ALEXANDRIA, AMCONSUL

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Wed, 29 Apr 2020 17:00:16 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: (U) Tri-Mission Rome COVID-19 Sitrep April 29

UNCLASSIFIED



MRN: 20 ROME 710
Date/DTG: Apr 29, 2020 / 291656Z APR 20
From: AMEMBASSY ROME
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: AMED, APER, ASEC, ATRN, CASC, EAID, EAIR, ECON, EFIN, PGOV, PHUM, PREL, SHLH, SOCI, KHIV, KNCV, KPAO, AID, ALITALIA, CDC, HHS, NIH, WHO, CN, RU, IT
Reference: 20 ROME 702
Subject: (U) Tri-Mission Rome COVID-19 Sitrep April 29

1. (U) Summary

- **Cases:** On April 29, as of 1800 local time, Italian authorities reported a total (cumulative) of 203,591 cases (+2,086, +1.04%) and 27,682 total deaths (+323, +1.18%). Italy has 104,657 active cases (-548, -0.52%) and 71,252 recoveries (+2,311, +3.35%). Rome has a total (cumulative) of 4,694 cases (+52, +1.11%). The Tri-Mission/Mission Italy has no cases of COVID-19.
- **Health:** Senior Italian health officials briefed that the increase in daily figures was expected as a result of ramped up screening-- on April 28, 57,272 swabs were taken, up from 25,000 on April 27. The number of infected people nationwide rose to 201,505 (105,205 infections are in progress.) Officials noted the daily increase in infections in Lombardy is also due to the surge in screening. Officials noted intensive care patients fell for the 25th consecutive day. The extraordinary commissioner for the COVID-19 emergency issued an order setting the maximum retail price of Type I medical face masks at no more than €0.50 each.
- **Political/Economic:** Coalition member Italia Viva's leader Matteo Renzi lashed out at PM Giuseppe Conte's handling of the crisis in an April 28 television interview, claiming the re-opening is too slow and infringes on the rights of Italians. The Partito Democratico (PD) was also reportedly critical of Conte's reliance on decrees that bypass Parliament. On April 28, during his second day visiting hard-hit northern provinces, PM Conte urged banks to provide liquidity to struggling businesses. The Fitch credit rating agency revised Italy's sovereign rating downward one notch to 'BBB minus' from 'BBB,' and changed its outlook from "negative" to "stable."

- **Vatican:** Pope Francis called for patience with governments' plans to ease the lockdowns to ensure the pandemic does not return.
- **U.S. Mission to UN Agencies in Rome:** The World Food Program announced the first cargo flight as part of the [Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19](#) is scheduled for May. The Food and Agriculture Organization announced its phased return of staff to its headquarters starting May 12.
- **Consular:** Consular issued a MASCOT Health Alert on the Government of Italy April 26 decree regarding workplace protocols and public safety.
- **Transportation & Travel:** Alitalia advised that its daily flights between Rome (FCO) and JFK will continue into May. United Airlines announced the cancellation of seasonal service to Naples (NAP) and Venice from Newark (EWR).
- **U.S. Military Update:** Mission DoD personnel are coordinating with EUCOM and the Italian Joint Operational Command to support the overall humanitarian assistance effort.
- **Public Affairs:** Italian media extensively report on the Phase 2 timeline amid public and political tensions. Media highlight **widespread criticism** of PM Conte's decree, which continues to be portrayed as **unclear**, as well as the Fitch downgrade for Italy. Today's analysis focuses on COVID-19's repercussion on the stability of the Italian government and on the global balance of power. One writer noted: "[In the post-COVID-19 world, Italy must define and defend its national interests like never before.](#)" An Embassy tweet yesterday highlighted President Trump's recognition, during his April 27 Coronavirus Task Force briefing, of Italy's recovery phase and support for PM Conte.

End Summary.

2. (U) Health: COVID-19 Cases Update

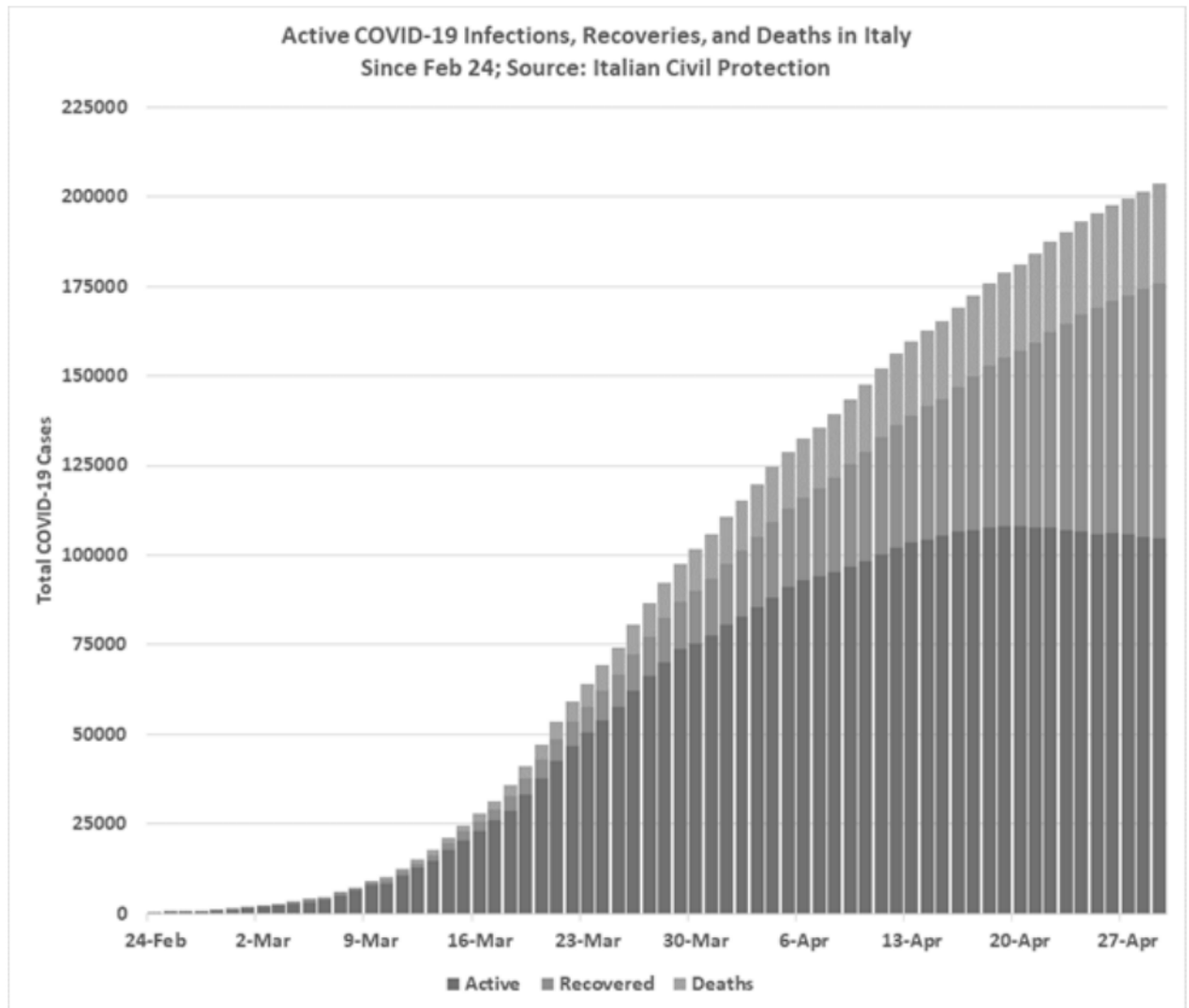
As of 1800 local time, the Italian Civil Protection Department website reports the following data:

April 29

A total (cumulative) of 203,591 cases (+2,086, +1.04%) and 27,682 total deaths (+323, +1.18%). Italy has 104,657 active cases (-548, -0.52%) and 71,252 recoveries (+2,311, +3.35%). Rome has a total (cumulative) of 4,694 cases (+52, +1.11%). The Tri-Mission/Mission Italy has no cases of COVID-19.

April 28

On April 28, as of 1800 local time, Italian authorities reported a total (cumulative) of 201,505 cases (+2,091, +1.05%) and 27,359 total deaths (+382, +1.42%). Italy has 105,205 active cases (-608, -0.57%) and 68,941 recoveries (+2,317, +3.48%). Rome has a total (cumulative) of 4,642 cases (+73, +1.59%).



- On April 28, senior health officials noted a slight rise in the daily figures: an increase of 1% on April 28 compared to an increase of 0.8% on April 27. Officials noted the increase was expected as the number of swabs collected increased from 32,003 on April 27 to 57,272 on April 28. The number of infected people rose to 201,505, while 105,205 infections are in progress. The number of intensive care patients fell for the 25th consecutive day: 1,863 compared to 1,956 on April 27. A similar dynamic was noted in Lombardy: the curve increased 1.1% (over April 27 at + 0.8%) with the notable increase of 3,520 swabs taken over those taken on April 27 (+52%). In Lombardy, the number of hospitalized patients and those in intensive care are still decreasing.
- Italy's extraordinary commissioner for the COVID-19 emergency, Domenico Arcuri issued an order (no.11/2020) fixing the maximum retail price of Type I medical face masks at no more than €0.50 each (manufacturing, design and performance requirements according to UNI EN 14683:2019).
- **Lazio (Rome) had 6,545 cumulative cases (+78, +1.20%) as of April 29.** The number of COVID-19 patients (130) decreased by 2 cases in Lazio ICU's on April 29.
- **Lombardy had 75,134 cumulative cases (+786, +1.06%) and 13,679 deaths (+104,**

+0.76%), as of April 29. The province of Milan had 19,121 cumulative cases (+284, +1.50%), as of April 29.

- As of April 29, there were 9,292 total cases in Tuscany (+ 61, +0.66%), including 3,079 in Florence.
- As of April 29, there were 4,410 cases in Campania, of which 2,416 were in Naples.
- As of April 28, there were 448 total cases in the Republic of San Marino.

3. (U) Political and Economic Update

- **Tensions Persist within Governing Coalition:** Despite being a member of the governing coalition, Italia Viva leader (and former Prime Minister) Matteo Renzi once again lashed out at Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's handling of the crisis in an April 28 television interview, claiming the re-opening is too slow and infringes on the rights of Italians. "A Prime Minister cannot change the Constitution with his own decree," he said. "Health is important," he conceded, but "freedom cannot be questioned by a prime minister; it sets a precedent." According to unnamed sources cited in the press, coalition member Partito Democratico (PD) does not want to call into question Conte's leadership but is also dissatisfied: "it is not possible to announce a new decree and then waste time explaining it in the following days." The PD was also reportedly critical of Conte's reliance on decrees that bypass parliament.
- **PM Conte Continues Visit to Northern Italy:** PM Conte visited the hard-hit provinces of Cremona, Piacenza, and Lodi on April 28, and met with the mayor of Codogno where the outbreak began in February. Conte took the opportunity to urge banks to provide liquidity to struggling businesses.
- **Fitch Credit Rating Agency Revises Italy's Rating Downward:** On April 28 in an unscheduled update on Italy's creditworthiness, the Fitch credit rating agency revised Italy's sovereign rating downward one notch to 'BBB minus' from 'BBB.' Fitch also changed its outlook from "negative" to "stable." The new rating puts Italian sovereign bonds just one level above non-investment grade. Fitch expects the country's ratio of debt to GDP to rise around 20 percentage points this year to 156%, due to a surge in spending combined with an 8 per cent contraction in the economy. Fitch's statement noted "according to our baseline debt dynamics scenario, the [debt] to GDP ratio will only stabilize at very high level over the medium term, underlying debt sustainability risks"
- **April Car Sales Hint at Economic Devastation and Urgency of Phase 2:** UNRAE, the association of foreign car manufacturers, reported just 2,073 cars were sold during the first 24 days of April, down from 175,000 sold in April 2019. Michele Crisci, President of UNRAE, said he was "stunned" at the near 99% decrease in sales during April thus far (Note: March car sales had already decreased 85% year-on-year. End Note.)
- **Café Owner's Protest in Bologna Goes National:** On April 28 in Bologna, a Five Star Movement politician and café owner started a protest against the national government's decision to keep restaurants closed until at least June 1. The protest gained steam on April 29, as restaurant and café owners across the country handed over the keys to their establishments to their respective mayors. The movement was particularly widespread in Florence, with 6,000 merchants briefly opening their shops in protest and 1,500 restaurant owners giving their keys to Mayor Nardella.
- **Pope Francis Asks for Prudence and Obedience of Government Restrictions:** Media reported Pope Francis asked for "prudence and obedience of the provisions [adopted by

the government] to stop the pandemic.” Commentators interpreted the Pope’s statement as a way to abate the Italian Episcopal Conference’s harsh criticism April 26 of the government’s continued restrictions on religious services. Press reports the Ministry of Interior is negotiating an agreement with Catholic bishops to allow the resumption of masses celebrated outdoors beginning May 11 and indoors by the end of May. In an April 29 interview with leading, left-leaning daily La Repubblica, Islamic religious community chairman Yahya Pallavicini noted PM Conte has not consulted other religious communities and hoped mosques can be reopened between May 12 and 22 to celebrate the end of Ramadan.

4. (U) Embassy to the Holy See

- A tenth Vatican employee tested positive for the coronavirus.
- The Pontifical Salesian University in Rome reported 39 positive cases. The entire university remains an isolated “red zone.”

5. (U) US Mission to UN Agencies in Rome

- **World Food Program (WFP):** WFP recently announced the first cargo flight scheduled for May as part of the [Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19](#).
- **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):** FAO announced its phased HQ plan to return to the workplace. The first phase from May 5-15 have no more than 30-40 personnel on premises.

6. (U) Consular Update

- Messaging: CONS issued a MASCOT Health Alert, posted to the mission home page, on the Government of Italy April 26 decree regarding workplace protocols and public safety.
- Requests for U.S. government-assisted evacuation (current): 0.
- Number of cruise ships tracked by posts and the number of U.S. citizens on board: One ship (the MSC Opera) with one U.S. citizen crew member.

7. (U) Transportation & Travel

- Fiumicino International (FCO) U.S. Flights -- April 29.
 - Alitalia Airlines one flight from JFK: CANCELED.
 - Alitalia Airlines one flight to JFK: 16 PAX.
 - Post expects to see intermittent service cancellations on Alitalia’s JFK-FCO route until U.S. and EU border restrictions ease.
- Alitalia advised that the daily flight from FCO to JFK will continue in May.
- United Airlines announced the cancellation of their seasonal service between Napoli (NAP) and Newark (EWR). The flight was to resume on July 7.
- United Airlines announced the cancellation of its seasonal service between Venice (VCE) and Newark (EWR). The flight was to resume on October 18.

-

8. (U) U.S. Military Update

- Mission DoD personnel are coordinating with EUCOM to execute the U.S. military’s portion of the overall assistance effort. ODC is identifying the correct Italian agency to coordinate local procurement of assistance supplies and place items on contract. Mission

military liaison officers are coordinating with the Italian Joint Operational Command to support strategic and localized DoD humanitarian assistance activities.

9. (U) Public Affairs Afternoon Update

Italian Media

- Extensively report on the Phase 2 timeline amid public and political tensions. Media highlight **widespread criticism** of PM Conte's decree, which continues to be portrayed as **unclear**, and the Fitch downgrade for Italy.

Commentary

- Today's analysis focuses on COVID-19's repercussion on the stability of the Italian government and on the global balance of power. Under headline "The Post-Virus World Without a Leading Power," centrist, top-circulation *Corriere della Sera*'s Franco Venturini opines that the emergency has damaged the United States, China, and Russia, and to some extent Europe: "The world could really change for Europe in November if America elects... a pro-Europe president... In the post-COVID-19 world, Italy must define and defend its national interests like never before." Angelo Panebianco comments in *Corriere della Sera*: "**The future political scenario in Italy** as envisioned by some of our most attentive observers is **not reassuring**. After the catastrophic drop in GDP and of the inevitable social and political knock-on effects, it is likely that the current government will not endure much longer... It will likely be replaced by the usual technical government."

Chinese Public Messaging

- The Chinese Embassy shared a tweet by Fareed Zakaria, Host of *CNN*'s news commentary program GPS, featuring the scientist and President of EcoHealth Alliance Peter Daszak's comments refuting the conspiracy theories spread by those who believe that the coronavirus was developed in a lab.

International Assistance/Russia

- Under headline: "**Russians? No, Thank You. The Military Mission is About to Come to an End,**" leading, left-leaning *La Repubblica*'s Deputy Managing Editor Gianluca Di Feo reports that "the Italian government intends to respond 'no, thank you' to a hypothetical extension of Moscow's military mission in Italy for the simple reason that... no region has requested the intervention of Russian soldiers."

Social Media Amplification

- An Embassy tweet yesterday highlighted President Trump's recognition, during Monday's Coronavirus Task Force briefing, of Italy's recovery phase and support for PM Conte.

Signature:

EISENBERG

Drafted By:

Cleared By:

ROME:
POL:
DOD/DAO:
ECON:
PD:
(b)(6)

CONS;
MGT;
POL;
EXEC;
ROME;



(b)(6)

Approved By:
Released By:
Info:

VATICAN, AMEMBASSY *ROUTINE*; UN ROME, USMISSION *ROUTINE*;
CIA WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*;
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; FBI
WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; ATLANTA GA, CDC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF
TREASURY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON
DC *ROUTINE*; US TRADE REP WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; DEPT OF
ENERGY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*; EUROPEAN POLITICAL
COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*; IO COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*

XMT:

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VLADIVOSTOK, AMCONSUL

Dissemination Rule:

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From: SMART Archive
Sent: Fri, 18 Sep 2020 08:11:24 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Osaka Sees Demonstrations in Support of "New Federal State of China"

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~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 OSAKA KOBE 132
Date/DTG: Sep 18, 2020 / 180811Z SEP 20
From: AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, CN, JP
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Osaka Sees Demonstrations in Support of "New Federal State of China"

1. ~~(SBU)~~ On August 29, around 150 supporters of the "New Federal State of China" gathered in Osaka's Utsubo Park wearing matching shirts and waving flags with the emblem of the recently created protest group. On the same day the group held a similar demonstration in Tokyo and in social media postings adherents highlighted an earlier June 30 rally in front of the PRC Embassy in Seoul. While the "New Federal State of China" concept was coined on June 4 by former White House Advisor Steve Bannon and GUO Wengui, a Chinese tycoon resident in New York City, Osaka police could not confirm whether the Osaka demonstration was directly funded by the founders.



Figure 1: Trucks adorned with the emblem of the "New Federal State of China" lead protesters through the streets of Osaka on August 29.

2. ~~(SBU)~~ Contacts in the Osaka Police Department who monitored the August 29 rally remarked that they were unaccustomed to seeing protest groups with such a level of coordination and funding. While they assumed that the funding originated from the Bannon/Guo initiative, the police contact said that Osaka Police had not tracked the funding source and were also uncertain of who the primary organizer(s) in Osaka were. The truck rentals alone would have cost nearly USD 10,000 suggested the police on contact. He asserted that most participants were ethnic Chinese resident in Japan, with little, if any, presence of Japanese nationals and added that he believed that some Hong Kong residents may have also joined.



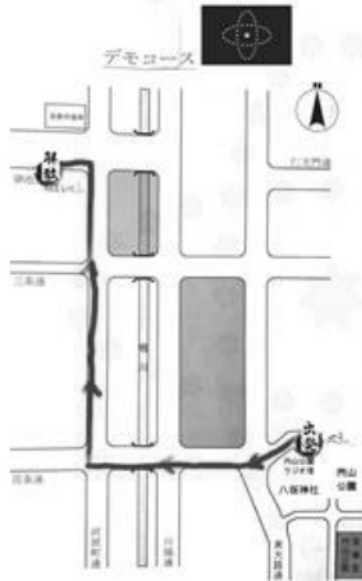
Figure 2: The rally finishes in Osaka's Utsubo Park after passing the PRC Consulate. Participants held signs that read "China Communist Party does not equal China or Chinese People" and "Wake up Japan".

3. ~~(SBU)~~ While there did not appear to be any sign of counter protesters at the Osaka protest, law enforcement contacts told ConGenOff that the PRC Consulate in Osaka may be seeking to organize PRC international students studying in the Kansai region to be present at an upcoming "New Federal State of China" event in Kyoto on September 26. The same contact said that the PRC Consulate had successfully gathered PRC students to counter a demonstration in support of Hong Kong that occurred in front of their consulate in July. The "New Federal State of China" uses Twitter and Facebook to circulate news of its protests, while the PRC Consulate has typically utilized its education center, through which it gathers PRC students to propagate recent political messaging.

9.26(土)京都 コロナ真相 追及抗議デモ



ウイルス専門家 ヤン博士
Coronavirus whistle blower
Doctor Li-Meng Yan



時間: 2020年9月26日 (土)
16時00分~
(デモ:17時00分~18時00分)
道路: 丸山公園から市役所まで
主催者: 鴨川龍馬
参加費*資料代:無料

鴨川龍馬
WhatsApp
+1(920)309-6613
Email: kyotokamogawa@protonmail.com

Figure 3: Notice for the upcoming September 26 Kyoto rally of the “New Federal State of China” group, with photo of Hong Kong based researcher who claimed that the corona virus that causes COVID19 was intentionally generated at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Signature: MEI

Drafted By: OSAKA KOBE: [Redacted]
Cleared By: RSO: [Redacted]
EXEC/LEG: [Redacted] (b)(6)
EXEC/LEG: [Redacted]
Approved By: OSAKA KOBE: [Redacted]
Released By:

Info: TOKYO, AMEMBASSY ROUTINE; SAPPORO, AMCONSUL ROUTINE;
NAGOYA, AMCONSUL ROUTINE; OSAKA KOBE, AMCONSUL ROUTINE;
FUKUOKA, AMCONSUL ROUTINE; NAHA, AMCONSUL ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

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~~SBU~~

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Tue, 11 Feb 2020 04:06:14 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Mission New Zealand End of Day (EOD) - Tuesday, February 11, 2020
Attachments: 20200201142726_SIIS Report on Coronavirus Battle.pdf

UNCLASSIFIED

MRN: 20 MDA 6956
Date/DTG: Feb 11, 2020 / 110406Z FEB 20
From: (b)(6) (Wellington)
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, MARR, MOPS, PGOV, PREL, 6H, CK, CN, NU, NZ, KORB, KPAO
Subject: Mission New Zealand End of Day (EOD) - Tuesday, February 11, 2020

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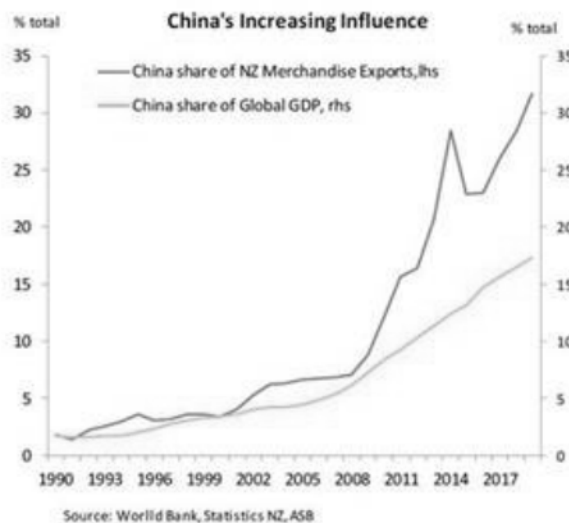
(U) Today's top items:

- Coronavirus:
 - No cases in NZ
 - PM, banks, universities address fallout
 - PRC's DATT circulates "Coronavirus Battle in China" report
- Police tout action against drug trafficking
- Desk officer meets TIP contacts

Coronavirus Updates (Reporting 4PPO):

- **(U) PM on Economic Fallout:** PM Ardern confirmed in a post-Cabinet press conference yesterday that although 157 individuals from last week's Wuhan evacuation flight are now in isolation at a military facility, there are no coronavirus cases in New Zealand, and she has prioritized streamlining information from Customs, Ministry of Health, and Immigration, to ensure accurate and consistent information. She also spoke about the economic impact the virus has caused, explaining that about 90% of NZ Rock Lobster are exported to China over the Lunar New Year, and she is working with the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) to resolve this and other export issues which have had supply chain disruptions since the outbreak of the virus, including the forestry industry. (AKL (b)(6))

- **(U) Banks NZ GDP to Contract this Quarter:** NZ banks estimate the coronavirus will contract the NZ economy in the first quarter this year, taking 0.6 percentage points off their original forecast of 0.5 percent growth. They also expect second quarter growth to be reduced by 0.5 percentage points. [Note: the economic contraction in NZ from SARS in 2003 is estimated at 0.6 percentage points overall] While they don't expect a cut in the monetary policy rate tomorrow – currently at 1 percent – they do expect a cut or fiscal stimulus if the effects are larger than expected. Some economists expect a 50 basis point cut because rates were cut after the 9/11 attacks, the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, and to a lesser extent SARS in 2003. China is NZ's largest trading partner taking over 30 percent of merchandise exports and there have been reports of the seafood and logging industries experiencing disruptions to their supply chains, but services exports of tourism and education are likely to feel the immediate impact. China is close to 20 percent of global GDP which is five times larger than in 2003 when SARS hit, and shocks to large economies such as the U.S. will have a multiplier effect on the NZ economy, currency, and financial markets. **Note:** GDP figures for the first quarter of 2020 will be released on June 20. (PE (b)(6))



- **(U) NZ Universities Risk “Massive Financial Hit” from Coronavirus:** The NZ Herald reported this morning that over 6,500 Chinese students set to study at NZ universities, just over 50% of the 12,700 Chinese students registered at NZ Universities, are stuck in China due to the NZ entry ban for any travelers who have been to China within 14 days of entering New Zealand. Calling the situation a “perfect storm scenario” for the university sector, Universities New Zealand's chief executive Chris Whelan said the ban came at the “worst possible” time because students are due to be travel to campuses, and the potential lost fees would be enough to almost wipe out the combined surplus of the entire sector. In direct fees alone, Universities New Zealand said institutions could face a loss of NZ\$170 million in expected revenue, while the students are expected to spend an additional NZ\$340m while living in New Zealand. Immigration

NZ said it would consider more flexible entry dates for student visas, and Education Minister Chris Hipkins said the government was looking for other ways to support the universities, calling Whelan's statements "alarmist and worst-case scenario." (AKL (b)(6) [redacted])

- ~~(SBU)~~ **PRC Defense Attaché Circulates Report:** Acting DATT at the PRC Embassy in Wellington forwarded the attached report from the Shanghai Institute on International Studies entitled "Coronavirus Battle in China: Process and Prospect" to other DATTs and the NZ military. The 18-page explains the PRC government's actions in response to the outbreak and features the WHO DG's comments. The report suggests three "joint actions" by the international community: improve epidemic info sharing, strengthen international epidemic control cooperation, and "oppose discrimination" against the affected.
- **(U) Op-Ed: PRC Response Means NZ-PRC "Rethink":** In an op-ed this morning, David Stevenson bemoan China's lack of transparency over the outbreak and suggested it's time to "rethink New Zealand's relationship with China." Stevenson noted in this era of mass air travel and global inter-dependency, China should accept that there must be "complete transparency and accountability in its health sector. And a necessary component of a transparent and accountable health sector is the free flow of essential information which will in reality mean freedom of speech." (AKL (b)(6) [redacted])

~~(SBU)~~ **Police "Smash" Drug Smuggling Ring:** Police Minister Nash announced the success of the NZP's "Operation Mystic" against methamphetamine, MDMA, cocaine, and ephedrine trafficking. The NZP announced 10 arrests and seizure of up to \$3.2M in drugs over eight months. Nash said wastewater analysis shows "13-15 kg" of meth is consumed weekly in NZ, especially in Northland and the East Coast. Nash said Operation Mystic arrests included money launderers with connections to Chile, Brazil, Italy, and the Philippines, and that illegal firearms and cash were also seized. Drug use and gangs have become increasingly high-profile in NZ and will likely be an issue in the upcoming election campaign. The opposition National Party has criticized the GNZ for being soft on crime and urged tougher law enforcement and criminal penalties.

~~(SBU)~~ **Embassy Convenes Trafficking Contacts:** On February 10 Desk Officer JP Kill met with Government of New Zealand and NGO TIP-related contacts Wellington. Representatives from the GNZ's lead anti-TIP agency Immigration New Zealand, as well as MFAT, the sex workers' union, the faith community, and a leading TIP researcher shared views on current GNZ efforts in the area. INZ gave an update on the Feb 9 opening day in Hawke's Bay of NZ's largest trafficking trial to date, and briefed attendees on recent INZ/NZ Police-led TIP training workshops. For their part NGO representatives stressed the need for greater efforts to increase general public awareness of TIP and, in particular, domestic sex trafficking outside the legal sex industry. (AKL (b)(6) [redacted])

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Drafted By:
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WELLINGTON: (b)(6)
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Attachments:

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From: SMART Archive
Sent: Thu, 08 Oct 2020 09:54:53 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Kuala Lumpur End of Day - October 8, 2020

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~~SBU~~

MRN: 20 MDA 41680
Date/DTG: Oct 08, 2020 / 080954Z OCT 20
From: (b)(6)
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, ELAB, SHLH, EAIR, EFIN, KNCV, KWMN, MY
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Kuala Lumpur End of Day - October 8, 2020

(U) Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim Says Will Meet the King October 13: Anwar's office released a press statement on October 8 saying he would present the King "documentation of the strong and convincing majority" supporting Anwar's claim to the prime minister's seat. In September Anwar had stated he was scheduled to meet the King on the same matter on September 22 but the King was unexpectedly admitted to the hospital. The king was discharged on October 2. (POL: (b)(6))

(U) North Korean Loses Appeal on Extradition to United States: Accused DPRK money-lauderer Mun Chol Myong lost his appeal of a Malaysian court ruling approving his extradition to the United States. A High Court judge ruled today that Mun failed to show sufficient evidence to support his claim that the case against him was "politically motivated." Mun's lawyer said he will appeal the decision to the appellate court. (POL: (b)(6))

~~(SBU)~~ **Top Glove Announces Plan to Reimburse Workers:** The repayment plan will include RM 136 million (USD 32.75 million) in reimbursements to workers over a ten month period for the recruiting fees the workers had paid to gain employment. The new plan is a significant increase over the RM 4.4 million (USD 1.06 million) repayment scheme previously announced but below the USD 40 to 60 million estimates some industry competitors had predicted. CBP issued a Withhold Release Order on Top Glove products arriving at U.S. ports on July 15 because of forced labor concerns. (POL: (b)(6))

(U) Concerns Over End of USAID PREDICT Program in Malaysia: In a call with Embassy ESTH officers October 7, the Director of EcoHealth Alliance, the implementing partner for USAID's PREDICT program, voiced his concern about Malaysia's future capacity to detect and test for pandemic disease in Malaysian Borneo, given Malaysia's designation as a lower-priority country under USAID's new Strategies to Prevent Spillover (STOP Spillover). He highlighted the lack of certified laboratories capable of testing human samples in Malaysian Borneo, which he said would be essential in the future to detect and prevent pandemic diseases of zoonotic origin similar to COVID-19. Note: Malaysian Borneo is the source of the recent

surge in COVID-19 cases, which has set multiple new daily record of cases in the past week. End Note. (ECON: (b)(6))

(U) Malaysia Airlines Will Not Be Bailed Out: Malaysia Airlines is suffering damaging losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has sparked fears of liquidation by Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), the holding company for the state carrier. Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul expressed on October 8, “We have consistently said that this is a matter that they must resolve. The Ministry of Finance will not inject capital or cash into MAG”. Failure to restructure Malaysia Airlines’ debt could jeopardize 13,000 jobs, hamper the country’s air connectivity and cause further economic losses for the country. (ECON: (b)(6))

(U) Embassy Program Supports Women Entrepreneurs in Sabah: PAS KL hosted a virtual speaker program yesterday with the Sabah Women Entrepreneurs and Professionals Association (SWEPA). The panel discussion, which featured ECA speaker Samira Cook-Gaines, President of Purposeful World Strategies, focused on small business issues during the time of COVID-19. Over the coming year, PAS KL is working with SWEPA on an entrepreneurship program that will focus on strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem in strategic regions of the country as part of the Embassy’s *Wanita Empowered* campaign. (PA: (b)(6))

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-SBU

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Fri, 01 May 2020 04:21:42 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Mission New Zealand EOD/COVID-19 Update - April 22, 2020 - Opposition Leader Facing Challenges / PRC Amb Rewrites History / PRC PPE concerns
Attachments: Ambassador Wu Xi was interviewed by AM Show.docx

UNCLASSIFIED

MRN: 20 MDA 19002
Date/DTG: May 01, 2020 / 010421Z MAY 20
From: (b)(6) (Wellington)
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, MARR, MOPS, PGOV, PREL, 6H, CK, CN, NU, NZ, KORB, KPAO, KNCV, SOCI, SHLH, KRIM
Subject: Mission New Zealand EOD/COVID-19 Update - April 22, 2020 - Opposition Leader Facing Challenges / PRC Amb Rewrites History / PRC PPE concerns

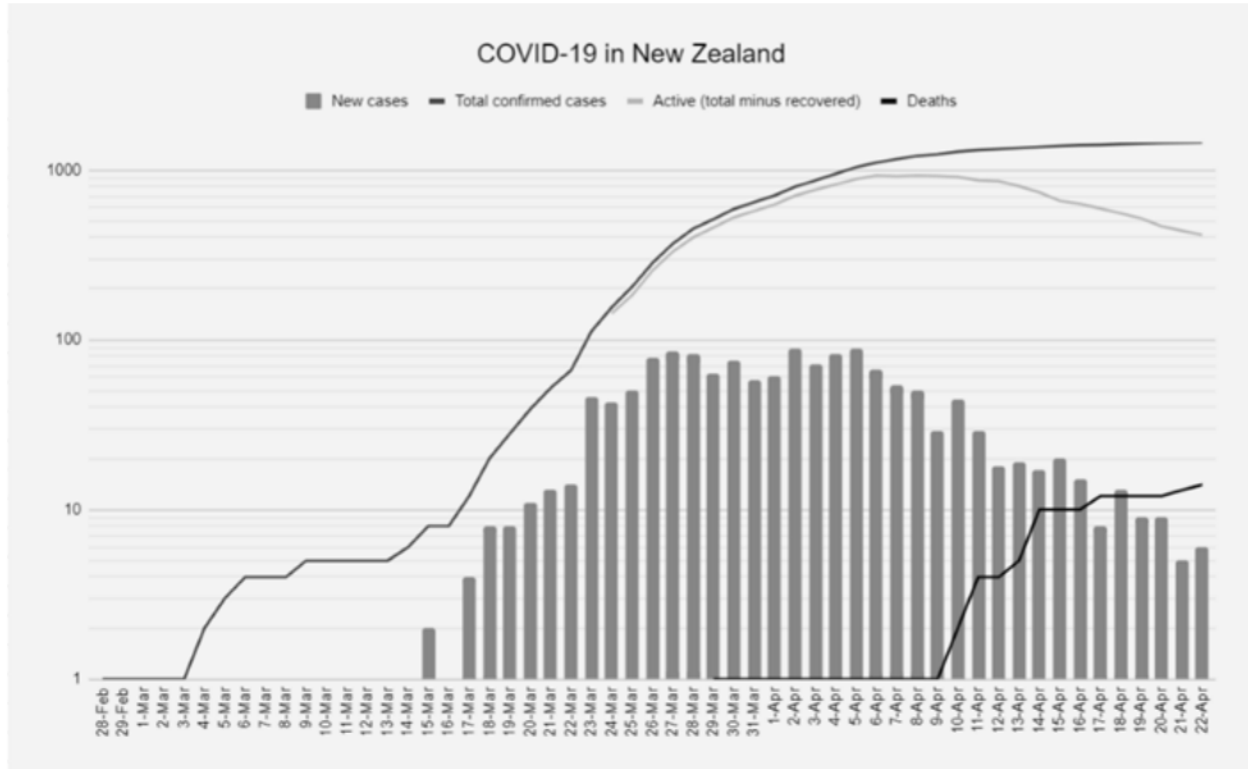
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(U) Today's Top Items:

- Slow COVID-19 growth, 1 more death, and 71% of cases have recovered
- Opposition leader faces renewed power struggle
- PRC Amb's Mandarin-only update rewrites recent TV interview, trade group revives Asia-NZ-Latin America "Southern Link"
- Oversight committee probes GNZ health response, Chinese PPE
- NZ extends transit window, Air NZ slowly ramps up domestic routes for Level 3

(U) Slow growth, 1 more death: On April 22 the NZ Ministry of Health announced one new death from COVID-19 (bringing the national total to 14) and six new cases, maintaining single digit increases. All six cases are related to travel or connected to existing clusters. The latest death is a woman in her 80s, with underlying health conditions who was a resident of a known cluster at a rest home. 1,036 of New Zealand's 1,451 total cases have recovered, 71.4%. A record number of tests, 5,289 were carried out yesterday, bringing the total number of tests to 94,467.



(SBU) Opposition Leader Facing Leadership Questions: Amid negative media coverage and public criticism of Opposition and National Party Leader's critiques of PM Ardern's COVID-19 response, media reported April 22 rumors that Bridges being challenged by his deputy Paula Bennett and former Defence Minister Mark Mitchell for leadership of the National Party, which Bridges has publicly denied. **[Comment:** National insiders confirm agitation against Bridges, who has survived one major scandal already, but now faces resurgent dissatisfaction over his COVID-19 posture. We understand two different groupings of MPs may be "running numbers" against Bridges, fueled by a range of motivations – personal ambitions and grievances, concerns over polling going into elections, and policy differences with the socially conservative Bridges. Bridges is confident and may again call a "put up, or shut up" caucus meeting to be attended by most National MPs on April 28 which could lead to a possible vote of confidence being held within a few weeks. Some contenders, Mitchell in particular, can argue they could partner with NZ First's Winston Peters, whom Bridges has ruled out, it would be theoretically possible for Winston Peters to cross the floor and coalesce with National under new leadership to form a new government. They would have the numbers to rule and legislate a delay in the September elections although this would be extraordinary without consensus in the House. While a government change now is unlikely, a leadership change would strengthen Peters by potentially giving him, once again, kingmaker powers (if he gets the required 5% vote for parliamentary seats). Ironically, it was Labour that faced weak polling this time in 2017, providing the impetus for Jacinda Ardern's elevation to run the party in August of that year, energizing the party and going on to create the current coalition government. PM Ardern has not yet addressed whether she will change the election date from September 19, 2020. **End comment.]**

~~(SBU)~~ **PRC Ambassador Rewrites History in Mandarin-only Report of English-language TV**

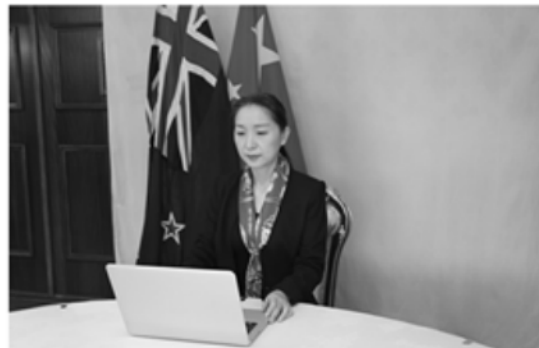
Interview: The PRC Embassy's Mandarin-language site took a revisionist approach to Ambassador Wu Xi's April 17 AM Show appearance (ref 20 MDA 17676), posting a summary(attached) that left out a defensive back-and-forth and repeated questioning about whether the PRC accepts responsibility for the spread of the virus. The post said that Wu had "accepted" an interview request from the show, though the hosts said that the PRC Embassy had approached them for a "right of reply" following Ambassador Brown's appearance in which he answered questions on the PRC's lack of transparency on COVID-19 (ref 20 MDA 17670). The PRC post highlighted only messages of China's "effective" anti-epidemic efforts, rejecting U.S. statements about responsibility for the spread of the virus, and the need for international solidarity, including between China and New Zealand. According to the post, Wu said in response to questions about Ambassador Brown's statements, "China's power, China's efficiency, and China's speed have been widely praised by the international community" and that "those accusing China of being opaque and undisclosed are unjust and desecrate the huge sacrifices made by the Chinese people" [via Google translate]. The *AM Show* appearance is not mentioned on the PRC Embassy's English-language site. Wu has had a bad week in NZ media, first with the defensive live TV interview, followed by her placing an op-ed on a small NZ blog-type outlet the same day as PRC influence watcher Anne-Marie Brady published an op-ed in one of NZ's two big news outlets calling for NZ to prioritize ties with Taiwan amid COVID-19 (ref 20 MDA 17668). (b)(6)

首页 > 双边关系

吴玺大使接受新西兰电视三台早间节目AM Show采访

2020/04/18

4月17日，吴玺大使就新冠肺炎疫情接受新西兰电视三台早间节目（AM Show）直播连线采访，介绍中国抗疫举措和成效，批驳美方近日涉疫情错误言论，呼吁包括新西兰在内的国际社会携手抗击疫情。主要如下：



~~(SBU)~~ **NZ China Council: "Southern Link" Transiting Medical Supplies:** The NZCC April 21 issued a press release to highlight that two Latin American airlines have begun routing via Auckland to China to ship medical supplies, furthering NZCC's idea of promoting New Zealand as a "Southern Link" between Latin America and China (ref 19 AUCKLAND 48). The release said Aerolineas Argentinas flew through Auckland to Shanghai for the first time April 15 and that LATAM has extended existing routes to transport "essential medical supplies from China to Latin America." "It's exciting to see the Southern Link concept gaining real momentum ... our next step is to commission an economic study to quantify the benefits of

New Zealand acting as a bridge to the broader Asia region," said NZCC Executive Director Rachel Maidment. "[NZCC] Chairman Sir Don McKinnon noted at the Southern Link Conference that this is a big and bold idea. In an age where many are turning inwards, it is exciting to support a concept which re-thinks the way we link economies and people." [Note: Despite two years of trying to make "Southern Link" happen, the NZCC and PRC Embassy have failed to get traction with GNZ officials or the private sector, who prefer the current stance of assessing any deal on its merits, whether OBOR or otherwise. The GNZ has not progressed on OBOR cooperation since a non-binding memo in 2017, under the previous government.] (b)(6)



NZ China Council
@nzchinacouncil

Southern Link in action! Two carriers start flying from Latin America to China via NZ transporting critical medical supplies. Great to see this concept become a reality nzchinacouncil.org.nz/2020/04/two-la...
#Aucklandairport #latam #aerolineas

Operación especial: China

DATOS DEL VUELO
Airbus 330
17 personas
Distancia total **38.200 kms** ida y vuelta
Tiempo: **52hs aprox.**

3:37 PM · Apr 21, 2020 · Twitter Web App

(U) Oversight Committee Probes GNZ Health Response, PRC PPE Quality: MPs on the Epidemic Response Committee (ERC) conducted health sector hearings on April 22. The NZ Medical Association criticized the withdrawal of GNZ funding to support GPs' transition to online consultations, and noted plummeting revenue for doctors' offices. NZ Dental Association board member Katie Ayers said the PPE procurement cost more than US\$1.25 million. NZFAA board member James Smith said the PPE procurement cost more than US\$1.25 million.

Drafted By:
Released By:
Info:

WELLINGTON: (b)(6)
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Attachments:

Ambassador Wu Xi was interviewed by AM Show.docx

Dissemination Rule:

Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED

Ambassador Wu Xi was interviewed by AM Show, the morning show of New Zealand Television

2020/04/18

On April 17, Ambassador Wu Xi accepted a live and online interview on New Zealand TV 's AM Show on the New Coronary Pneumonia Epidemic Situation, introduced China 's anti-epidemic measures and effectiveness, rejected the US 's recent statements about the epidemic and called for including New Zealand Of the international community work together to fight the epidemic. Mainly as follows:



Ambassador Wu said that the new coronavirus is a completely new virus for humans. Before the outbreak, people knew little about the virus, and it would take some time from discovery, research, detection and confirmation. After the outbreak, the Chinese side has always informed the WHO and relevant countries and regions of the outbreak information in an open, transparent and responsible manner. The timeline for the Chinese side to deal with the outbreak is clear. On December 27, 2019, Dr. Zhang Jixian from Hubei Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine Hospital first reported three suspicious cases. On 29th, Hubei and Wuhan related disease control centers and hospitals carried out an epidemiological survey. On the 30th, the Wuhan Health and Safety Commission issued the "Urgent Notice on Doing Well in the Treatment of Unexplained Pneumonia". On the 31st, the expert team of the National Health and Health Commission arrived in Wuhan to conduct an on-site investigation. On January 3, 2020, China promptly and proactively notified the World Health Organization and countries including the United States. On the 11th, the

Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention uploaded the entire genome sequence of 5 new coronaviruses to the website to share data with WHO and the world. On the 23rd, China took unprecedented comprehensive, strict, and thorough measures such as closing the Lihan Channel.

In response to questions from reporters about the US ambassador's accusation against the new epidemic in China, whether China should be responsible for the global spread of the epidemic, Ambassador Wu pointed out that China's anti-epidemic reflects the responsibility of a responsible big country. China's power, China's efficiency, and China's speed have been widely praised by the international community. The Chinese people have made tremendous sacrifices and made significant contributions to the health and safety of people around the world. Those accusing China of being opaque and undisclosed are unjust and desecrate the huge sacrifices made by the Chinese people. Two months after the closure of Wuhan, what epidemic prevention measures have been taken by other countries? Especially in the 2 months after the US government closed the border to all Chinese citizens, what epidemic prevention and control work has been carried out?

China is the first country to report the new coronary pneumonia epidemic to WHO, but it does not mean that the virus originated in Wuhan. An epidemic disease may first break out in any region, country, or city in the world, but where its source is a serious scientific issue should be referred to scientists and medical experts. Any responsible country will resolutely oppose the unreasonable practice of labeling the virus in any way.

In the face of this sudden global public health crisis, all countries including China are victims. If someone needs to apologize or be responsible for the virus, who should apologize and be responsible for the HIV and H1N1 influenza viruses? Recently, we have heard that many American politicians are always accusing this and that. They accused the Chinese government of lacking transparency, accused the governor of his country of not respecting the federal government, accused the ventilator of the previous government's reserve is not enough, accused the WHO of not doing well enough. But I think that blaming others, finding scapegoats, and blaming the pot against the epidemic will not be of any help, but will only harm the interests of the people of their own country and undermine international cooperation against epidemics.

Ambassador Wu pointed out that the virus has no national boundaries and no race, and is a common challenge facing all mankind. No country can be alone. The international community needs solidarity and cooperation more than ever. China is willing to uphold the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind and continue to work with countries around the world, including New Zealand, to strengthen anti-epidemic cooperation and jointly safeguard global public health security.

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Mon, 09 Nov 2020 04:05:39 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur End of Day Digest for October

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 KUALA LUMPUR 938
Date/DTG: Nov 09, 2020 / 090404Z NOV 20
From: AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: AEMR, AMGT, AMTC, CASC, EAIR, ECON, EFIN, EFIS, EINV, ELAB, ETRD, ETTT, OEXC, PARM, PGOV, PHUM, PREF, PREL, SCUL, SENV, SHLH, SMIG, TINT, TPHY, KCWT, KCYB, KGHG, KHIV, KJUS, KNTR, KPAO, KSTC, KTIP, KWMN, AU, CN, IN, JP, MY, SG, APECO
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur End of Day Digest for October

1. ~~(SBU)~~ This product is a digest of Kuala Lumpur "End of Day" updates for the month of October for historical reference. It contains updates that have not been transmitted front channel elsewhere.

China-Related EODs

October 6, 2020

(U) Malaysia Embraces Chinese Digital Silk Road Initiatives: In a digital forum organized by the China Culture & Entertainment Industry Association (CCEA), Malaysia's Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Nancy Shukri, praised China's Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiatives for driving digital technology cooperation between China and Malaysia and harnessing the "ideas and talents" of Malaysia's youth in support of the economy. The forum concluded the September 24-30 "2020 Malaysia-China Year of Culture and Tourism" DSR campaign, which focused on digital culture and tourism, talent development, intellectual property rights, and e-sports. Minister Shukri noted, "Malaysia and China will be working together to bring forth more intellectual properties through industrial collaboration," and highlighted prospects for Chinese firms to influence the development of Malaysia's e-commerce, automation and artificial intelligence sectors.

October 13, 2020

(U) Malaysian Coast Guard Seizes Six Chinese Vessels, Detain Sixty Crew for Illegal

Activity: Malaysia's Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) on October 9 detained six Chinese fishing vessels and 60 Chinese crew members off the southern tip of peninsular Malaysia. Per an MMEA press release, all of the vessels were from Qinhuangdao, China, and were headed to Mauritania. The press release noted that the vessels had anchored in Malaysia's territorial waters to fix damage to some of the boats and the crews are being charged with "anchoring without the approval/notification of the Director of Maritime." Local media quoted a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in Beijing on October 12 – ahead of Chinese FM Wang Yi's October 12-13 visit to Kuala Lumpur - acknowledging that the vessels were in Malaysian waters when detained.

October 21, 2020

(U) Malaysia's Digi Selects China's ZTE to Upgrade Radio Access Network for 5G: One of Malaysia's largest mobile providers, Digi Telecommunications, announced last week it had selected China's ZTE to upgrade its radio access network (RAN) nationwide for 5G. Digi said ZTE's equipment would allow them to support essential 5G technologies, including "Dynamic Spectrum Sharing, multi-carrier aggregation, higher order MIMO, and cellular Internet of Things," and would help them fulfill government plans to provide reliable 4G connectivity nationwide. Digi has been closely involved in the planning stages of Malaysia's 5G deployment and, together with Maxis and Celcom, accounted for 70 percent of mobile subscriptions in 2019.

(U) Malaysian Tech Company Partners with Chinese Firm to Develop Semiconductor Hub in Kedah: Malaysia's IBI Urban Tech announced on October 20 it had signed an agreement with China's Orient Excellent Asset Management Corporation to jointly develop a semiconductor hub in the northwestern state of Kedah. The proposed 6,482-acre facility would sit close to the Kulim Hi-Tech Park and Penang's electrical and electronics (E&E) sector manufacturing hub, with development of the site expected to commence in the second quarter of 2021. IBI Urban Tech is owned by Malaysia's Green Packet, which in August inked a 10-year agreement with China's Tencent Cloud to become the exclusive provider of its cloud services in Malaysia.

October 23, 2020

(U) Malaysian Authorities Release PRC Crew Members of Fishing Boats: A local press outlet cited an anonymous Malaysian security official saying that authorities released the crews of the six Chinese-flagged fishing boats detained on October 9 for allegedly trespassing in Malaysian territorial waters. The security official said the release occurred last week but had not been made public out of consideration of "diplomatic relations." It is unclear whether the six fishing vessels had been released as well.

October 29, 2020

(U) Malaysian Exports Rise in September; China and US among Largest Recipients: According to the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia's exports increased 12.4 percent in September compared to August, mostly in sectors such as electronics, rubber products, and scientific equipment. Exports to the United States have expanded 22.1 percent this year to USD 2.5 billion, making it Malaysia's third largest export market. Exports to China, the top export destination, sustained double-digit growth for the fourth consecutive month, causing a yearly increase of 41.9 percent growth to USD 3.8 billion.

October 30, 2020

(U) Malaysian Economists Optimistic about China's Five-Year Plan: While details of China's Five-Year plan have not been announced, RHB Investment Bank economist Peck Boon Soon said that the plan's growth focus could potentially benefit Malaysia's electrical and electronics sector, one of Malaysia's top exports to China. Mazlina Abdul Rahman, an economist for the Malaysian Industrial Development Finance (MIDF) Amanah Investment Bank, noted that technological prowess and supply chain security are highly anticipated in the Five-year plan, which will make China "reliant on imports which could possibly benefit Malaysia's semiconductor industry." Such comments come at a time where Malaysia recorded an annual export growth to China of 41.9 percent.

Aviation

October 7, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia Makes Headway on FAA Audit:** The Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) briefed U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials on progress towards resolving safety and operational deficiencies identified under a regular audit in 2019. CAAM inspector staffing levels will be about 40 percent higher by November 1, and CAAM has instituted additional training, data, and maintenance regimes. CAAM CEO Captain Chester Voo said he will send the Malaysia-cleared draft Memorandum of Agreement for technical assistance with the FAA today.

Energy

October 27, 2020

(U) Malaysian Offshore Oil and Gas Support Ship Sinks Off Sarawak: Malaysian-flagged Dayang Topaz sank this morning after it collided with a Petronas-owned oil platform near the coast of northern Sarawak resulting in two fatalities and one injury. Media reported the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), the Royal Malaysia Airforce, and other entities rescued 184 crew members. MMEA Director General Admiral Zubil shared his assessment that severe weather cut one of the ship's anchors, causing a loss of control.

Environment/Health

October 8, 2020

(U) Concerns Over End of USAID PREDICT Program in Malaysia: In a call with Embassy ESTH officers October 7, the Director of EcoHealth Alliance, the implementing partner for USAID's PREDICT program, voiced his concern about Malaysia's future capacity to detect and test for pandemic disease in Malaysian Borneo, given Malaysia's designation as a lower-priority country under USAID's new Strategies to Prevent Spillover (STOP Spillover). He highlighted the lack of certified laboratories capable of testing human samples in Malaysian Borneo, which he said would be essential in the future to detect and prevent pandemic diseases of zoonotic origin similar to COVID-19. Note: Malaysian Borneo is the source of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases, which has set multiple new daily record of cases in the past week. End Note.

October 22, 2020

(U) Public Awareness of Environmental Challenges Highlights Opportunities for More ESTH Engagement: According to the recently published International Science Survey by the Pew Research Center, seven in ten Malaysians place more priority on environmental protection, even if it comes at the expense of economic growth and the creation of job opportunities. In the same study, respondents claim that the top five environmental issues for them are: pollution of water bodies, waste management, air pollution, deforestation, and extinction of species. Growing population awareness of environmental challenges presents Post with opportunities to further engage in environment, science, technology, and health diplomacy with civil society and the Malaysian government.

Investment/Finance/Trade

October 5, 2020

(U) Ambassador Briefs USABC Virtual Trade Mission: As the opening speaker for the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) Virtual Trade Mission, the Ambassador thanked member companies for their cooperation, support, and corporate social responsibility efforts during the COVID-19 outbreak. She discussed business climate challenges in Malaysia and opportunities for investment and exports, especially in high-tech, e-commerce, and digital economy. Participants raised concerns about the difficulties of investing given current travel restrictions and the political uncertainty.

October 8, 2020

(U) Malaysia Airlines Will Not Be Bailed Out: Malaysia Airlines is suffering damaging losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has sparked fears of liquidation by Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), the holding company for the state carrier. Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul expressed on October 8, "We have consistently said that this is a matter that they must resolve. The Ministry of Finance will not inject capital or cash into MAG". Failure to restructure Malaysia Airlines' debt could jeopardize 13,000 jobs, hamper the country's air connectivity and cause further economic losses for the country.

October 9, 2020

(U) Prime Minister Says Lockdowns Will Not Disrupt Port Klang: Following a special meeting of Malaysia's National Security Council, Prime Minister Muhyiddin announced October 8 that the Conditional Movement Control Order that went into force on October 9 in the Klang district of Selangor State would not disrupt economic activity at Port Klang, Malaysia's busiest port. International Trade and Industry Minister Azmin Ali told local press on October 8 that all economic sectors in Klang, including Port Klang, will be permitted to operate as usual under strict standard operating procedures (SOPs) for preventing COVID-19. As police established roadblocks and closed thoroughfares in Klang, GOM officials threatened to shut down businesses that do not comply with strict COVID SOPs.

October 21, 2020

(U) Western Digital to Sell Malaysian Hard Disk Drive Factory to Taiwanese Company: Taiwan's Wistron Corporation confirmed on October 20 it would acquire Western Digital's hard disk drive (HDD) factory in the Sungei Way Free Trade Zone of Petaling Jaya for RM 120 million (USD 29 million). Local media reported Wistron planned to repurpose the

factory to manufacture Internet of Things (IoT) products, and expected to commence operations in the first half of 2021. California-based Western Digital still operates manufacturing facilities in Johor, Penang, and Sarawak.

(U) Malaysia Invests in Tech Despite Pandemic: On the October 20th virtual conference “Propelling a Resilient Economy,” Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Jamaluddin promoted Malaysia’s National Technology and Innovation Sandbox, an initiative under the government’s Short-Term Economic Recovery Plan. He expressed that such program will invest approximately USD25 million to fast-track the development and commercialization of advanced technology in sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, education, and tourism. This initiative also seeks to reduce regulations for automation and drone manufacturing, yet program implementation details and prospects for success remain unclear.

Malaysia’s Domestic Politics

October 8, 2020

(U) Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim Says Will Meet the King October 13: Anwar’s office released a press statement on October 8 saying he would present the King “documentation of the strong and convincing majority” supporting Anwar’s claim to the prime minister’s seat. In September Anwar had stated he was scheduled to meet the King on the same matter on September 22 but the King was unexpectedly admitted to the hospital. The king was discharged on October 2.

October 14, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **No Imminent Leadership Change After Anwar Meets the King:** Anwar Ibrahim said he had enough support from MPs to form a new government, but did not provide a list of MPs supporting his bid during an October 13 meeting with the King, according to a Palace press release. At a press conference after the meeting, Anwar claimed he had support from more than 120 MPs, well above the 112 MPs needed to form a majority coalition. These unspecified MPs have not pledged their support publicly, however. The King began meeting with heads of the major political parties to confirm their support for PM Muhyiddin or Anwar, but then postponed them due to new COVID-19- related restrictions that started October 14.

October 19, 2020

(U) Parliament Limiting Media Access for Upcoming Sitting: Parliament’s Corporate Communications Department announced late last week that it will limit access to only traditional media organizations to protect against the spread of COVID-19 during the upcoming sitting of parliament starting November 2. Embattled Prime Minister Muhyiddin’s government will present the federal budget on November 6. Some Members of Parliament and activists argue the decree is aimed at limiting access by independent online outlets and suppressing potentially negative media coverage of the debate and possible no-confidence motions against the Muhyiddin administration.

October 21, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **UMNO President Reaffirms Support for PM Muhyiddin:** United Malays National Organization (UMNO) President Zahid Hamidi on October 21 called for a “political ceasefire”

in the country and reaffirmed his party's support for PM Muhyiddin's Perikatan Nasional (PN) ruling coalition. UMNO is the largest party in the PN coalition, and Zahid said all leaders and component parties in the coalition should increase cooperation to maintain stability as the country faces economic challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. The UMNO President's announcement complicates opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's claim that he has a large enough majority to form a new government, as he would likely need support from UMNO parliamentarians.

~~(SBU)~~ **Two Largest Malay-Muslim Political Parties Formalize Partnership:** The United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) announced on October 20 that they will formalize their cooperation by legally registering their joint political entity Muafakat Nasional (MN), or the "National Concord". UMNO and PAS formed MN in September 2019 to "unite the Muslim community." UMNO and PAS's announcement to legally register MN did not mention PM Muhyiddin's Bersatu party, their partner in the ruling Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition, even though Bersatu agreed to join MN in August, 2020.

October 27, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Ruling Coalition Component Parties Reaffirm Support for PM Muhyiddin:** The United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), and the Alliance of Sarawak Parties (GPS) reaffirmed their support and "undivided loyalty" for PM Muhyiddin's leadership in the ruling Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition. These statements of support, on the heels of the King rejecting the PM's proposal to declare a state of emergency (see 20 Kuala Lumpur 910), could help solidify the ruling coalition and its razor-thin majority going into the November 2 sitting of the Parliament and the 2021 national budget deliberations scheduled for November 6.

October 30, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Parliament Convenes on November 2:** The main agenda item for the ruling Perikatan Nasional (PN) government is the 2021 federal budget, which will be announced on November 6. Opposition parliamentarians told PolOffs the debate on the budget will take three weeks, with a vote expected on November 23. The PN government currently has a three-seat majority in the 222-seat Parliament. A defeat on the budget could be viewed as a vote of no confidence for PM Muhyiddin. Malaysia's King released a statement urging members of parliament to put aside differences, prioritize the welfare of the people and support the 2021 federal budget. The budget will also garner significant attention because Malaysia's USD 72 billion spending on stimulus measures during the COVID-19 pandemic drove the 2020 fiscal deficit to six percent nearly double its original forecast.

~~(SBU)~~ **Cabinet Reshuffle Unlikely, UMNO Supports Current Cabinet:** The United Malays National Organization (UMNO) Supreme Council announced its decision to continue supporting Prime Minister Muhyiddin's current cabinet, following an emergency meeting held on October 29. Before the meeting, analysts speculated UMNO would demand new cabinet appointments, including deputy prime minister and other key positions, in return for UMNO's continued support for PM Muhyiddin's government. The Supreme Council also announced that a general election should only be held once the COVID-19 pandemic is under control.

Malaysia's Foreign Relations

October 8, 2020

(U) North Korean Loses Appeal on Extradition to United States: Accused DPRK money-lauderer Mun Chol Myong lost his appeal of a Malaysian court ruling approving his extradition to the United States. A High Court judge ruled today that Mun failed to show sufficient evidence to support his claim that the case against him was “politically motivated.” Mun’s lawyer said he will appeal the decision to the appellate court.

October 9, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **U.S., Australian, and Japanese Cooperation with Malaysia:** DCM Newbill, the Australian DCM, and Japanese DCM on October 8 reviewed areas of cooperation discussed during the October 6 quadrilateral foreign ministerial meeting in Tokyo. They assessed that maritime security, quality infrastructure, and countering disinformation, among other areas highlighted during the quadrilateral meeting, are areas for further cooperation in Malaysia. The Indian DCM was also invited but unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

October 22, 2020

(U) FM Hishammuddin Calls for Focused International Action on COVID-19: FM Hishammuddin issued the call after decrying the threat to peace, stability, and prosperity caused by the global pandemic in a virtual meeting with fellow ASEAN foreign ministers and the United Nations. FM Hishammuddin called for the UN to help tackle smuggling and trafficking in persons along with international burden sharing to deal with the Rohingya crisis.

October 29, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Foreign Minister Issues Statement on Anti-Islamic “Inflammatory Rhetoric,” Summons French Envoy:** Responding to recent remarks by French President Macron, FM Hishammuddin tweeted “Malaysia condemns any rhetoric that seeks to defame the religion of Islam.” Media reported he expressed concern over the “growing hostility, hate speech, and slander against Islam,” during an October 28 meeting with the French Charge d’Affaires. After the meeting, the French Embassy released a statement saying President Macron “did not target the Muslim community in France but only an ideology – radical Islamism.” The French Embassy statement received over 1,500 online comments, with many questioning France’s support for freedom of speech without regard to religious sensitives. Hishammuddin's tweet was shared 1,500 times. Conversely, some contacts assessed that Hishammuddin’s response was an effort by the ruling coalition to burnish its Islamic credentials with the Malay Muslim population and Middle East countries.

Military – Security

October 2, 2020

(U) EXBS, Japan's METI, and Singapore Customs Host Over 500 in Joint Industry Outreach: From September 29 to October 1, EXBS, in collaboration with DOE; BIS; Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI); and Singapore Customs hosted the first virtual Joint Industry Outreach (JIO). Global experts presented the latest changes and challenges in strategic trade controls (STC), including updates from the European and Asia-

Pacific regulatory regimes; new or existing changes to U.S. sanctions and the Commerce Entity List specifically concerning DPRK, Iran, Russia, China, Syria, Cuba, etc.; and evolving STC challenges in emerging technology including intangible technology transfer. More than 520 attendees participated representing 14 countries (Austria, Australia, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States.)

October 6, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Police Investigating “Hard-Line“ Islamic Group Hizbut Tahrir in Malaysia**

(HTM): The investigation into the Malaysia faction of Hizbut Tahrir follows decrees by Religious Affairs Departments in Johor, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Sabah banning HTM’s activities. Director of the Malaysia Research Institute on Strategic Studies, Mizan Aslam, assessed that Malaysian officials were concerned about HTM’s ideology, which supports the creation of an Islamic Caliphate and does not recognize democratic systems or the authority of the state. Police described HTM as “extremist,” noting its teachings were in conflict with the Sunni denomination practiced in Malaysia. No HTM members have been arrested, but police authorities stated plans to continue monitoring the organization. The umbrella organization, Hizbut Tahrir, is also banned in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Jordan.

October 22, 2020

(U) EXBS Works with Malaysia and Revives the APEC STAR Conference: From October 20-21, U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, through the EXBS Program, supported the first hybrid (in-person and virtual) APEC Secure Trade in the APEC Region (STAR) Conference. The conference was last held in 2016 during Peru’s APEC host year. This year’s conference supported the APEC Counterterrorism Working Group Strategic Plan (2018-2022) to address the secure trade and terrorism challenges in the region, with an overall theme of Counterterrorism and Secure Trade : Balancing Trade Security and Trade Facilitation. Discussions topics included the international obligation to prevent terrorism, export controls challenges and benefits, and secure trade strategy and trade facilitation. Participants included more than 190 representatives from across the APEC region’s 21 member economies, including policymakers, industry representatives, NGOs, and public and private institutions.

Refugees – Human Rights – Labor/Trafficking in Persons

October 1, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **FGV Holdings “Disappointed” WRO Issued, Vows to Clear Its Name:** In response to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Withhold Release Order (WRO) on FGV Holdings palm oil products, the company issued a press release stating it had taken several steps to correct forced labor allegations. FGV said its “efforts are well documented and available in the public domain.” According to the statement, FGV’s legal counsel has been in touch with CBP and submitted evidence of compliance. Minister of Human Resources M. Saravanan said his ministry is “concerned” and that he had dispatched his labor officers on the ground to investigate FGV. Both the Ministry of Plantation Industries and the Royal Malaysian Police’s Anti-Trafficking unit made inquiries to embassy staff who referred them to CBP.

October 2, 2020

(U) Malaysian Media Reaction to CBP FGV WRO: Malaysian media responded to CBP's

FGV WRO announcement with concern and skepticism, with many outlets claiming the U.S. action will impact FGV's earnings, the Malaysian economy and reputation, and the lives of more than 110,000 FGV farmers. Edge Markets, an economic focused media outlet, reported that amidst rumors that imports from a second plantation (Sime Darby) might be banned "plantation stocks were among Bursa Malaysia's top losers in the morning trading session." Utusan Malaysia (major Malay language daily) reported that Universiti Putra Malaysia Associate Prof. Dr. Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff theorized that the action was an effort to reduce the United States trade deficit with Malaysia. However, conservative leaning Malay language outlet Berita Harian quoted Malaysian Industrial Development Finance research analyst Khoo Zhen Ye as saying the WRO would not have a far-reaching impact on FGV or the Malaysian economy because U.S. and Canadian markets only account for about five percent of FGV revenue.

October 5, 2020

(U) Rubber Glove Company Set to Pay Migrant Workers \$12 Million in Remediation: On October 1 Kossan Rubber Industries Bhd announced it will pay an estimated RM50 million (USD12 million) in remediation fees to its 4,000 migrant workers within 18-months. Kossan founder Tan Sri Lim Kuang Sia told media the company, one of Malaysia's largest glove exporters, has done its best to comply with international labor standards, stating "we must get things right." Labor rights activist Andy Hall welcomed the company's decision, which he described in a statement as "clearly taken reluctantly out of fear at the barrel of U.S. Custom and Border Protection's gun."

October 8, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Top Glove Announces Plan to Reimburse Workers:** The repayment plan will include RM 136 million (USD 32.75 million) in reimbursements to workers over a ten month period for the recruiting fees the workers had paid to gain employment. The new plan is a significant increase over the RM 4.4 million (USD 1.06 million) repayment scheme previously announced but below the USD 40 to 60 million estimates some industry competitors had predicted. CBP issued a Withhold Release Order on Top Glove products arriving at U.S. ports on July 15 because of forced labor concerns.

October 15, 2020

(U) Concerns Grow About Return of Anti-Migrant Sentiment Under New CMCO: Human rights organizations expressed concern that a new two-week Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) for Kuala Lumpur and other areas in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases will spark a rise in anti-migrant sentiment and could be used to justify raids and deportations by authorities. Already vulnerable, migrants may also face increased economic pressure as the informal jobs sector deals with restrictions on worker movement between districts. A report by Reuters highlighted dozens of Facebook pages, including some run by current and former security officials, that contained discriminatory language, particularly against Rohingya communities in Malaysia.

October 16, 2020

(U) Rubber Glove Association Responds to Forced Labor Listing: The president of the Malaysian Rubber Glove Manufacturers Association (MARGMA) said the industry abides by Malaysian law and international standards and does not condone forced labor, in response to the U.S. Department of Labor listing Malaysian rubber gloves as produced by forced labor. He

highlighted MARGMA's recent efforts on social compliance and industry leaders committing to pay back over RM 250 million (USD 60 million) in workers' debts. As a measure to reduce employing workers with debt bondage, he also said rubber glove companies would immediately repatriate workers that had debt they had not previously disclosed, a practice criticized by labor activists.

Religious Affairs

October 30, 2020

(U) Malaysia's First Catholic Cardinal Dies at 88: Malaysia's first Roman Catholic cardinal Anthony Soter Fernandez passed away on October 28 following a bout with cancer. Pope Francis appointed the 88-year-old Fernandez as cardinal in November, 2016. He had served as Archbishop Emeritus of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur for 20 years. Fernandez was an outspoken critic of detentions without trial and had declared the now-repealed Internal Security Act as "immoral" after the unprecedented mass arrest without trial of civil rights leaders, opposition lawmakers, and church workers to ostensibly prevent race riots in 1987 under Mahathir's first term as Prime Minister. His death leaves the College of Cardinals with 218 members.

Media – Public Affairs – Programs

October 1, 2020

(U) Op-ed on RBG Legacy: Three Malaysian outlets, the New Straits Times, Utusan, and Sinchew, published an op-ed by Ambassador Lakhdhir on Ruth Bader Ginsberg's legacy of championing gender equality. In the piece, Ambassador Lakhdhir paralleled RBG's influence in the United States with numerous female judges in Malaysia and highlighted the Embassy's work promoting women's equality in Malaysia. The op-ed ran in English, Malay and Chinese.

October 6, 2020

(U) Countering Disinformation TechCamp: Ambassador Lakhdhir, the Chief Minister of Penang, and the Chairman of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission opened an Embassy KL sponsored regional TechCamp focused on combatting disinformation. Over the next two weeks, participants from Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand will engage with international experts on topics ranging from data visualization and digital storytelling to online fact-checking and media monitoring of social issues. Participating journalists come from prominent media outlets such as Malaysia's Malaysiakini, Philippines' ABS-CBN, Cambodia's Phnom Penh Post and Indonesia's tvOne. Also attending are government and community influencers representing organizations such as the Philippines' Presidential Communication Office and Undi 18 – a Malaysian youth movement that seeks to empower youth on voter education and democracy. Following the program, participants will apply for seed-funding to conduct projects focused around credible reporting and media literacy education.

October 8, 2020

(U) Embassy Program Supports Women Entrepreneurs in Sabah: PAS KL hosted a virtual speaker program yesterday with the Sabah Women Entrepreneurs and Professionals Association (SWEPA). The panel discussion, which featured ECA speaker Samira Cook-Gaines, President

of Purposeful World Strategies, focused on small business issues during the time of COVID-19. Over the coming year, PAS KL is working with SWEPA on an entrepreneurship program that will focus on strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem in strategic regions of the country as part of the Embassy's Wanita Empowered campaign.

October 16, 2020

(U) Civic Engagement Discussion with YSEALI Alumni: PAS Kuala Lumpur hosted a virtual talk targeting recent YSEALI Bootcamp Alumni who are currently planning their own civic engagement campaigns in their communities. The program featured ECA-sponsored speaker Emily Young, the Executive Director of the University of San Diego's Nonprofit and Philanthropic Institute, who focused on how to play a more active civic role and how to work across ethnic, religious, and generational lines to promote greater civic participation in society. The speaker also discussed how to address generational and gender gaps within civic engagement and foster a communal impact mindset.

October 28, 2020

(U) Weekly Russia-Malaysia Column in Major Print Newspaper: Utusan Malaysia, a Malay-language paper, published an editorial penned by the Russian Center for Science and Culture Kuala Lumpur (RCSC) discussing Islam in Russia and the "strong ties" between Russia and Malaysia as evidenced by the "Russian Mosque" in Terengganu (modeled after the St. Basil Cathedral in Moscow). The piece is part of a month-old weekly column highlighting Russian-Malaysian relations as a regular, unpaid op-ed. Other editorials have covered the history of Russian-Malaysian relations as well as discussed Putin's "achievements." The Russian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur otherwise has very limited media or public engagement. PAS KL will track to see if this is the start of a new trend.

October 30, 2020

(U) Mahathir Tweet on France Goes Viral, Blocked on Twitter: Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed released a series of 16 tweets on Oct 29 about recent events in France. Twitter blocked one of the tweets, which said Muslims "have a right to kill" French citizens, for glorifying violence. Mahathir's tweets each received thousands of likes, retweets, and comments. International reaction on social media has been swift and divisive. Ambassador Lakhdir issued the following statement on Embassy social media, "I extend my deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to the people of France in the wake of the terrible attacks in Nice and Paris. I strongly disagree with Tun Dr. Mahathir's recent statement. Freedom of expression is a right, calling for violence is not."

(U) Fulbright Recipient Recognized for International Teaching Honor: Samuel Isaiah, a 2019 Fulbright Malaysian Graduate Study Program recipient, was recognized this week as a top 10 finalist for the Global Teacher Prize 2020. Samuel is currently pursuing his Master's Degree at State University of NY at Albany through the Fulbright Program. A congratulatory Facebook post on the Embassy's social media accounts had over 175K impressions in one day. The post highlighted Samuel's success and the Fulbright exchange program.

Telecommunications/Cybersecurity

October 1, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **IT Sector Representatives Brief DCM:** Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Newbill hosted representatives from the IT sector to discuss the operating environment, investment climate, and export opportunities in Malaysia. Representatives shared that the COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions on immigration, including for short-term technical staff, negatively impact operations, especially for companies with manufacturing lines in the country. They highlighted concerns about ongoing non-tariff barriers, including opaque data localization rules, which continue to create challenges for U.S. technology firms looking at expanding activities in Malaysia and noted that increased technology use in business created new opportunities in the IT and electronics sectors.

October 13, 2020

(U) Malaysia Launches 2020-2024 Cybersecurity Strategy: Malaysia's National Cybersecurity Agency (NACSA) launched on October 12 the 2020-2024 Malaysia National Cyber Security Strategy (MCSS), which will guide Malaysia's national cybersecurity management and development for the next five years. Communications and Multimedia Minister Saifuddin Abdullah, speaking on behalf of Prime Minister Muhyiddin, said the MCSS would encompass five pillars: (1) strengthening governance through the formation of the Malaysian Cyber Security Committee, to be chaired by Senior Minister Ismail Sabri; (2) enforcing existing laws and regulations with respect to cyber crimes; (3) working with industry to enhance cybersecurity research capabilities; (4) developing local expertise and promoting cybersecurity awareness and (5) improving international cooperation to combat cyber threats. The government has said it will allocate USD 433 million to advance the MCSS' 12 strategies, 35 action plans, and 113 programs.

October 20, 2020

(U) Malaysian Government Partners with Microsoft for Digital Start-Up

Initiative: Microsoft Malaysia, in partnership with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) and the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), announced on October 19 the expansion of its "Highway to a 100 Unicorns" initiative to Malaysia. The initiative, which is open to Malaysian registrants until October 31, aims to "strengthen the nation's startup ecosystem" by offering "mentoring, technology, and access to enterprise clients." The central feature of the initiative is the Emerge X competition, through which Microsoft will award selected start-ups with free GitHub and Azure credits and enrollment in business and technology workshops. MDEC CEO Surina Shukri praised Microsoft in a press release for its commitment to Malaysian entrepreneurs, while MaGIC CEO Dzuleira Abu Bakar said the initiative presented "an exciting opportunity" for global cooperation.

October 26, 2020

~~(SBU)~~ **Ambassador Highlights U.S. Digitalization Technologies at AMCHAM's Penang**

Dialogue: Ambassador Lakhdhir headlined with Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow at the American-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce's annual "Penang Dialogue," bringing together U.S. industry leaders to discuss Malaysia's role in "Resetting the Global Supply Chain." The Ambassador highlighted the corporate social responsibility contributions of U.S. firms in COVID response in Malaysia and invited participants to join the Indo-Pacific Business Forum later this week to learn more about that and opportunities to partner with the United States. The Chief Minister acknowledged the need to focus on talent development and retention, as well as coordinate regulatory formation, implementation, and enforcement across the GOM. In a

private "VIP" discussion with industry leaders, the Chief Minister and the Ambassador discussed the impact of political uncertainty on the business climate, the impact of COVID-19 on supply chains globally, and new business plans to respond to the changing conditions.

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Signature: LAKHDIR

Drafted By: KUALA LUMPUR: (b)(6)

Cleared By: POL (b)(6)

POL
ECON: (b)(6)

PD: (b)(6)

Approved By: KUALA LUMPUR: (b)(6)

Released By: KUALA LUMPUR:

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From: SMART Archive
Sent: Tue, 18 Aug 2020 02:08:45 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Malaysia: Health Experts Overview Zoonotic Risks and Assess Government Detection Capabilities #ECON #TBIO #KNCV #SHLH #CDC #SENV #KCW T #MY

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MRN: 20 KUALA LUMPUR 700
Date/DTG: Aug 18, 2020 / 180207Z AUG 20
From: AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, TBIO, KNCV, SHLH, CDC, SENV, KCWT, MY
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 20 Kuala Lumpur 686
B) 20 Kuala Lumpur 744
C) 20 Kuala Lumpur 340
Subject: Malaysia: Health Experts Overview Zoonotic Risks and Assess Government Detection Capabilities

1. ~~(SBU)~~ Summary and Comment. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, Malaysian government health officials, wildlife agencies, and NGOs are increasingly concerned about the potential of zoonotic diseases emerging within Malaysia. The country's role as the origin of the 1998 Nipah virus, as well as ongoing local zoonotic disease outbreaks, has left a lasting impact on health officials' approach to public health policies. Health experts are also concerned that land-use change, human-animal contact, and wildlife trafficking exacerbate risks of zoonotic diseases making the leap from animals to humans. While Malaysia does not host large scale wet markets serving exotic wildlife products, small scale wet markets proliferate in rural and indigenous communities, especially in Malaysian Borneo. Recognizing this threat, Malaysia's federal and Sabah and Sarawak state governments have or are developing labs specialized for zoonotic disease and wildlife forensics. USG support through USAID's PREDICT program was instrumental in the establishment of these labs, paving the way for Malaysia's early COVID-19 responses (Tab 1). Post continues to highlight our public health and research assistance, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, which resonates positively with Malaysian audiences. **End Summary.**

As Forests Recede, So Does the Boundary Between Wildlife and Its Viruses

2. ~~(SBU)~~ EcoHealth Alliance, an NGO focused on infectious disease, shared their concern that

land-use change, such as deforestation for new developments and plantation agriculture, are increasing human-animal contact and thus opportunities for zoonotic disease transmission. As Malaysians push further into the forests, wildlife like rodents and monkeys move into urbanized zones. While Peninsular Malaysia experiences more human-wildlife contact due to its population density, Malaysian Borneo is the site of ongoing deforestation. Sabah's push to double its non-palm oil agricultural production and construction of the pan-Borneo highway will raise the level of human-wildlife contact further. Leptospirosis, which has led to hundreds of deaths over the past few years, is spread from animal urine in water bodies and has been exacerbated by increased flooding and urban development. The state of Sarawak has also reported 22 rabies cases and 21 deaths since 2019, with the origin of the outbreak believed to be feral dogs from West Kalimantan.

3. ~~(SBU)~~ Animal husbandry also poses major zoonotic risk. The 1998 Nipah outbreak in Malaysia was contracted by humans through consumption of local pigs, though researchers now believe the virus originated in native flying foxes. Health experts explain that Malaysia's experience with Nipah and SARS deeply shaped the Ministry of Health's (MOH) awareness of and preparations for future outbreaks. Wildlife officials in Sarawak shared that some rural communities are farming exotic wildlife for consumption, which faces little regulation. Swiftlet nest collection, driven by high demand from consumers in China, has become a lucrative industry for locals in Malaysian Borneo and poses a significant risk through potential contacts with bats at collection sites.

Wet Markets Not A Serious Concern in Peninsular Malaysia....

4. ~~(SBU)~~ Both NGOs and wildlife officials believe wet markets are not a serious concern in Peninsular Malaysia, since live animals and exotic wildlife products are not openly present in Malaysia's large urban areas. Wet markets that sell agricultural produce, seafood, and livestock products are regulated by local councils and state health departments. TRAFFIC, a counter wildlife trafficking NGO, has identified restaurants that sell wildlife goods illegally, but enforcement operations remain rare, as goods are marketed privately and sold online. Malaysia's indigenous populations have hunting rights but are prohibited from selling bushmeat, although prohibitions are difficult to enforce. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN) Director General privately acknowledged that bushmeat trading in the villages along the central forest spine of Peninsular Malaysia occurs, but uncovering local networks is difficult.

....But Proliferate in Rural Borneo

5. ~~(SBU)~~ Wet markets present a more significant concern in rural Malaysian Borneo, especially in the state of Sarawak. Officials from the Sabah Wildlife Department (SWD) and Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) engage in weekly undercover raids of wet markets and frequently find protected species for sale as pets or for consumption. SFC officers shared that indigenous communities consume flying foxes, a high-risk species for zoonotic disease, believing that its meat resolves asthmatic symptoms. One health expert noted that indigenous people may have developed immunities to zoonotic diseases that could affect those outside the communities. Online sales are expanding the local trade outside of physical wet markets, exacerbated by

shortcomings in current legislation which provides limited online enforcement authorities for wildlife officials (REF A). The outreach director of the SFC commented that public outreach to indigenous communities, which make up a substantial portion of the population, would be effective in dissuading them from consuming exotic wildlife, but it was challenging given the diversity of their language and remoteness of some settlements. The government is also reluctant to impose severe penalties on indigenous people due to their relatively low income and their traditional interactions with wildlife. The SFC official noted that COVID-19 is leading to greater local concerns for wet markets among locals and several mayors had shut down local markets due to fears of local zoonotic risks.

Wildlife Trafficking Risks Spreading Viruses Beyond Malaysia's Borders

6. ~~(SBU)~~ The PERHILITAN Director General noted with displeasure that some Chinese scientists and media had identified Malaysian (Sunda) pangolins as a potential origin of COVID-19. PERHILITAN's wildlife forensics lab, which has received previous support from USG programs and is considered among the best in the region (REF B), performed subsequent studies on seized Malaysian pangolin parts and found no signs of COVID-19 strains within their genetic material. Health experts and wildlife officials, however, raise concerns that smuggled Malaysian pangolins do risk spreading zoonotic diseases beyond Malaysia's borders.

EcoHealth Alliance shared that TRACE, a wildlife forensics NGO, is working with the PERHILITAN lab to identify markers for Malaysian (Sunda) pangolins to determine if they originate in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, or Sarawak, to aid wildlife crime investigations as well as zoonotic disease tracing. In addition to pangolins, other trafficked wildlife that have tested positive for potential viruses include civets, certain rodent species, primates, and to a lesser extent some reptile species; the latter two are linked to the exotic pet trade. Tests on other species, such as clouded leopards, are also ongoing within Malaysia to determine additional potential vectors. Exotic eating houses catering to tourists in Sabah often serve pangolins and other high-risk species, and some NGOs expect demand for exotic eating to increase as China and Vietnam crackdown on exotic wildlife products, and Sabah reopens to foreign tourists (REFs C and D). Wildlife contacts note that law enforcement's growing wildlife forensics units and labs, which is utilized in wildlife trafficking investigations, is also bolstering zoonotic disease detection capabilities.

Federal and State Government Labs Bolstering Detection Capabilities

7. ~~(SBU)~~ The Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN), which is directly under the purview of the federal government, cooperates closely with the Malaysian Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Veterinary Department, as well as several universities and EcoHealth Alliance, in its zoonotic detection research. All of Malaysia's labs are certified in accordance with the Biosafety in Microbiology and Biomedical Laboratories, the United States standard used by the CDC and NIH. NGO contacts note that PERHILITAN's wildlife lab ranks as one of the best in the SouthEast Asia (REF B). One contact working with the lab shared that although the Ministry hopes to raise the lab to a Level 3 Biosafety Lab (BSL-3), the current priority should be funding for repairs to maintain its Level 2 Biosafety Lab (BSL-2) certification and assure it can maintain its real-time wildlife forensics and zoonotic detection

capabilities. He noted privately that although the government invests significant funding for new equipment, the government does not provide sufficient funding for maintenance leading to frequent breakdowns of critical equipment. MOH's Sungai Buloh medical center already hosts a BSL-3 lab which conducts diagnostics for zoonotic diseases in human subjects and coordinates closely with PERHILITAN's lab in detected viral transmissions between wildlife and humans.

8. ~~(SBU)~~ EcoHealth Alliance expressed concern that Sabah and Sarawak have to file formal requests, which face lower priority than Peninsular samples and additional bureaucratic hurdles, to have wildlife products tested in the PERHILITAN lab, leading to delays in results and biosafety risks while samples are in transit. As part of a partnership with EcoHealth Alliance and with the support of PREDICT, the SWD has founded the Sabah Wildlife Health, Genetic and Forensic Laboratory (WHGFL) which has received a BSL-2 certification seven years running, although it lacks some of the capabilities of its Peninsular counterpart. While this lab faced risks to its physical structural integrity due to soil erosion at its location, the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is stabilizing its structural foundation. The University of Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is also launching a Borneo Medical Health and Research Center, which will include its own BSL-2 lab to complement the WHGFL, which, when complete, will increase the state's testing and diagnostic capacity, allowing for research, and providing training facilities to nurture local talent. Through a Sabah-based Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) program, the lab is bolstering its wildlife forensics capabilities, receiving training for its forensic unit, and developing connections with international experts. The lab also tests wildlife products from northern Sarawak, the federal territory of Labuan, and Brunei, due to its relative proximity. UMS also hosts a BSL-3 lab which has a similar relationship with the Sabah wildlife labs as the Sungai Buloh facility in Peninsular Malaysia.

9. ~~(SBU)~~ The University of Malaysia Sarawak, in cooperation with the SFC, are in the process of developing a lab for Sarawak, though it is at least two years from completion. Sarawak is seeking international partners in the development of the lab and has begun studies on local bat populations near the state capital of Kuching.

USG PREDICT Program Bolsters Zoonotic Detection and Prepared Officials for COVID-19

10. ~~(SBU)~~ USAID's PREDICT program facilitated over 80,000 tests in Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia, identifying 76 new viruses and 29 known viruses, including 11 of zoonotic origin. Sixty-six of the new viruses were identified in Sabah and 11 in Peninsular Malaysia; testing has not yet taken place in Sarawak. Eight new coronaviruses were detected in Malaysian bats and rats, with three genetically related to SARS CoV, and three viruses were detected within 15 human subjects. 627 health care experts from government, universities, and NGOs have participated in PREDICT trainings, boosting skills such as detection, surveillance, and SOP development.

11. ~~(SBU)~~ Alumni of PREDICT programs have played a critical role in Malaysia's COVID-19 outbreak response. A health contact privately shared that the first three cases of COVID-19 in Malaysia were diagnosed by health officials using the PREDICT Quan protocol. Once the World Health Organization (WHO) released the COVID-19 Berlin qPCR protocol for testings, the PREDICT implementors arranged for the protocol's distribution for the federal National Public Health Lab, University of Malaysia Sarawak, and the Kota Kinabalu Public Health Lab

for testing. Additionally, due to long turnaround times for tests processed in Peninsular Malaysia during the early stages of the outbreak, local labs in Sabah informally utilized its own testing protocols developed under PREDICT for initial screenings (REF D).

Public Messaging

12. (U) Since April, the Public Affairs section has continued to promote U.S.-Malaysia cooperation on combating zoonotic diseases. In the early days of the pandemic, the Chinese Embassy expended significant effort to showcase healthcare diplomacy outreach; however, post-sponsored focus group discussions with Malaysians of all backgrounds reflected that Malaysians still hold the Chinese responsible for the pandemic and distrust Chinese messaging. Post deployed targeted social media content to showcase how the United States has been a long-time healthcare partner, including infographics describing over \$2 million in U.S.-funded COVID-19 relief efforts and USAID implementer EcoHealth Alliance’s work with the USAID PREDICT program. The Ambassador highlighted the USG’s support for PREDICT as part of her widely-read (in three languages) July 4 op-ed that underscored the longstanding strength of our bilateral cooperation in this incredibly important area. Additionally, in April, the Public Diplomacy section hosted a Virtual Talk with Dr. Peter Daszak, the president of EcoHealth Alliance highlighting longstanding U.S. health and humanitarian assistance in Malaysia.

&Reference: 20 Kuala Lumpur 686

&Reference: 20 Kuala Lumpur 744

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ASIAN PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION *ROUTINE*; ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*

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Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Mon, 20 Jul 2020 00:52:39 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: Malaysia: National Vaccine Plan Develops, Singapore Border Reopening Plan Unveiled (COVID-19 Update 41)

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~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 KUALA LUMPUR 620
Date/DTG: Jul 20, 2020 / 200050Z JUL 20
From: AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, AMGT, PREL, KNCV, AEMR, CASC, PGOV, ELAB, KTIP, PREF, AMED, MY
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 20 Kuala Lumpur 534
B) 20 Kuala Lumpur 386
C) 20 MDA 28406
D) 20 Kuala Lumpur 458
Subject: Malaysia: National Vaccine Plan Develops, Singapore Border Reopening Plan Unveiled (COVID-19 Update 41)

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary:** The Malaysian government is developing a vaccine development roadmap to prepare for the domestic distribution of a potential vaccine after it is developed, with two local pharmaceutical companies identified for bottling. Malaysia and Singapore jointly announced that the first stage of their phased border reopening will begin on August 10. Opposition political leaders are raising some skepticism of government COVID-19 testing data and a recent cluster has brought entry requirements under scrutiny after a man tested positive the day after testing negative upon arrival. **End Summary**

Malaysia Eyes a Vaccine As Cases Remain Low and Controlled

2. ~~(SBU)~~ Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Khairy Jamaluddin announced a six-month roadmap for a national vaccine development is being developed. Currently, Malaysia only has the capacity to develop vaccines for animals, not humans, and the Minister explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had underscored the strategic need for Malaysia to build human vaccine development and manufacturing capacity. Minister Khairy has requested assistance from the USG previously for vaccine development (REF A), and MOSTI is working with the Chinese

government and pharmaceutical companies to conduct human trials of vaccines in Malaysia (REF B). The Prime Minister announced the government has identified two local pharmaceutical companies, Duopharma Biotech Bhd and Pharmaniagas, to “fill and finish” for the COVID-19 vaccine distribution once it is made available. Minister Khairy stated “We will buy from vaccine makers from abroad, we will buy in bulk, bring it back to Malaysia, and ... bottle it.” The Minister claims both companies already possess sufficient facilities and have agreed to prioritize COVID-19 vaccines once they are made available. Pharmaniaga and Duopharma’s stock rose 20.4 percent and 12.2 percent respectively following this announcement.

Rollout of Singapore Travel Announced

3. (U) On July 14, Malaysia’s Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and Singapore FM Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan said both the Malaysian and Singaporean government agreed to open the borders from August 10 onward for “essential business and official travelers” through the Reciprocal Green Lane (RGL) and Periodic Commuting Arrangement (PCA). All eligible travelers must take a COVID-19 swab test and submit an itinerary, and citizens of either nation with long-term immigration passes can enter. (REF C). Under this first phase of the RGL opening, only 400 Malaysians and Singaporeans are permitted a week, only a fraction of the 100,000 average daily crossing pre-MCO. Transit permits for daily commuters will only be open come the third phase, and citizens of both countries will be permitted for any purpose in the fourth. Non-Malaysian or Singaporean citizens, including permanent residents, are not yet included in this planned phased arrangement.

4. (U) Defense Minister Sabri stated to media that foreign nationals residing in Malaysia are not permitted to depart the country for tourism or other non-essential travel under the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO), or they will not be permitted to return for “some time”. The Minister noted that Malaysian nationals are still restricted from traveling overseas, except for those who need to further their studies. (Note: This does not apply to USG personnel on official travel. All returning and incoming officers will follow the procedures outlined by the MFA for safe return to Malaysia. End Note.) In a separate media statement, the Ministry of Defense announced that the 2021 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA ‘21) scheduled to take place from March 16-20, 2021, has been cancelled over concerns about COVID-19 travel and economic constraints.

Consular and Community Updates

5. ~~(SBU)~~ Post has successfully welcomed the DCM and his family as well as an incoming DAO officer and expects the return of the Ambassador next week.

6. (U) The International School of Kuala Lumpur announced to families that it had received permission to reopen in-person on August 4 (start of the scheduled school year), complying to social distancing and other safety measures. ISKL has confirmed online learning will be available for students unable to come to campus, and promised additional detail on SOPs and measures for students returning from abroad next week.

7. ~~(SBU)~~ The Consular Section is liaising with Malaysian Immigration to support one U.S. citizen aboard the Holland America Line vessel Noordam who wishes to disembark and return to the

United States. While the crew were granted permission to disembark and transit Malaysia, crew family members, including this U.S. citizen, were denied. Consular successfully obtained Immigration clearance earlier this week for three U.S. citizen family members in a similar situation onboard the Royal Caribbean vessel Celebrity Solstice.

8. ~~(SBU)~~ In accordance with Consular Affairs guidance and Diplomacy Strong standards, the NIV and IV Units are preparing for a gradual resumption of limited visa services. The NIV Unit is prioritizing student visas and emergency cases, while the IV Unit is prioritizing immediate family member visas and medical professionals.

Refugees and Foreign Workers

9. ~~(SBU)~~ On July 11, Defense Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob announced that a total of 19,000 undocumented migrants have been deported since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, including 8,575 migrants from Indonesia, 2,584 from Bangladesh, and 1,890 from Myanmar. Following a noticeable decline in the labor force in the construction sector, which employs the second highest number of foreign workers, the Malaysian Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) allocated a fiscal injection worth RM 70 million (USD 16.4 million) to retrain and upskill local labor and youth in high impact fields for careers in the construction industry. The economic stimulus package is in response to the Government of Malaysia's initiative to enhance the use of technology while reducing the country's dependence on foreign labor.

10. ~~(SBU)~~ More than 100 UNHCR cardholding refugees are at risk of losing their rented homes amid an ongoing immigration operation to weed out undocumented migrants by focusing on punitive action against landlords. According to UNHCR reports, the Deputy Minister of Federal Territories has taken stricter measures against migrants near the Selayang Wholesale Market in Kuala Lumpur, a popular site for migrants, including issuing warning letters preventing foreigners from entering the wholesale market, owning hawking business licenses, or being employed by traders. A refugee rights advocate warned that such tactics by the authorities will contribute to rising anti-refugee sentiments, as "according to the law, refugees are treated the same as undocumented migrants."

New "Cluster" of Three Cases Raises Concerns, GOM Defends Testing and Screening Procedures

11. (U) The emergence of a new "Novgorod cluster", which while limited to only three reported cases, has raised concerns of entry procedures. A Malaysian national returning from Russia tested negative on arrival, but later tested positive after experiencing symptoms the next day. Three other family members who picked up the man have also since tested positive, and screening remains ongoing. The Health Ministry is advising Malaysians to limit the number of people picking up overseas arrivals and minimize contact with members of household while in quarantine. The MOH Director General has stated the MOH is continually testing the rapid test kits, imported from Korea, for accuracy. The MOH shared that out of 17,152 international arrivals screened at Kuala Lumpur's International Airport since the start of the RMCO, only 72 have tested positive and were sent to hospital for treatment. Reacting to this cluster, as well as police investigations of international arrivals who did not present themselves for tests at completion of their self-home quarantine, the Director General stated the government is

arrivals from high risk countries to quarantine at government facilities.

12. ~~(SBU)~~ At a session of parliament following the news of the cluster, political opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim, as well several other Members of Parliament including the former Deputy Health Minister, publicly questioned the accuracy of Malaysia's stated COVID-19 testing results, claiming Malaysia's testing rates are much lower than other countries and citing reports of false negative results from antigen rapid test kits deployed at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Anwar noted that Malaysia currently runs 0.18 tests per 1,000 population, compared to Australia's 1.98 and Canada's 1.03, which have similar sized populations.

13. ~~(SBU)~~ **Comment.** Malaysia's test rates are significantly higher than neighboring countries such as Indonesia and Thailand. Prime Minister Muhyiddin and the Perikatan Nasional (PN) government, which took power in March 2020, have received broad public support for their outbreak response measures, strengthening the legitimacy of the new government as it faces continued criticism from the political opposition for the means in which it took power. **End Comment.**

14. ~~(SBU)~~ The MOH Director General has previously cited the low positivity rate, especially among local tests and random sampling of at risk populations (REF D) as evidence the country's numbers accurately reflect the state of the outbreak within Malaysia. Public health experts note that Malaysia has not seen a surge in hospitalizations with respiratory syndromes, indicating widespread community spread is not likely occurring undetected. Concerns remain that there are undetected cases amongst Malaysia's sizable foreign worker population, which has expressed reluctance to voluntarily undergo testing following recent immigration crackdowns.

USAID Donated Testing Supplies Arrive in Sabah

15. ~~(SBU)~~ USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), in cooperation with EcoHealth Alliance and ESTHOffs, delivered donated testing equipment for a regional reference laboratory in Kota Kinabalu. The RDMA-supported Infectious Disease Detection and Surveillance (IDDS) team based at FHI360's Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) procured a range of laboratory commodities including RT-PCR kits, extraction reagent kits, PCR tubes and strips, and filter tips for about 10,000 tests to enhance the testing capacity of the laboratory. IDDS has confirmed delivery of the requested supplies to the laboratory, which will play a significant role in the state of Sabah's ability to restart its tourism-dependent economy.



~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Signature: THOMPSON

Drafted By: KUALA LUMPUR (b)(6)
Cleared By: ECON: (b)(6)
 MGT: (b)(6)
 CONS: (b)(6)
 ECON: (b)(6)
 POL: (b)(6)
 POL: (b)(6)
Approved By: EXEC/LEG: (b)(6)
Released By: KUALA LUMPUR (b)(6)

Info: ASEAN JAKARTA, USMISSION ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE;
 (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6)
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 (b)(6) ROUTINE; EAP-ANP-Australia-DL ROUTINE; EAP-CM-Unit Chiefs-
 DL ROUTINE; EAP-K-ROK-UNIT-DL ROUTINE; EAP-MTS-Office-
 DL ROUTINE; EAP-P-Office-DL ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE;
 (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6)

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 (Shenyang) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE;
 (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6)
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 (Beijing) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE;
 (b)(6) (Beijing) ROUTINE; To, (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6)
 (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; (b)(6) ROUTINE; ASIAN
 PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule:

Archive Copy

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~~SBU~~

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Thu, 20 Feb 2020 06:13:49 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: FW: Guangzhou COVID-19 SitRep, February 20
Attachments: South China Flight status- 20 FEB- info cut off 0915.xlsx

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~~-SBU~~

MRN: 20 FTR 7828
Date/DTG: Feb 20, 2020 / 200613Z FEB 20
From: (b)(6) (Guangzhou)
To: SMART Archive
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: AMGT, APER, ASEC, AEMR, SHLH, PGOV, PREL, CASC, ECON, EAIR, SOCI, KPAO, PROP
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: FW: Guangzhou COVID-19 SitRep, February 20

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: (b)(6) (Guangzhou) (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2020 1:34 PM
To: BEIJING 2020 Coronavirus <BEIJING2020Coronavirus@state.gov>; Beijing 2020 Coronavirus MGT Team <Beijing2020CoronavirusMGTTeam@usdos.onmicrosoft.com>
Cc: Guangzhou EAC <GuangzhouEAC@state.gov>; (b)(6) Hong Kong 2020 Coronavirus <HongKong2020Coronavirus@state.gov>
Subject: Guangzhou COVID-19 SitRep, February 20

Italicized text: Provides state of play – likely not worthy of Mission China SitRep

Normal text: Provides new information

Latest Update

~~(SBU)~~ Guangdong will make all-out efforts to promote economic stability and development, first by pushing forward the safe resumption of production, Party Secretary Li Xi said during a February 19 party meeting, echoing Governor Ma Xingrui's February 15 and 16 calls for the same. In this spirit, more Guangdong municipalities announced companies could resume operations without special approval, including Zhongshan, Jiangmen, and several more districts in Shenzhen and Zhuhai. In an early sign that Guangdong cities may be moving to ease monitoring of inter-city travel, Zhongshan announced February 19 it would remove 41 checkpoints on inter-city highways and roads, and Shenzhen announced loosened procedures for frequent travelers. In Guangxi, Jinjing town (Mashan county, Nanning municipality) has closed

all inbound and outbound vehicular traffic effective February 18 following a confirmed cluster of nine COVID-19 cases. To date, Post has not noticed easing of residential closed management procedures in South China.

Development in Testing and Treatment

(U) Zhong Nanshan, the Guangzhou Institute of Respiratory Health, and Shenzhen-based Evergrande property developer has joined forces with Harvard Medical School (HMS) to establish the "Sino-U.S. New Coronavirus Scientific Research Expert Group," according to press reporting. The group held its second video conference February 19 to exchange and discuss cooperation on rapid detection and diagnosis, clinical treatment, drug screening, and vaccine development, according to separate reporting. HMS participants included George Q. Daley, MD, PhD, Dean; David Golan, MD, PhD, Dean for Research Operations and Global Programs; Arlene Sharpe, MD, PhD, Director of the Department of Immunology (HMS) and Co-Director of the Evergrande Center for Immunologic Diseases at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital; Bruce Walker, Director of the Ragon Institute of Mass General, MIT, and Harvard. Evergrande committed 800 million RMB (118 million USD) over five years to support the research. Over the long-term, the group will focus on virus traceability, infection and pathogenic mechanisms, rapid immunological detection methods, scientific research cooperation in ten major fields including genomic mutation and evolution.

(U) Guangdong provincial health authorities said February 19 at the daily press conference that about 89 percent of patients taking traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) medications have either recovered or exhibited improvements in their condition. The application of TCM in Hubei by a team of 312 Guangdong TCM medical professionals has shown that - combined with Western medicine - TCM shortens the treatment process, increases recovery rates, and reduces mortality. In Guangdong, TCM treatment combined with Western medicine has been applied to 93 percent of COVID-19 patients to help lower fevers and relieve fatigue. TCM treatment is reportedly most effective in early and mid-stages of infection.

Third Country Response Efforts and International Travel

(U) As of 09:15 a.m. local, approximately 290 international flights in the next 7 days continue to operate on approximately 73 direct routes from South China to foreign destinations, including to the United States, United Kingdom, Singapore, Russia, Malaysia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, Australia, France, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In addition to Guangzhou (40), this includes routes from Shenzhen (10), Haikou (1), Fuzhou (7), Xiamen (13), and Nanning (2). Guilin currently has no international routes operating. South China's major cities also maintain flight connections or train routes to major Chinese cities for onward international travel. See attached spreadsheet for details. As of February 18, some 25 daily "transit" ferries from seven Pearl River Delta ports direct to the Hong Kong airport for ticketed passengers continue to operate. Ticketed passengers are "in transit" and are exempt from Hong Kong mandatory quarantine for Mainland arrivals. Ferries from Shenzhen and Dongguan to Macau were suspended as of February 19, although land borders remain open.

Economic and Supply Chain Impact

(U) Heavily indebted private-sector conglomerate HNA Group will be taken over by the Hainan

provincial government and its assets divided, according to international press reports. The Hainan-based HNA operates Hainan Airlines – which has 13 China-U.S. routes, all of which were suspended amid COVID-19. HNA Group has been shedding foreign assets since 2018.

(U) State-owned Guangzhou Auto Corp. (GAC) announced it would begin mass production of facemasks on February 20 using five production lines. GAC said the masks would be distributed by Guangzhou authorities to medical personnel and public transit workers. The firm on February 12 had said it wanted 12 production lines running by February 22, with eventual goal of 30.

(U) Hainan Governor Shen Xiaoming visited Qionghai city February 18, home of the Bo'ao Forum for Asia, to observe epidemic-control efforts on the site, according to press reports. The Forum, which annually convenes senior Chinese officials and high-level foreign attendees, is currently scheduled for March 24-27.

Support for U.S. Citizens

~~(SBU)~~ *There are no known COVID-19 cases of American citizens in Guangdong, Fujian, Guangxi, or Hainan. ACS is in contact with one Amcit in mandatory centralized quarantine in a Shenzhen.*

Post Operations

~~(SBU)~~ *Post Medical Provider returned to Guangzhou February 19 with medical equipment that can test for a variety of respiratory viruses and bacteria. While it cannot test for COVID-19, it can test for 22 other respiratory pathogens and give medical personnel a better picture of any illnesses that occur at Post.*

~~(SBU)~~ *There was no change to post security posture. Essential LE staff reported to work February 20, with others on administrative leave. All LE staff are still required to file daily reports to Diplomatic Services Bureau on their health and work status.*

~~(SBU)~~ *Supermarkets, public transportation, hospital services, bank, and ride hailing services in Guangzhou are all operating without indications of significant disruption. Staple goods are continuously stocked, including fresh produce, meat, and eggs. ConGenOff has observed inconsistent inventory of some dry goods and frozen prepared foods. Residential water delivery is currently not available for standard delivery, but Post has made arrangements with the vendor to ensure availability. Dine-in restaurant service has been suspended throughout the city since February 13. Delivery and take-out options are abundant. DPO disruptions have been resolved through alternate routing.*

Media/Social Media Roundup: Guangzhou Edition

~~(SBU)~~ *South China PAS media contacts posted satirical comments on the government's response to COVID-19. The manager of an online media outlet in Guangzhou noted that with the increasing closed management policies of cities and provinces in the COVID-19 campaign, there has also been an uptick in the blocking of WeChat groups, Weibo posts, and other websites. A leader of a WeChat public account in Guangzhou posted commentary that the*

government should gain respect and authority to govern by not completely squashing rumors. A Guangzhou-based blogger had written about a January order given by the Director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology to the staff in January to not discuss COVID-19. This post has since been blocked on social media.

(U) Guangzhou netizens shared comments made by Wang Chen, the Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Engineering who said that society should prepare for long-term co-existence with COVID-19 after this year, with commenters expressing concern. They also discussed reports that nine individuals are being investigated by the Guangzhou police for obstructing the COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control measures, including deliberate concealment of symptoms and refusal to quarantine, with some netizens commenting that these individuals should be severely punished for their actions.

Drafted: (b)(6)

Approved: (b)(6)

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Drafted By:	GUANGZHOU: (b)(6)	(Guangzhou)
Released By:	GUANGZHOU: (b)(6)	(Guangzhou)
Attachments:	South China Flight status- 20 FEB- info cut off 0915.xlsx	

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Mon, 17 Feb 2020 05:39:22 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: FW: Guangzhou COVID-19 SitRep, February 17

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~

MRN: 20 FTR 7218
Date/DTG: Feb 17, 2020 / 170539Z FEB 20
From: (b)(6) (Guangzhou)
To: SMART Archive
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: AMGT, APER, AMED, AEMR, ASEC, CASC, PREL, PGOV, SHLH, ECON, EINT, EAIR, KPAO, CN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: FW: Guangzhou COVID-19 SitRep, February 17

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

From: (b)(6) (Guangzhou) (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2020 1:32 PM
To: BEIJING 2020 Coronavirus <BEIJING2020Coronavirus@state.gov>; Beijing 2020 Coronavirus MGT Team <Beijing2020CoronavirusMGTTeam@usdos.onmicrosoft.com>
Cc: Guangzhou EAC <GuangzhouEAC@state.gov>; (b)(6); Hong Kong 2020 Coronavirus <HongKong2020Coronavirus@state.gov>
Subject: Guangzhou COVID-19 SitRep, February 17

Latest Update

~~(SBU)~~ Guangdong Governor Ma Xingrui chaired two meetings February 15-16 on resuming business operations and infrastructure projects, stressing the province would avoid excessive restrictions to commerce and support foreign enterprises in resuming production, according to [press reports](#). Governor Ma's intervention may signal an attempt to nudge local governments throughout the province to loosen control on business resumption.

Development in Testing and Treatment

~~(SBU)~~ ConGen staff observed no significant change at seven hospitals designated by Guangdong health authorities to receive COVID-19 patients during February 17 windshield observations. There were no lines at fever clinic entrances. Outpatient entrances at two hospitals had short lines similar to ones observed February 14. The atmosphere was calm at all facilities, and security posture was normal.

(U) The Guangzhou notary office will modify its facemask distribution system effective February 15, according to press. Rather than a daily lottery system that citizens had criticized as unfair, the city will move to a 10-day cycle in which registered residents can enter their names to win 10 masks once every 10 days.

(U) As of 12:00 p.m. local, cumulative case incidence stood at: Guangdong - 1322 (339 in Guangzhou), Fujian - 290, Guangxi - 238, Hainan - 162 (Deaths: Guangdong – 4, Hainan – 4, Guangxi -2)

(U) The Guangdong Provincial Public Security Department (GDPSD) said in a February 16 press conference the GDPSD had enforced strong measures against wildlife markets and will investigate and severely punish violators. The GDPSD asked the public to report any illegal trade of wildlife or wildlife products.

Third Country Response Efforts and International Travel

(U) As of February 14, international flights continue to operate on approximately 64 direct routes from South China to foreign destinations. Some 24 daily “transit” ferries from 7 Pearl River Delta ports direct to the Hong Kong airport for ticketed passengers continue to operate. Ticketed passengers are “in transit” and are exempt from Hong Kong mandatory quarantine for Mainland arrivals.

Economic and Supply Chain Impact

~~(SBU)~~ Shenzhen-based real estate developer Evergrande said February 16 it would discount residential sales prices across China by 25 percent through February 29, with the discount continuing at lower rates after that. The company announced additional discounts for buyers paying more cash up front, and – perhaps in a sign that people are hesitant to move into full buildings amid outbreak fears – discounts for units in buildings with high ownership rates.

~~(SBU)~~ South China agricultural activity resumed haltingly during the week of February 10-14, contacts told ConGen staff. In the tree nut sector, many migrant workers had yet to return and processing operations had not resumed, but firms were preparing sales plans and readying factories for an early March start. Nut importers transferred most inventory before the holiday, but distributors and retailers were struggling with logistics slowdowns and depressed customer foot traffic.

~~(SBU)~~ Two shiploads of U.S. soybeans were recently imported under China’s tariff exemptions, contacts said. While imports of U.S. sorghum and other feed ingredients such as dried distiller grains had not yet arrived, a 72,000 metric ton shipment of U.S. sorghum ordered in fall 2019 would reach south China in late February and another large delivery in mid-March. State-owned trader COFCO placed two orders for U.S. wheat before the holiday and other wheat importers had returned to work, but contacts said domestic logistic networks were not fully online and only 30 percent of flour mills had resumed processing.

~~(SBU)~~ Livestock feed companies had resumed production, but these players were raising prices given higher input and transport costs, according to contacts. Guangdong hog and broiler (chicken) feed prices had already risen, but demand was strong and February sales up year-on-

year, though contacts warned business could suffer in March and April if the outbreak continued. With pork prices high, contacts said hog production by large players would continue robustly. As for broilers, prices had held low amid stricter regulation of live fowl sales. On February 10 the Guangdong Department of Agriculture began issuing transport certificates to large broiler producers and other agricultural players to help them bypass road blockages and make "last mile" deliveries.

~~(SBU)~~ With the oilseed (soybean, etc.) sector in central and east China impacted by transportation blockages and worker shortages, south China played an increasingly important role in the trade of soymeal (the byproduct of oil extraction, used to feed farm animals), contacts said. Soymeal prices were up by RMB 100 per ton up to RMB2650 per ton.

~~(SBU)~~ Some importers had pivoted to Ukraine for corn and France for barley. Importers also were looking to Russia, which in recent months received greater market access for corn, barley, sugar beet pulp, and rapeseed meal. But while Russian products were price competitive in theory, many relied on containers transported by rail to northern Chinese ports then shipped by vessel to elsewhere in China.

~~(SBU)~~ Industry groups promoting U.S. wheat, pistachios, pecans, cranberries, prunes, raisins, and dairy postponed previously contemplated promotional activities in China until as late as May, contacts said.

(U) As of February 15, Guangzhou travel agencies had cancelled 12,466 domestic and overseas tours involving 214,500 people. At least 59 mid-range and luxury hotels in Guangzhou had suspended business amid low demand, and eight major domestic and international sporting events in the city had been cancelled, according to [press reports](#).

(U) The Guangzhou branch of the People's Bank of China, along with other Guangdong financial authorities, directed banks January 30 to stabilize critical financial infrastructure and provide liquidity to companies, according to press reports. Industrial and Commercial Bank's Guangdong branches, for example, increased cash inventory to meet emergency customer needs, dispatched personnel to monitor ATMs for banknote shortages and equipment failures, supplied ATMs with RMB 3 billion in banknotes via 15,000 operations between January 24 and February 5, and ensured that cash reached hospitals and other key entities. Financial institutions ramped up digital services, with Guangzhou-based Nanyue Bank and others developing new online platforms and directing branches to serve customers remotely.

(U) Guangdong authorities directed banks to help companies resume operations via loan restructuring and extension, non-repayment of some principal and interest, and exemption from interest penalties, according to press reports. The government also directed banks to streamline credit approval. Agricultural Development Bank's Guangdong branch, for example, identified 118 companies to assist, and fast-tracked RMB 355 million to five of them within two days. Construction Bank's Guangdong branch took just one day to issue a RMB 55 million loan for the Sun Yat-sen University-linked Daan Genome Company to produce virus testing kits. For its part, Agricultural Bank's Guangdong branch unveiled 10 support measures for SMEs, including preferential interest rates and faster access to credit.

Support for U.S. Citizens

~~(SBU)~~ There are no known COVID-19 cases of American citizens in Guangdong, Fujian, Guangxi, or Hainan.

Post Operations

~~(SBU)~~ No changes to staffing numbers or post security posture.

~~(SBU)~~ Supermarkets, public transportation, hospital services, bank, and ride hailing services in Guangzhou are all operating without indications of significant disruption. Local grocery stores are continuously stocked, including with fresh produce, meat, and eggs. Residential water delivery is currently not available for standard delivery, but Post has made arrangements with the vendor to ensure availability. Dine-in restaurant service has been suspended throughout the city since February 13. Delivery and take-out options are abundant. DPO disruptions have been resolved through alternate routing. Automobile traffic in the vicinity of the Consulate was noticeably up compared to the prior week, with Guangzhou residents opting to drive in order to avoid public transportation.

Media/Social Media Roundup: Guangzhou Edition

~~(SBU)~~ South China PAS media contacts discussed the rumors circulating on social media that a graduate of the Wuhan Institute of Virology is patient zero of COVID-19, which has been denied by the Institute. Other contacts continued to express concern that people returning to work will exacerbate the spread of the virus throughout offices and residential neighborhoods, following the news of confirmed cases at the IGC (天汇广场) office tower in Zhujiang New Town, Guangzhou.

(U) Guangzhou netizens agreed with comments made by China's Ambassador to the U.S. Cui Tiankai in his interview with NPR, noting that China is prepared to welcome experts from the United States to combat COVID-19. Other topics local netizens discussed: 1) The Director of the Chinese CDC, Gao Fu, might end up being blamed for the central government's missteps in handling the epidemic. Articles about Director Gao Fu have since been censored on social media; and, 2) An announcement by the Chinese Ministry of Justice that the production or sale of illegal medical masks could be punishable by a lifetime prison sentence garnered widespread support from netizens.

Drafted: (b)(6) (with inputs from: ATO, FCS, PTO, PAS, E/P, GSO, ISC staff)

Cleared: (b)(6)

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Drafted By: GUANGZHOU: (b)(6) (Guangzhou)
Released By: GUANGZHOU: (Guangzhou)

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

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~~SBU~~

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Fri, 31 Jan 2020 11:21:11 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: FW: ConGen Guangzhou Update - 11:00 a.m January 28
Attachments: BGI Real-Time Kit for 2019-nCoV.pdf

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~

MRN: 20 FTR 4224
Date/DTG: Jan 31, 2020 / 311121Z JAN 20
From: (b)(6)
To: SMART Archive
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: AMGT, CASC, PREL, APER, SHLH, PGOV, CN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: FW: ConGen Guangzhou Update - 11:00 a.m January 28

From: (b)(6) (Guangzhou) (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2020 11:33 AM
To: BEIJING 2020 Coronavirus <BEIJING2020Coronavirus@state.gov>; Beijing 2020 Coronavirus MGT Team <Beijing2020CoronavirusMGTTeam@usdos.onmicrosoft.com>
Cc: Guangzhou EP Americans <GuangzhouEPAmericans@state.gov>; Guangzhou EAC <GuangzhouEAC@state.gov>
Subject: ConGen Guangzhou Update - 11:00 a.m January 28

Post Posture

- Post held an EAC January 27. No recommended change in posture. Cable forthcoming. The next EAC will be held January 28 at 3:00.
- ConGenOffs are conducting daily assessments of healthcare facilities, public transportation, and food availability.
- Consular circulated a MASCOT Message for clearance following Guangdong CDC's January 26 announcement face masks are mandatory in most public spaces. Pending Embassy Beijing clearance.
- The American International School of Guangzhou (AISG) (b)(6) issued a survey mandated of all schools regarding recent travel and students and faculty and any exposure to visitors from Hubei.
- The Kuwaiti Consulate in Guangzhou told Post January 27 they have drawn down to "minimal diplomatic staff." The UK Consul General reached out from London to inquire about Post posture.

Medical

- Case incidence as of 0800: Guangdong - 188 (including 51 in Guangzhou), Guangxi - 51 , Fujian - 59 , Hainan – 33
- A senior Guangdong provincial public health official confirmed to ESTHOFF January 27 that increases in the number of cases in Guangdong Province are “more and more evident” of human-to-human transmission.
- ESTHOFF conducted windshield assessments of four hospital fever clinics designated by the health authority as 2019-nCoV treatment locations January 27. The conditions were much the same as the previous day--all facilities appeared to have capacity, and there were no lines in the waiting rooms or outside. The atmosphere was calm, and security presence was normal at all facilities. (Caveat: the GZ population is very low due to holiday travel—these conditions may change once people start to return to GZ). [This summary already appears in Mission China January 27 cable; updates from January 28 will be sent later in the day to ESTH]
- Official provincial mouthpieces reported facemask manufacturers in Guangdong were operating during the holiday season to ensure adequate supplies of facemasks.
- BGI, the Shenzhen-based biotechnology company, has a stockpile of 100,000 sets of rapid detection kits for the 2019-nCov they are supplying to Wuhan and other key epidemic areas, after receiving China FDA approvals January 26, according to official media. See attached.
- Medical teams from Hainan (137 people) and Guangxi (145 people) deployed to Wuhan January 27, according to press. The Hainan team included veteran crisis responders.

Food & Water Supplies

- No observable change from last reporting. Stores are open, but fresh produce moves off the shelves quickly. ConGenOff observed some instances of panic shopping January 27 with customers buying multiple carts of groceries.

Transportation

- Public transportation is running normal. At a press conference January 27, Guangdong Vice Governor Zhang Guanjian committed that no cities in Guangdong would be locked down, assuring that land and air transport would remain open. The announcement comes the day after Shantou city briefly announced a lockdown January 26, only to backtrack within hours. The Vice Governor reiterated the call for people to stay home whenever possible. [Note: Guangdong is the most populated province in China with some 113 million people. End Note]
- According to news reports, non-Guangdong plated cars are being stopped at the toll plaza to access Baiyun Guangzhou (CAN) airport for temperature screenings.

American Citizens

- There is an uptick in new emails to Guangzhou ACS related to the virus, although

overall volume remains low. Inquiries including guidance on whether to travel for scheduled ACS appointments, advice on helping non-citizen LPRs or NIV holders in Wuhan, and American Citizens in our consular district requesting general advice or expressing concern. ACS is responding daily and referring people to newest Mission guidance, CDC guidance, and encouraging STEP registration. Post expects that as the Lunar New Year period winds down, there will be an uptick in inquires by February 3.

DATE	NEW EMAIL INQUIRIES	NEW PHONE CALLS
1/25/2020	3	2
1/26/2020	5	0
1/27/2020	13	0

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Drafted By: GUANGZHOU: (b)(6)
Released By: GUANGZHOU:
Attachments: BGI Real-Time Kit for 2019-nCoV.pdf

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

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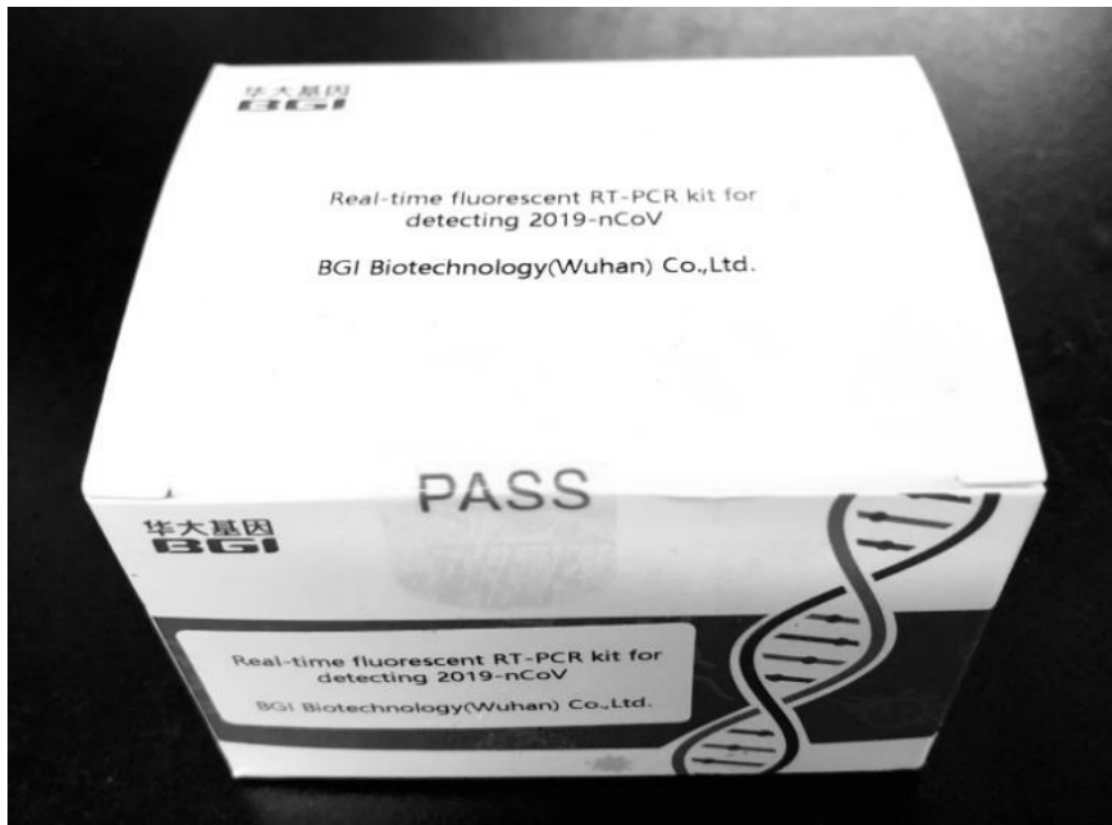
~~SBU~~

[NOT FOR PUBLIC USE]

BGI Real-Time Detecting Kit for 2019-nCoV Ready for International Delivery

January 24, 2020, Shenzhen, China

Summary: BGI is a world-leading genomics company headquartered in Shenzhen, China, and the third-party collaborator authorized by China's National Health Commission in detecting the 2019-nCoV virus in China. BGI has developed a real-time detecting kit for the virus which is ready for international delivery.



As widely reported in the media, a new coronavirus has been identified in China, which has been given the name “2019 novel coronavirus” or “2019-nCoV.” Building on BGI’s history of developing solutions for rapid pathogen detection, BGI has developed a real-time fluorescent RT-PCR kit for detecting the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. The kits have already been issued to many hospitals and disease control centers in China, and ready for international delivery.

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses, circulating mainly among animals, including camels, cats and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect human and then spread between people such as seen with MERS and SARS. 2019-nCoV is a new strain of virus in the family that has not been previously identified in humans.

As of 24:00 on January 22 (GMT+8), a cumulative total of 571 cases with 17 deaths have been reported in China. Cases have also been identified in Chinese Hong Kong (1), Macau (1), Taiwan (1) as well as other countries, including United States (1), Japan (1), Thailand (3), Republic of Korea (1) etc.

Immediately after the occurrence of unexplained pneumonia in Wuhan on December 31, 2019, BGI successfully developed a Real-Time Fluorescent RT-PCR kit for detecting 2019-nCoV, which can issue results in a few hours. It's been proved that the kits can specifically detect 2019-nCov. Kits are then produced immediately for epidemic prevention and control.

BGI has been working with relevant Chinese authorities including the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, through which the kits have been issued to various hospitals and local disease control centers. The National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China announced that BGI is the collaborator for the pathogen detection, the sole third-party institution given that status so far.

The kits are ready for international delivery to assist the global endeavor in fighting the epidemic, a number of which have already been sent to nearby countries. The kits are equipped with English manuals and BGI is prepared to offer online training. Detection are expected to process within local laboratories and issue results in 3 hours.

The development of the 2019-nCoV detection kit builds upon BGI's previous experience developing rapid diagnostic solutions for pathogen detection. For example, in April 2003, BGI successfully sequenced the SARS virus in less than 20 hours, and developed an enzyme immunoassay test kit in 96 hours. In 2011, BGI successfully developed a diagnostic kit for the Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia Coli (EHEC)

epidemic that broke out in Germany. All scientific data and information was made available to the international community, laying an important scientific foundation to control the epidemic.

Contacts:

(b)(6) BGI Genomics

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(b)(6) BGI Group

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About BGI

Founded in 1999, BGI is one of the world's leading life science and genomics organizations. BGI's mission is to use genomics to benefit mankind and to be a leader in the era of life sciences. BGI follows a genomics development model of "research, production and application". With businesses in more than 100 countries and regions around the world, BGI has established cooperation and partnerships with thousands of different organizations across multi-disciplinary research areas including medical health, resource conservation and judicial services. At the same time, BGI provides equipment, technical support and solutions for the needs of national economies and people's livelihoods, such as precision medicine and precision health. BGI is committed to applying its genetic and technological achievements to real world settings in order to realize the dream of trans-omics for a better life.

<https://www.genomics.cn/>

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Fri, 15 May 2020 07:41:49 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: No Going Back: Australians' Trust in the PRC Continues to Decline as Beijing's Trade Threats Become Reality

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 CANBERRA 638
Date/DTG: May 15, 2020 / 150740Z MAY 20
From: AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, KNCV, KPAO, PREL, PROP, OIIP, 2P, 5A, AU, CN, ECON, PREF, KPIN, ALP
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 20 CANBERRA 566
B) 20 CANBERRA 562
C) 20 CANBERRA 544
D) 20 PERTH 52
E) 20 MELBOURNE 54
F) 20 CANBERRA 75
G) 20 CANBERRA 504
H) 20 CANBERRA 512
I) 20 CANBERRA 516
Subject: No Going Back: Australians' Trust in the PRC Continues to Decline as Beijing's Trade Threats Become Reality

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary and comment:** Important segments of Australia's media, opinion leaders, and the public are increasingly losing trust in the People's Republic of China (PRC), as Beijing moves forward with new trade restrictions against Australia in what media is characterizing as a response to Australia's call for an international inquiry into the origins of COVID-19. Opinion leaders from across the political spectrum have highlighted the PRC's "economic coercion," though government officials – including the Foreign, Trade, and Agriculture Ministers – have thus far refused to directly link the trade actions with broader political tensions. While the United States has come under some fire in recent weeks for its management of COVID-19, the criticism has consistently differed from that directed at China – notes of sympathy rather than anger. Opinion is not monolithic, and there are some who counsel that Australia's leadership should have been more circumspect in dealing with Australia's largest trading partner or who rehash Australian sensitivities over being seen as the United States' "deputy

sheriff.” Even here, we detect an important shift in tone. Long gone are the paeans to China as an unquenchable and benign fount of economic prosperity; in its place lies growing anxiety and resentment. **End summary and comment.**

2. (U) This is the latest in a series of Mission Australia cables on how the COVID-19 pandemic is reshaping Australia’s relationship with the PRC (reftels).

Australian Opinion Leaders Clear-Eyed about PRC’s “Economic Coercion”

3. (U) Australian media have overwhelmingly characterized the PRC’s mid-May notification of plans to impose a series of restrictions on Australian barley and beef imports as an act of economic retaliation for the Australian government’s call for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 (refs B and C). While the centrist *Australian Financial Review* (correctly) noted that the barley issue is tied to a longstanding WTO anti-dumping dispute, columnist Jennifer Hewett wrote on May 12, “a range of companies are likely to pay a high cost for Australia’s version of common-sense diplomacy” and that the “payback could hardly have come as a surprise.” In center-right *The Australian*, Greg Sheridan wrote that Beijing’s decision “constitutes naked economic coercion and intimidation,” arguing further that there is “no doubt” that the decision was linked to Canberra’s call for a COVID-19 inquiry. On May 14, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Foreign Affairs Correspondent Stephen Dzedzic called the PRC’s actions a “predictable piece of theatre.” He added that “Beijing has a long track record of economic coercion, and the pattern is strikingly similar across the globe.” A May 14 editorial in *The Australian* argued that the CCP’s playbook is to “disrupt, divide, and distort, at the best of times. But with COVID-19, the CCP has its back to the wall, lashing out instinctively.” 6PR Radio Mornings host and IVLP alum Gareth Parker maintained that “we’re being bullied by China” and that “anyone doing business with China needs to look at other markets urgently.”
4. (U) Comments among Australian foreign affairs opinion leaders echoed the harsh coverage of the PRC across the media spectrum. The Australian National University’s Darren Lim and Victor Ferguson wrote in a May 13 Lowy Institute article that Beijing’s actions follow a “familiar playbook, in which the Chinese government relies on technical regulatory measures to restrict exports, while denying any retaliation is taking place.” In response to the PRC’s denial of a connection between its trade decisions and Australia’s claim for an inquiry, the Perth USAsia Centre’s Jeffrey Wilson noted that “if you threaten to shoot someone, no one will believe when you stand over his body a week later and claim he accidentally fell on a bullet.” Wilson’s comments were widely quoted in Australian media and *The Washington Post*. According to former Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Deputy Secretary Richard Maude, “China is increasingly conducting its diplomacy in a manner it would never accept from others.” Writing for the Asia Society, Maude warned that the PRC seeks to play elements of Australia’s community and society off against each other. “Australia will be in a stronger position if Commonwealth and state governments, together with business, can resist this obvious trap.”



ABC Beijing correspondent Bill Birtles' social media commentary following Beijing's aggressive trade tactics. [Comment: The U.S. exports roughly 100,000 tons of barley each year and could not replace the millions of tons Australia exports to China annually. End Comment.]

Australian Public Increasingly Leary of the PRC

5. (U) Amidst the backdrop of the diplomatic frost between Australia and the PRC (refs B and C), a substantial majority of Australians are less favorable towards the PRC's authoritarian one-party state when thinking about the COVID-19 outbreak, according to a May 14 Lowy Institute [poll](#). Sixty-eight percent of Australians are less favorable towards the PRC's government while 27 percent say they feel about the same. [Note: The same poll also noted that 90 percent of Australians think that the United States handled the COVID-19 outbreak "very badly" or "fairly badly." End Note.]

Media Note More Cautious Approaches of Industry and Government

6. ~~(SBU)~~ Despite the widespread negative media coverage of the PRC's actions, Australian media outlets have noted the more cautious approach taken by industry and government. Industry representatives from the meat, dairy, wine, minerals, and education sectors all gave interviews expressing concern that were widely quoted in the media. Media also quoted state officials, many of whom expressed concern about the deterioration in Australia-PRC relations.
7. ~~(SBU)~~ Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk [told](#) the ABC she was concerned about a "trade war." Victoria Treasurer Tim Pallas was [quoted](#) in center-left *The Age* as saying that vilification of the PRC would be "dangerous, damaging, and irresponsible," even as he publicly backed calls for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19. Deflecting media questions about "subservience" to the PRC, Western Australia Premier

Mark McGowan was widely quoted as saying that “we need good relationships with all of our trading partners.” Local media noted an apparent shift in posture for McGowan, who has previously been quick to champion the PRC as a vital economic partner; *WAToday* characterized his actions as passively handing off the tariff issue to the state agriculture minister. McGowan’s focus on the importance of Japan and South Korea – Australia’s second and fourth largest trading partners – also received media attention, echoing commentary by Jeffrey Wilson, who argued that Western Australia needs to diversify its export markets.

Australian Concern about the United States Lingers in the Background

8. ~~(SBU)~~ While the focus of Australian collective angst has generally centered on the PRC in recent weeks, the United States was brought back into focus as questions mounted on the origins of the virus. News Corp outlets began reporting on April 28 that Five Eyes countries are “looking closely” at whether COVID-19 emerged from a wet market or from a lab at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. News Corp’s *The Daily Telegraph* reported on May 1 on an unofficial, unclassified timeline listing open-source information on the PRC’s cover-up of COVID-19. Secretary Pompeo’s appearance on ABC’s *This Week* on May 3 received significant local media coverage in Australia, as his comments appeared to confirm *The Daily Telegraph*’s report.
9. ~~(SBU)~~ Left-leaning media outlets were quick to criticize the United States and its alleged “interference” in news reporting and commentary. On May 4, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* reported concern among the Australian government that the *The Daily Telegraph*’s insinuation that the virus originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology is hampering Australia’s effort to pursue an independent inquiry. Three days later, both outlets claimed to link the report to the United States, noting that “whether true or not,” the alleged connections underscored divergences in national security circles in Canberra and Washington. *The Daily Telegraph* reported on “emerging fears in the [Australian] intelligence community” of unreliable U.S. intelligence. This sentiment was echoed by certain foreign affairs commentators. ANU Professor and former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans characterized the imbroglio as “another nail in the coffin of U.S. international credibility.” *The Australian*’s Greg Sheridan wrote on May 6 that PM Morrison and his government “are right to go nowhere near these allegations, while at the same time avoiding gratuitous offense” to the United States.

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10. ~~(SBU)~~ Australians’ focus on the United States was relatively quick to shift back to the PRC, however, as Beijing ramped up its aggressive tactics and Secretary Pompeo’s May 6 press conference, which was extensively covered in Australian media, appeared to allay concerns that the United States was heedlessly pushing the virology lab theory. *The Australian* subsequently published a five-part series looking at the history of the outbreak and the PRC’s actions and inactions, concluding that the PRC “deliberately concealed information about the coronavirus, and it has fought for weeks against calls for an inquiry.” Miranda Devine, a columnist for *The Daily Telegraph*, put the focus back on the PRC’s economic coercion, writing that the PRC is “now threatening

economic boycotts against countries like Australia.”

Signature: CULVAHOUSE

Drafted By:
Cleared By:

PAS: (b)(6)

PD: [Redacted]

PD: [Redacted]

POL-ECON: [Redacted]

EXEC/LEG: [Redacted]

PD: [Redacted]

POL: [Redacted]

POL: [Redacted]

ECON: [Redacted]

ECON: [Redacted]

EXEC: [Redacted]

CANBERRA: [Redacted]

(b)(6)

Approved By:
Released By:
Info:

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SYDNEY, AMCONSUL *ROUTINE*; CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
~~SBU~~

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Tue, 10 Mar 2020 09:11:43 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: PRC COVID-19 Response Shows Progress and Cracks in China's Emergency Preparedness

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 BEIJING 476
Date/DTG: Mar 10, 2020 / 100909Z MAR 20
From: AMEMBASSY BEIJING
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: SHLH, HHS, CDC, NIH, PGOV, CN, SENV, PREL, AMED, AID, KHIV, KFLU, KFPC, KGHI, KHLS, KSCA, KTBT
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: PRC COVID-19 Response Shows Progress and Cracks in China's Emergency Preparedness

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **SUMMARY AND COMMENT.** Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, PRC health officials expressed growing confidence in China's public health emergency response capabilities following the 2003 SARS outbreak. Health officials regularly praised China's enhanced ability to detect, monitor, and report on infectious diseases. As part of the 2018 Chinese government restructure, the PRC aimed to streamline its public health emergency response to epidemics. Various international and domestic assessments, however, indicated that the PRC still had gaps in its ability to effectively coordinate emergency responses to pandemics and other biological threats. China's response to COVID-19 further confirmed shortcomings in Chinese public health emergency preparedness and raised concerns about the PRC's ability to prevent future outbreaks. **END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.**

Significant Progress in China's Epidemic Emergency Response Since SARS

2. (U) Prior to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, the Chinese government initiated a series of self-reflective changes to its emergency response structure for preventing and controlling infectious diseases. After garnering widespread criticism for its response to the 2003 SARS epidemic, which resulted in 5,327 cases and 348 deaths in China, PRC leadership publicly recognized shortcomings in its management of the outbreak. The PRC subsequently accelerated reforms to improve its infectious disease prevention system and emergency response to epidemics, resulting in significant restructuring and a massive build-up in its capabilities.

3. (U) Within a decade, international experts praised China for its revamped pandemic emergency response system that demonstrated enhanced risk communication, infection prevention, control measures, and clinical management, particularly in its response to the 2013 H7N9 epidemic. From 2003 to 2012, Chinese government annual public health funding increased more than 10-fold from \$1.28 billion to \$17.46 billion RMB. In those 10 years, the PRC established a nationwide infectious disease surveillance system with over 3,000 outposts, including Chinese Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) branches, disease prevention and control laboratories, and public health supervision institutions throughout the country. The PRC's 2006 "National Contingency Plan for Public Health Emergency Response" created an emergency management system that streamlined information flow, promoted interagency coordination, and required timely public notification.

Centralizing and Reforming Management of Public Health Emergencies

4. (U) After the government reshuffle in 2018, the National Health Commission (NHC) was reorganized and granted clear authority over the formulation of infectious disease control and prevention policy to optimize China's response to public health emergencies. Chinese government ministries and provincial authorities were expected to implement NHC guidance at the local and regional level. In contrast, the newly created Ministry of Emergency Management (MEM) assumed responsibility for emergency responses to natural disasters, but also took over workplace safety and certain health functions that slightly overlapped with NHC's responsibilities. According to the "National Contingency Plan for Public Health Emergency Response," however, NHC retained responsibility to lead and coordinate interagency responses to epidemics.

Assessing Epidemic Emergency Preparedness with Chinese Characteristics

5. ~~(SBU)~~ In 2019, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security released its Global Health Security Index (GHSI) assessing global emergency preparedness for catastrophic biological risks. The GHSI classified China as "more prepared" for a pandemic than most nations, ranking it 51 out of 195 countries evaluated for health security capabilities. China scored slightly below average in its ability to prevent the emergence of zoonotic diseases. [**Note:** Most Chinese and international experts agree that COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease. The source remains unknown, but some data have suggested bats or pangolins as the possible origin and intermediary. **End Note.**] However, China received the lowest possible score in the following public health areas that hold major implications for its emergency response during the current COVID-19 outbreak:

- Conducting emergency preparedness and response exercises.
- Linking public health and security authorities for rapid response.
- Overseeing dual-use research involving dangerous pathogens with pandemic potential.

- Carrying out a WHO Joint External Evaluation (JEE) to highlight critical gaps in capacity preparedness. [**Note:** China has not participated in a JEE, a process which enables countries to determine their gaps and weaknesses in preparing for and responding to infectious disease risks. More than 100 countries, including the United States, have voluntarily completed a JEE. The JEE is a key aspect of implementing the International Health Regulations (IHR), an agreement signed by all WHO member states, including China, to work together for global health security. The United States has encouraged China to conduct a JEE since 2005 but China has only participated as a technical observer to other country JEEs and has never agreed to conduct their own. **End note.**]

6. ~~(SBU)~~ During discussions with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services officials in 2018, NHC Director General of the Health Emergency Response Office Xu Shuqiang admitted that China needed to improve its diagnostic and treatment capabilities. Yet, he confidently asserted that China centered its emergency response system on joint prevention and control mechanisms, web-based reporting, rapid testing, human capacity, and strong interagency coordination. Publishing their own assessment, however, NHC-affiliated medical experts from the Chinese Preventive Medicine Association (CPMA) complained that China had excessively focused on improving medical treatment while failing to develop preventative measures against infectious diseases.

Seeking Truth from Facts: China's COVID-19 Response

7. ~~(SBU)~~ China received mixed reviews over its initial emergency response to COVID-19, ranging from praise from the World Health Organization (WHO) for its “unprecedented” containment efforts, to domestic criticism over delayed risk communication. In reference to the Wuhan lockdown, a senior official at an international humanitarian aid organization told ESTHOff that the PRC initially reacted like it had never dealt with an epidemic, suggesting the primary reasons for its stunted response were a lack of clarity on areas of responsibility following the government reshuffle, and central government intervention. The aid official said the PRC decision to seal off Wuhan on January 23 came too late as 5 million people had already left the city for the Chinese New Year. [**Note:** Other health officials noted that the containment measures helped slow transmission. Prominent Chinese epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan publicly claimed the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases would have tripled if China had not implemented these severe control measures. The WHO stated that PRC containment measures were “buying the world time” to handle the outbreak. **End Note.**]

8. ~~(SBU)~~ At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, Chinese government ministries appeared slightly confused about their emergency response functions, noted the aid official. NHC and MEM were still adjusting to their new responsibilities, the official observed, and fell short in emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Although the PRC was actively seeking supplies and aid needed to respond to the outbreak, the aid organization said that the NGOs the government designated to receive international donations appeared to be completely oblivious to international standards for making such requests. The aid organization worked closely with the designated NGOs to develop standards for requesting contributions, such as including the type,

quantity, and expected expiration dates for medicine and other emergency supplies. The aid official was surprised to find NHC initially scrambling to create clear standard operating procedures for their emergency response. NHC also rushed in setting nationwide standards for personal protective equipment (PPE), medicine, medical equipment, and consumable goods, lamented the aid official.

The Chinese Interagency Art of War against COVID-19

9. ~~(SBU)~~ Despite early challenges, the PRC quickly overcame logistical hurdles and provided a rapid emergency response ensuring that food, donations, and national resources were directed to Wuhan, assessed the senior aid official. After preliminary central government involvement, the NHC clearly took the lead for the emergency response while MEM and other relevant government ministries played a supporting role. MEM Division Director Yin Mingyu, overseeing the Department of International Cooperation and Rescue, told ESTHoff MEM was providing logistical and personnel assistance to transport suspected COVID-19 patients to hospitals. MEM personnel travelled nationwide with NHC-led joint committees to assist factories and companies resume normal operations while providing instruction on health and prevention measures, elaborated Yin.

10. ~~(SBU)~~ The senior aid official spoke highly of the Chinese government's overall interagency coordination and implementation of NHC guidance. She recounted that in a briefing to provide information on China's COVID-19 interagency working group, Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs (DITEA) Deputy Director General Liang Hong had claimed that the PRC General Administration of Customs (GAC) facilitated emergency shipment of goods far quicker than other countries that had experienced far less dire circumstances. In the briefing, Liang said that MOFCOM's DITEA worked with GAC to handle international assistance while ensuring compliance with international standards and controlling market prices. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) managed medical stockpiles with support from provincial, regional, and municipal officials. [Note: Post received a request from the MEM on February 15 requesting basic information on how the U.S. managed its emergency stockpile system, indicating that the PRC's mechanism had not been fully developed or implemented. End Note.] MIIT also reviewed the quality and compliance of special medicine and emergency equipment from bilateral and multilateral partners.

Criticism of PRC Health Security Capabilities and Transparency

11. ~~(SBU)~~ During its COVID-19 response, China faced internal criticism over its limited health capabilities and international disapproval for its lack of transparency. In a Chinese medical journal, CPMA Chinese medical experts pointed out that China CDC suffered from ongoing staff shortages of infectious disease experts and an outdated IT system for reporting on infectious diseases before the COVID-19 outbreak. ESTH health contacts said that low salaries for China CDC infectious disease experts resulted in retention problems. Dr. Zhong Nanshan publicly expressed dissatisfaction, saying China CDC should be elevated beyond merely a technical branch of NHC. Most Chinese observers agreed that China CDC needed more resources and authority to conduct infectious disease surveillance, report on public health

concerns, and engage in policy planning.

12. ~~(SBU)~~ The senior aid official voiced strong concerns over officials' lack of transparency about the number of Chinese citizens requiring urgent medical, food, and financial assistance after the Wuhan lockdown. While the aid official positively assessed the NHC's timely and transparent reporting of COVID-19 cases, the official felt that China's emergency response completely ignored the need for humanitarian assistance to Chinese citizens stuck in Wuhan. The aid official also noted that they had offered to host a training session for MEM and NHC on emergency response to epidemics, but had never received a response.

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

Signature: Branstad

Drafted By:

BEIJING;

(Guangzhou)

(Shenyang)

(Beijing)

Cleared By:

ESTH;

HHS/CDC/IRD;

(b)(6)

ECON;

POL;

ESTH;

HHS/OGA

Approved By:

PD:A/DCM;

Released By:

BEIJING;

Info:

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; ATLANTA GA, CDC ROUTINE; DIA WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; CIA WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE; PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI ROUTINE; CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE ROUTINE; ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

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Dissemination Rule:

Archive Copy

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~~SBU~~

From: SMART Archive
Sent: Wed, 11 Mar 2020 01:15:27 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: PRC COVID-19 Response Shows Progress and Cracks in China's Emergency Preparedness

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~~SBU~~



MRN: 20 BEIJING 476
Date/DTG: Mar 11, 2020 / 100909Z MAR 20
From: AMEMBASSY BEIJING
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: SHLH, HHS, CDC, NIH, PGOV, CN, SENV, PREL, AMED, AID, KHIV, KFLU, KFPC, KGHI, KHLS, KSCA, KTBT
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Correction Reason: CORRECTED COPY: Corrected drafter information
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The Chinese Interagency Art of War against COVID-19

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10. ~~(SBU)~~ The senior aid official spoke highly of the Chinese government's overall interagency coordination and implementation of NHC guidance. She recounted that in a briefing to provide information on China's COVID-19 interagency working group, Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs (DITEA) Deputy Director General Liang Hong had claimed that the PRC General Administration of Customs (GAC) facilitated emergency shipment of goods far quicker than other countries that had experienced far less dire circumstances. In the briefing, Liang said that MOFCOM's DITEA worked with GAC to handle international assistance while ensuring compliance with international standards and controlling market prices. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) managed medical stockpiles with support from provincial, regional, and municipal officials. [Note: Post received a request from the MEM on February 15 requesting basic information on how the U.S. managed its emergency stockpile system, indicating that the PRC's mechanism had not been fully developed or implemented. End Note.] MIIT also reviewed the quality and compliance of special medicine and emergency equipment from bilateral and multilateral partners.

Criticism of PRC Health Security Capabilities and Transparency

11. ~~(SBU)~~ During its COVID-19 response, China faced internal criticism over its limited health capabilities and international disapproval for its lack of transparency. In a Chinese medical journal, CPMA Chinese medical experts pointed out that China CDC suffered from ongoing staff shortages of infectious disease experts and an outdated IT system for reporting on infectious diseases before the COVID-19 outbreak. ESTH health contacts said that low salaries for China CDC infectious disease experts resulted in retention problems. Dr. Zhong Nanshan publicly expressed dissatisfaction, saying China CDC should be elevated beyond merely a

technical branch of NHC. Most Chinese observers agreed that China CDC needed more resources and authority to conduct infectious disease surveillance, report on public health concerns, and engage in policy planning.

12. (SBU) The senior aid official voiced strong concerns over officials' lack of transparency about the number of Chinese citizens requiring urgent medical, food, and financial assistance after the Wuhan lockdown. While the aid official positively assessed the NHC's timely and transparent reporting of COVID-19 cases, the official felt that China's emergency response completely ignored the need for humanitarian assistance to Chinese citizens stuck in Wuhan. The aid official also noted that they had offered to host a training session for MEM and NHC on emergency response to epidemics, but had never received a response.

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Signature: Branstad

Drafted By:
Cleared By:

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From: SMART Archive
Sent: Fri, 06 Mar 2020 07:57:23 GMT
To: SMART Core
Subject: China's COVID-19 Messaging: Bucking up Domestic Confidence and Shifting Blame

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MRN: 20 BEIJING 458
Date/DTG: Mar 06, 2020 / 060755Z MAR 20
From: AMEMBASSY BEIJING
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PROP, PGOV, PREL, ECON, KPAO, KMDR, KFLU, CN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 20 Beijing 286
B) 20 Beijing 442
C) 20 Beijing 235
Subject: China's COVID-19 Messaging: Bucking up Domestic Confidence and Shifting Blame

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary:** The PRC propaganda authorities use a spectrum of narrative approaches to craft news coverage, commentary, and descriptions of China's response to COVID-19. Ensuring that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and PRC government are seen to be responsive, in control, and winning against this fight is paramount. In practice, these positive messages are often mixed with neutral and negative messages. Neutral stories are generally more factual and may feature data such as reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) or describe actions China has taken to address the epidemic. Recently, negative stories aimed at shifting blame outside of China comprises a new strategy as China seeks to rebrand itself as a global leader in the fight against COVID-19, rather the outbreak's epicenter. COVID-19 continues to be intensely monitored and avidly discussed by China's active social media users. The U.S. Mission in China has successfully countered false PRC narratives with factual, transparent, and authentic Chinese language information reaching millions of Chinese seeking information on COVID-19. **End Summary.**

Positive Narratives: China is in a Battle Against the Virus – and Will Win

2. ~~(SBU)~~ Chinese state-run media pushed out many positive narratives and messages about the PRC government and CCP response to COVID-19. These positive narratives continued from earlier in the month to focus on the PRC response to the crisis and how the CCP will win the battle against the epidemic. (Ref A). These positive narratives focused on how the CCP and PRC were responding, Xi's

direct role in leading the response, how the PRC is working closely with the international community and with the WHO, and more broadly narratives that supported trust in the PRC response.

Xi Leads the Fight

3. (U) In February media outlets covered Xi's personal and direct engagement in combatting COVID-19 with photos of visits, *CCTV* coverage of Xi chairing leadership meetings on COVID-19 and focus on scientific research. By early March Chinese news outlets were widely amplifying Xi's direct engagement in combatting the epidemic. For example, on March 2, *Xinhua* covered Xi's visit to the Academy of Military Medical Sciences and the School of Medicine at Tsinghua University in Beijing. *Xinhua* reported that Xi stressed coordination in advancing scientific research on COVID-19, and his interest in vaccines, anti-bodies, medicines and fast testing kits. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a statement on March 2 titled, "Xi Jinping Urged Greater Efforts in Scientific Research on Novel Coronavirus Outbreak."

The CCP Cares – Leading Group for COVID 19 Response

4. (U) Media outlets have all widely amplified Premier Li Keqiang presiding over the leading group of China's COVID-19 response with multiple positive stories demonstrating how the PRC government and CCP are improving prevention and control, measures to care for staff working at the frontlines and how the central government and CCP have reacted at the most crucial moments to curb the spread of the epidemic. State-run media also pushed out daily updates with information on infection rates and new cases, with many outlets developing special landing pages or resources in online platforms to push out real-time updates. Good news stories about the PRC response in sending medical teams, building hospitals and stable food supplies were continued.

Working Closely with International Community and Sharing Vital Information

5. ~~(SBU)~~ *CCTV* and other Chinese media outlets widely repeated praise from the WHO on China's "pragmatic and flexible anti-epidemic measures." *The Paper* reported on February 26, "After completing their nine-day inspection in China, WHO experts hailed China's unprecedented responses to COVID-19 and acknowledged China's role in protecting the international community and buying time for other countries to prepare for the outbreak. On the same day, UN General Secretary Guterres also recognized China's efforts to alleviate the negative impact of COVID-19 and its contributions to mankind. Chinese media said, these remarks from WHO and the United Nations truthfully reflect the aggressiveness, speed, and transparency with which China responded to the outbreak. *Guangming Daily* commented on February 26, "It is no exaggeration to say that China's resolute and powerful preventive and control measures, and its outstanding capabilities to lead, respond, organize, mobilize, and implement could not be achieved by other countries. The effectiveness of China's prevention and control work has once again demonstrated the significant advantages of the CPC's leadership and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics."

China's Response Gave the Rest of the World Time

6. (U) *People's Daily* cited China's sense of responsibility in a February 22 op-ed saying, "the Chinese speed on the technical, resource, and infrastructure fronts saved precious time for the world to address the virus while limiting the number of countries affected to just 20. The Chinese practice established new benchmarks in global epidemic control, sharing information and working closely with the WHO and

countries in an open, transparent, and responsible manner, inviting international experts and facilitating their visits to Wuhan and elsewhere." *Guangming Daily* opined on February 28, "the battle against COVID-19 is also a war to defend the world" and that China's response "demonstrates our major power's sense of responsibility." Many media outlets described China's response as "shrewd and courageous" and *Guangming Daily* said the lockdown of Wuhan minimized the spread of the virus to other countries. The op-ed claims China's "timely information sharing saved the world precious time to rise to the epidemic."

Neutral Narratives Still Promote PRC Goals

7. ~~(SBU)~~ More neutral narratives focused on the epidemic situation in Hubei and around China, as well as the complex issues surrounding the epidemic. Other topics including actions the PRC is taking on wild animals and markets, innovative and new responses to help combat COVID-19, stories about front line responders, and about other cities such as Beijing. Many of these neutral stories focused on actions that the PRC took to control the epidemic and commentary from official state-run outlets noted China's reaction and response can serve as a model for other countries.

"We Would Never Let Beijing Fail"

8. (U) The *Global Times* reported on February 27 that Beijing is facing mounting pressure in efforts to contain COVID-19 as new confirmed infections surged due to imported cases of infection and cluster outbreaks. Media reports said officials from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) confirmed that authorities made the capital the top priority of its epidemic prevention and control work, with measures matching those adopted in Hubei. A WeChat post from the CCP Party School on February 17 featured an article titled, "We Would Never Let Beijing Fail" and discussed the strict measures implemented in Beijing.

Trust PRC Information, Response, and Treatment and Don't look behind the Great Firewall

9. ~~(SBU)~~ The Chinese public has actively followed COVID-19 news, with special interest in stories from traditional and social media on what they can do to stay healthy, help their families, and learn from "trusted medical experts." The CCP leveraged medical experts with established credibility, such as Zhong Nanshan, the doctor to first publicly acknowledge SARS, to convey these messages and push official narratives (**Note:** However, many netizens continue to source information beyond the Firewall and compare statements from Chinese experts with the international community, including from U.S. CDC. In this information space, the U.S. Embassy continued to attract Chinese netizens seeking accurate and factual information with U.S. messages reaching millions. **End Note.**)

Negative Narratives – Move the Blame

11. ~~(SBU)~~ Negative narratives ranged from disinformation and conspiracy theories to questioning U.S. data and information on cases and transmission in the United States. Even in the midst of the crisis the official propaganda authorities, MFA spokesperson, and various state-run media organizations continued to critique the United States. Early stories talked about the U.S. "overreaction" and sending diplomats out of Wuhan, while more recent stories claimed the stock market changes in the United States were due to a panic over COVID-19 in the U.S. Other negative narratives compared COVID-19 to the flu, reacted angrily over naming conventions that linked COVID-19 to China or Wuhan, and claimed other international reactions were racist and unfair. As the epidemic spreads to more countries, these

negative stories push the blame outside of China as the PRC seeks to rebrand itself as a global leader in the fight against COVID-19, rather than the country where it originated and spread.

U.S. Overreacts – Diplomatic Staff Are Safe, No Need for Bans

12. ~~(SBU)~~ The PRC response echoed in official media, social media, and from the MFA briefing podium negatively portrayed the closure of the U.S. Consulate in Wuhan, the evacuation of U.S. citizens from the city, and the departure of Mission China family members due to health concerns. China portrayed U.S. screening and travel restrictions as a “ban” on Chinese from traveling to the United States, calling the U.S. response “excessive.” In a key editorial on February 21 *People’s Daily* said, “Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia, the WHO has repeatedly stated it does not recommend countries take any travel or trading restrictions and has called on countries to take convincing measures based on evidence. However, some countries still choose to ignore WHO’s professional recommendations by taking excessive restrictive measures.” *People’s Daily* continued, “Such egoistic acts taken at the expense of others are not conducive to epidemic prevention and control. Rather, they have created panic, disrupted normal international exchanges and cooperation, and negatively affected global air transport market and the world economy.”

13. (U) *The Paper* on March 4 opined, “it’s worth noting that at the onset of the outbreak, the Trump administration was the first to evacuate expats from China and moved quickly to announce travel bans. As other countries followed suit, China was left hamstrung by what was effectively isolation, and its economy suffered. Had China decided to retaliate by banning all travel from and to the United States and imposing export controls on medical supplies such as masks and medicines, America would have been plunged into the hell of coronavirus.” *The Paper* concluded, “Despite the rhetoric of gloating U.S. politicians and attacks by racist U.S. media outlets, China chose not to take advantage of America’s plight. It’s ridiculous to demand an apology from China given the huge sacrifices the country has made. Instead, the United States should apologize to China for its wrong deeds, and the world is indebted to China for singlehandedly slowing the spread of the virus.

14. ~~(SBU)~~ Later when other countries added restrictions, *Xinhua* opined, “recently some countries have taken necessary border restrictive measures aimed at protecting the health and security of their citizens and foreigners as well as safeguarding regional and global public health security. As long as those measures are science-based, professional and appropriate, they can be understood and accepted.”

Suppressing Evidence of US Assistance

15. ~~(SBU)~~ The *People’s Daily* in commentary on February 27 commented that while the U.S. Department of State announced it will provide \$100 million in aid to help China and other countries in their epidemic prevention efforts China has “yet to see actual actions.” The commentary said, compared to the U.S. government, U.S. businesses, friendly groups, and civil society organizations are much more active. CASS statistics show that the total aid from U.S. companies ranks first, far more than those from other countries. On Embassy accounts, many netizens continue to ask about the U.S. response to COVID-19, U.S. donations, and specifics on aid to China and to other countries to combat COVID-19.

“All Those who Doubt China are Doomed to Fail”

16. (U) In early March, the CCP and official media outlets directly responded to critiques of China’s

ability to weather the COVID-19 production impacts. American politicians that want companies to leave China are doomed to fail was one topline. While the PRC representative to the UN framed the story as “confident Beijing will meet economic goals despite virus.” The PRC argued, there is no replacement of China’s “highly refined, specialized, high-quality, and efficient supply chain.” Media outlets also linked the response to COVID-19 as another reason to trust China’s production saying China’s achievements in epidemic prevention provide confidence to resume production.” The *21st Century Business Herald* in an editorial on February 2 said, “While it is natural for businesses to feel concerned, some American politicians and Western media that always want companies to leave China have taken this opportunity to promote a decoupling policy. But their move is doomed to fail.”

Is the U.S. Lying about COVID-19 Numbers in the United States.?

17. (SBU) Chinese media actively pushed questions about the accuracy in U.S. cases and reports of COVID-19 and the speed of the U.S. response. On March 2, the *Beijing News* featured a commentary opining the United States does not know the extent of the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. The fact that the U.S. stock market crashed indicates the market's misgivings about epidemic control outside of China, and lack of trust in the U.S. claimed Chinese media. In addition to official media coverage, Chinese netizens actively debated and discussed information on cases and response in the United States in late February and early March. On March 2, popular comments on *Weitianxia*, a prominent international news Weibo account operated by Sina discussed the CDC release of a COVID-19 patient and testing in the U.S. for COVID-19. The *Global Times* reported on February 27 that Chinese experts said the U.S. might not be able to effectively contain the outbreak of COVID-19, as the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have different perspectives on the situation, and President Trump's priority is still the economic data and the presidential election.

18. (SBU) On March 4 *People's Daily* issued a commentary titled, “The spread of coronavirus in the United States raises concern.” In the commentary *People's Daily* highlights concerns over the nursing center in Washington State, public health officials’ reactions in the U.S., and claims the U.S. administration acted slowing in testing potential COVID-19 cases. Active debate and discussion on Weibo in February closely tracked and monitored news announcements in the U.S. on COVID-19 response and cases. On social media Chinese netizens criticized the U.S. CDC’s measures, debating whether the U.S. system is up to the task of addressing the novel coronavirus outbreak, while also opining that Europe’s decision to increase refugee admissions will further help the virus spread. As one Chinese netizen put it, “the ‘glorified’ countries, without exception, are caught in a panic.”

Stock Market Decline Shows U.S. May Not Have Control

19. (U) The *Global Times* opined on February 27 that “panic driven by the possible spread of COVID-19 in the United States has sent the country's stock market plummeting for days.” The *Global Times* said, “only actions to combat the virus, rather than words, can save the U.S. stock market from a meltdown and stop it from once again becoming the center of a global financial crisis.” The *Global Times* claimed, the market selloff “revealed investor concerns over whether or not the U.S. can bring the situation under control, particularly as the U.S. CDC confirmed the country's first possible case of community transmission.”

Sowing Doubt on the United States with Conspiracy Theories and Rumors

20. (SBU) A key editorial published in *People's Daily* on February 28 claims although the novel

coronavirus pneumonia epidemic first appeared in China, it did not necessarily originate in China. The editorial says in contrast to cautious scientists, some Western politicians and media have made rash assertions and even conjectured a so-called biochemical war to stigmatize China. *People's Daily* continues the drumbeat of "viruses know no borders" and says it is "everyone's duty to defeat ignorance with science, smash rumors with truth, resist prejudice with cooperation, and stop 'political viruses' such as conspiracy theories from causing chaos." Also in late February, Chinese media outlets all widely amplified well-known Chinese epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan saying the epidemic first appeared in China, but it may not have originated from China. This led to active discussions by netizens guessing that Zhong implied it came from the U.S. *Global Times* highlighted the origin story as well by amplifying a joint China-WHO report on February 29. Another popular online rumor that was widely circulated on Weibo and other social media platforms was that the U.S. was responsible for making the virus as either a bioweapon or a way to limit China's rise. While Chinese official media outlets debunked many of these rumors including that the CIA creating the virus, the conversations online were not quickly censored or limited which allowed many different conspiracy theories to circulate.

Mission China's Response: The Chinese People are Still Listening to us, Seeking the Truth

21. ~~(SBU)~~ Throughout February, Mission China's Chinese language social media platforms Weibo and WeChat shared content about the COVID-19 virus reaching more than 34.5 million Chinese and generating more than 748,000 engagements, showing that some Chinese audiences are hungry for fact-based, transparent reporting provided by the United States. The top post by engagement across Department of State properties the past month was the Embassy's February 8 post on China's Weibo about how the Department of State assisted in shipping nearly 17.8 tons of medical supplies to China.

22. ~~(SBU)~~ U.S. government messages have been effective in countering Chinese narratives – the Embassy translated and amplified information from the U.S. CDC with facts on prevention, response, and definitions that have been widely read and discussed. While not entirely immune from censorship, the U.S. Embassy Weibo page was filled with debate between netizens about which viewpoint was right, and where information differed from official Chinese narratives. Public exchanges on our page continue to offer unique models of transparency by showing our whole of government approach to epidemic response in near real-time.

23. ~~(SBU)~~ **Comment:** Taken together, China's positive messages on its official COVID-19 response, neutral factual discussions, and negative rumors have been effectively combined in official media and online discussions. The CCP's core narrative: that China must be on a war-like footing and mobilize to combat COVID-19, continues to have wide popular support. Additionally, as the virus spreads outside of China, the CCP will strain to counterbalance the COVID-19's Chinese origins deflecting attention with a rosy picture of how PRC authoritarian control stalled the epidemic in its tracks. Anti-American sentiment stirred up by the CCP has not effectively deflected criticism of the CCP. Moreover, reframing of the COVID-19 story as an authoritarian triumph seems intended to serve as another installment in the story of a global power competition between effective, authoritarian, rising China, and a weakened hypocritical West in decline. **End Comment**

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Branstad

Drafted By:
Cleared By:

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From: SMART Archive
Sent: Fri, 06 Mar 2020 06:53:16 GMT
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Subject: PRC Narratives of COVID-19

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Date/DTG: Mar 06, 2020 / 060650Z MAR 20
From: AMEMBASSY BEIJING
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PROP, PGOV, PREL, ECON, KPAO, KMDR, KFLU, CN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 20 Beijing 286
B) 20 Beijing 442
C) 20 Beijing 235
Subject: PRC Narratives of COVID-19

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary:** The PRC propaganda authorities have used several different narrative approaches to news coverage, commentary, and descriptions of China's response to COVID-19. Ensuring that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and PRC government are seen as responsive, in control, and winning against this fight are paramount in positive messages. These positive messages are mixed with neutral and negative messages as well. Neutral stories are more factual, sometimes feature World Health Organization (WHO) information, or describe action China has taken to address the epidemic. The negative stories and attribution of the blame outside of China is a shift as China seeks to rebrand itself as a global leader in the fight against COVID-19, rather than the country where it originated and spread. The COVID-19 virus continues to be intensely monitored and avidly discussed by China's active social media users. By countering negative and neutral PRC narratives with factual, transparent, and authentic information the U.S. Mission in China has successfully reached millions of Chinese netizens seeking information on COVID-19. **End Summary.**

Positive Narratives: China is in a Battle Against the Virus – and Will Win

2. ~~(SBU)~~ Chinese state-run media pushed out many positive narratives and messages about the PRC government and CCP response to COVID-19. These positive narratives continued from earlier in the month to focus on the PRC response to the crisis and how the CCP will win the battle against the epidemic. (Ref A). These positive narratives focused on how the CCP and PRC were responding, Xi's direct role in leading the response, how the PRC is working closely with the international community and with the WHO, and more broadly narratives that supported trust in the PRC response.

Xi Leads the Fight

3. (U) In February media outlets covered Xi's personal and direct engagement in combatting COVID-19 with photos of visits, *CCTV* coverage of Xi chairing leadership meetings on COVID-19 and focus on scientific research. By early March Chinese news outlets were widely amplifying Xi's direct engagement in combatting the epidemic. For example, on March 2, *Xinhua* covered Xi's visit to the Academy of Military Medical Sciences and the School of Medicine at Tsinghua University in Beijing. *Xinhua* reported that Xi stressed coordination in advancing scientific research on COVID-19, and his interest in vaccines, anti-bodies, medicines and fast testing kits. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a statement on March 2 titled, "Xi Jinping Urged Greater Efforts in Scientific Research on Novel Coronavirus Outbreak."

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5. (SBU) *CCTV* and other Chinese media outlets widely repeated praise from the WHO on China's "pragmatic and flexible anti-epidemic measures." *The Paper* reported on February 26, "After completing their nine-day inspection in China, WHO experts hailed China's unprecedented responses to COVID-19 and acknowledged China's role in protecting the international community and buying time for other countries to prepare for the outbreak. On the same day, UN General Secretary Guterres also recognized China's efforts to alleviate the negative impact of COVID-19 and its contributions to mankind. Chinese media said, these remarks from WHO and the United Nations truthfully reflect the aggressiveness, speed, and transparency with which China responded to the outbreak. *Guangming Daily* commented on February 26, "It is no exaggeration to say that China's resolute and powerful preventive and control measures, and its outstanding capabilities to lead, respond, organize, mobilize, and implement could not be achieved by other countries. The effectiveness of China's prevention and control work has once again demonstrated the significant advantages of the CPC's leadership and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics."

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Neutral Narratives Still Promote PRC Goals

7. ~~(SBU)~~ More neutral narratives focused on the epidemic situation in Hubei and around China, as well as the complex issues surrounding the epidemic. Other topics including actions the PRC is taking on wild animals and markets, innovative and new responses to help combat COVID-19, stories about front line responders, and about other cities such as Beijing. Many of these neutral stories focused on actions that the PRC took to control the epidemic and commentary from official state-run outlets noted China’s reaction and response can serve as a model for other countries.

New Innovations Help with Response

8. ~~(SBU)~~ Several Chinese outlets claimed the outbreak “unleashed innovation capacity.” Articles cited AI, drones, big data platforms, and other new technologies as playing an important role in medical diagnosis, delivery of supplies, and meeting people's needs in maintaining a normal life during the crisis. (Ref B and C).

Beijing is Special

9. (U) The *Global Times* reported on February 27 that Beijing is facing mounting pressure in efforts to contain COVID-19 as new confirmed infections surged due to imported cases of infection and cluster outbreaks. Media reports said officials from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) confirmed that authorities made the capital the top priority of its epidemic prevention and control work, with measures matching those adopted in Hubei. A WeChat post from the CCP Party School on February 17 featured an article titled, “We Would Never Let Beijing Fail” and discussed the strict measures implemented in Beijing.

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U.S. Overreacts – Diplomatic Staff Are Safe, No Need for Bans

12. ~~(SBU)~~ The PRC response echoed in official media, social media, and from the MFA briefing podium negatively portrayed the closure of the U.S. Consulate in Wuhan, the evacuation of U.S. citizens from the city, and the departure of Mission China family members due to health concerns. China portrayed U.S. screening and travel restrictions as a "ban" on Chinese from traveling to the United States, calling the U.S. response "excessive." In a key editorial on February 21 *People's Daily* said, "Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia, the WHO has repeatedly stated it does not recommend countries take any travel or trading restrictions and has called on countries to take convincing measures based on evidence. However, some countries still choose to ignore WHO's professional recommendations by taking excessive restrictive measures." *People's Daily* continued, "Such egoistic acts taken at the expense of others are not conducive to epidemic prevention and control. Rather, they have created panic, disrupted normal international exchanges and cooperation, and negatively affected global air transport market and the world economy."

13. (U) *The Paper* on March 4 opined, "it's worth noting that at the onset of the outbreak, the Trump administration was the first to evacuate expats from China and moved quickly to announce travel bans. As other countries followed suit, China was left hamstrung by what was effectively isolation, and its economy suffered. Had China decided to retaliate by banning all travel from and to the United States and imposing export controls on medical supplies such as masks and medicines, America would have been plunged into the hell of coronavirus." *The Paper* concluded, "Despite the rhetoric of gloating U.S. politicians and attacks by racist U.S. media outlets, China chose not to take advantage of America's plight. It's ridiculous to demand an apology from China given the huge sacrifices the country has made. Instead, the United States should apologize to China for its wrong deeds, and the world is indebted to China for singlehandedly slowing the spread of the virus."

14. ~~(SBU)~~ Later when other countries added restrictions, *Xinhua* opined, "recently some countries have taken necessary border restrictive measures aimed at protecting the health and security of their citizens and foreigners as well as safeguarding regional and global public health security. As long as those measures are science-based, professional and appropriate, they can be understood and accepted."

Show us the Money

15. ~~(SBU)~~ The *People's Daily* in commentary on February 27 commented that while the U.S. Department of State announced it will provide \$100 million in aid to help China and other countries in their epidemic prevention efforts China has "yet to see actual actions." The commentary said, compared to the U.S. government, U.S. businesses, friendly groups, and civil society organizations are much more active. CASS statistics show that the total aid from U.S. companies ranks first, far more than those from other countries. On Embassy accounts, many netizens continue to ask about the U.S. response to

COVID-19, U.S. donations, and specifics on aid to China and to other countries to combat COVID-19.

Americans and Those that Doubt China are Doomed to Fail

16. (U) In early March, the CCP and official media outlets directly responded to critiques of China's ability to weather the COVID-19 production impacts. American politicians that want companies to leave China are doomed to fail was one topline. While the PRC representative to the UN framed the story as "confident Beijing will meet economic goals despite virus." The PRC argued, there is no replacement of China's "highly refined, specialized, high-quality, and efficient supply chain." Media outlets also linked the response to COVID-19 as another reason to trust China's production saying China's achievements in epidemic prevention provide confidence to resume production." The *21st Century Business Herald* in an editorial on February 2 said, "While it is natural for businesses to feel concerned, some American politicians and Western media that always want companies to leave China have taken this opportunity to promote a decoupling policy. But their move is doomed to fail."

Is the U.S. Lying about COVID-19 Numbers in the United States.?

17. ~~(SBU)~~ Chinese media actively pushed questions about the accuracy in U.S. cases and reports of COVID-19 and the speed of the U.S. response. On March 2, the *Beijing News* featured a commentary opining the United States does not know the extent of the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. The fact that the U.S. stock market crashed indicates the market's misgivings about epidemic control outside of China, and lack of trust in the U.S. claimed Chinese media. In addition to official media coverage, Chinese netizens actively debated and discussed information on cases and response in the United States in late February and early March. On March 2, popular comments on *Weitianxia*, a prominent international news Weibo account operated by Sina discussed the CDC release of a COVID-19 patient and testing in the U.S. for COVID-19. The *Global Times* reported on February 27 that Chinese experts said the U.S. might not be able to effectively contain the outbreak of COVID-19, as the White House and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have different perspectives on the situation, and President Trump's priority is still the economic data and the presidential election.

18. ~~(SBU)~~ On March 4 *People's Daily* issued a commentary titled, "The spread of coronavirus in the United States raises concern." In the commentary *People's Daily* highlights concerns over the nursing center in Washington State, public health officials' reactions in the U.S., and claims the U.S. administration acted slowing in testing potential COVID-19 cases. Active debate and discussion on Weibo in February closely tracked and monitored news announcements in the U.S. on COVID-19 response and cases. On social media Chinese netizens criticized the U.S. CDC's measures, debating whether the U.S. system is up to the task of addressing the novel coronavirus outbreak, while also opining that Europe's decision to increase refugee admissions will further help the virus spread. As one Chinese netizen put it, "the 'glorified' countries, without exception, are caught in a panic."

Stock Market Decline Shows U.S. May Not Have Control

19. (U) The *Global Times* opined on February 27 that "panic driven by the possible spread of COVID-19 in the United States has sent the country's stock market plummeting for days." The *Global Times* said, "only actions to combat the virus, rather than words, can save the U.S. stock market from a meltdown and stop it from once again becoming the center of a global financial crisis." The *Global Times* claimed, the market selloff "revealed investor concerns over whether or not the U.S. can bring the situation under control, particularly as the U.S. CDC confirmed the country's first possible case of community

transmission.”

Debunking Conspiracy Theories with Rumors

20. ~~(SBU)~~ A key editorial published in *People’s Daily* on February 28 claims although the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic first appeared in China, it did not necessarily originate in China. The editorial says in contrast to cautious scientists, some Western politicians and media have made rash assertions and even conjectured a so-called biochemical war to stigmatize China. *People’s Daily* continues the drumbeat of “viruses know no borders” and says it is “everyone's duty to defeat ignorance with science, smash rumors with truth, resist prejudice with cooperation, and stop ‘political viruses’ such as conspiracy theories from causing chaos.” Also in late February, Chinese media outlets all widely amplified well-known Chinese epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan saying the epidemic first appeared in China, but it may not have originated from China. This led to active discussions by netizens guessing that Zhong implied it came from the U.S. *Global Times* highlighted the origin story as well by amplifying a joint China-WHO report on February 29. Another popular online rumor that was widely circulated on Weibo and other social media platforms was that the U.S. was responsible for making the virus as either a bioweapon or a way to limit China’s rise. While Chinese official media outlets debunked many of these rumors including that the CIA creating the virus, the conversations online were not quickly censored or limited which allowed many different conspiracy theories to circulate.

21. ~~(SBU)~~ **Comment:** Despite anger online and questions about who knew what when, and how the CCP and PRC central government responded, as well as what will be covered-up, the propaganda authorities have managed to maintain a decent level of control. Positive messages on China’s response, neutral factual discussion, and negative rumors have all mixed together in official media and online discussions. The CCP central story line that there is a battle and the nation must mobilize to combat COVID-19 seems to continue to have wide popular support. As the virus spreads outside of China, the CCP will continue to paint a rosy picture of the PRC response and how PRC actions helped the world and are a model for China’s authoritarian rule and controlled media environment. Anti-American sentiment stirred up by the CCP about U.S. actions were met with mixed results in China. Negative stories and seeking to reframe the COVID-19 story may be part of a global power competition where China is seeking to show that their model of response is effective while actively casting doubts on the U.S. and other open, democratic countries’ response.

22. ~~(SBU)~~ In February, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing has posted nearly 75 times on Chinese social media platforms Weibo and WeChat about the COVID-19 virus reaching more than 34.5 million Chinese and generating more than 748,000 engagements, showing that some Chinese audiences are ready and willing to listen to fact-based, transparent reporting provided by the United States. The top post by engagement across Department of State properties the past month was the Embassy’s February 8 post on Weibo about how the Department of State assisted in shipping nearly 17.8 tons of medical supplies to China.

23. ~~(SBU)~~ U.S. government messages have been effective in countering Chinese narratives – the Embassy translated and amplified information from the U.S. CDC with factual information on prevention, response, and definitions that have been widely read and discussed. The U.S. Embassy Weibo page was filled with debate between netizens about which viewpoint was right, and where information differed from official Chinese narratives. This is a chance for the U.S. to showcase transparency, admit if and when mistakes are made and lessons learned, and demonstrate that a democratic, federalist system can share information in an open and authentic way with citizens, local

governments, and civil society alike to effectively prevent and respond to epidemics. **End Comment.**

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

Signature: Branstad

Drafted By:
Cleared By:

BEIJING: [redacted]
 ECON [redacted]
 ESTH [redacted]
 CONS [redacted]
 PD: [redacted]
 PD:l [redacted]
 [redacted]
 PO [redacted]
 PD: [redacted]
 BEIJING: [redacted]

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Approved By:
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Sent: Thu, 20 Feb 2020 11:10:25 GMT
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Subject: Mission China COVID-19 Update February 20

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Date/DTG: Feb 20, 2020 / 201107Z FEB 20
From: AMEMBASSY BEIJING
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: SHLH, PGOV, PREL, CASC, AMGT, AMED, ASEC, ELAB, ECON, EINT, KPAO, KHIV, KFLU, KFLO, KFPC, KGHI, KHLS, KSCA, CDC, HHS, NIH, OSHA, AID, CN
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Reference: A) 20 BEIJING 308, 296, 292, 282, 276, 264, 248, 234, 226, 222, 218, 216, 214, 206, 204, 202, 200, 198, 188, 186, 174, 172, 166, 164, 142, 122, 108, 74
B) 20 BEIJING 260
C) 20 BEIJING 250
D) 20 BEIJING 256
E) 20 BEIJING 254
F) 19 WUHAN 112
G) 20 BEIJING 272
Subject: Mission China COVID-19 Update February 20

1. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary and comment:** China's National Health Commission (NHC) released new case definition guidelines, reverting the confirmed case definition for Hubei province to no longer include "clinically diagnosed" cases in its confirmed case count and will only include lab-confirmed cases, consistent with other provinces. As a result, all provinces in China will now use a "lab-confirmed" case definition for reporting purposes. The change, which resulted in a decline in officially reported national cases, was made without explanation in the official documents. The NHC reported 394 new cases on February 19, bringing the total number of officially reported cases to 74,576. The number of newly reported cases on February 19 dropped to 394, or 1,490 fewer than the average for the previous three days, due to the change. President Xi Jinping said in public remarks that there exists a greater need to protect and care for medical workers to ensure they stay healthy and are not infected with COVID-19. Contacts at several ministries informed the Embassy that national government offices had reopened and were operating under rotating shifts.

2. ~~(SBU)~~ **Summary and comment, cont.:** Businesses throughout China continue to reopen, though many face labor shortages, logistics challenges and a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). More municipal and provincial governments continue relaxing restrictions on intra-city and intra-provincial transport, though strict movement restrictions continue in many cities. A CG Wuhan contact reported the arrival of military guards at residential communities in Wuhan has resulted in stricter quarantine enforcement. A number of government officials outside of Hubei have cautioned against overzealous implementation of epidemic response measures. China’s *Global Times* reported that the PRC government has donated COVID-19 nucleic acid testing kits to Japan. The Peoples’ Bank of China (PBOC) listed the control of the epidemic as its top priority and asserted, perhaps optimistically, that the impact of the coronavirus on the economy will be limited “as the epidemic has not changed the country's economic fundamentals.” PBOC stated it will help companies affected by the epidemic by lowering lending rates, increasing credit support, and providing more loans. Social media users continued to criticize a propaganda video released by authorities in Gansu province showing female health workers crying as their heads are shaved; central government authorities have allowed this criticism of overzealous Gansu officials to continue for two days without obvious censorship of most comments. **End Summary and comment.**

(U) LATEST UPDATES

3. ~~(SBU)~~ **New Coronavirus Guidelines Released, Case Definition Changed Again.** The PRC National Health Commission (NHC) and National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine February 19 released the *6th Edition of the Diagnosis and Treatment Scheme for Pneumonia from Novel Coronavirus (Trial Version)*. Under the updated guidelines, Hubei province will no longer include “clinically diagnosed” cases in its confirmed case count and will only include lab-confirmed cases, consistent with other provinces (figure 1). The Hubei Provincial Health Commission announced February 13 that it had amended case definitions for COVID-19 to include the new “clinically diagnosed” category which did not require lab-confirmation but did require clinical characteristics and radiographic evidence of pneumonia. As a result, the total number of confirmed cases reported from Hubei province initially increased significantly, with 14,840 new cases (of which 13,332 were clinically diagnosed and 1508 were laboratory confirmed) on February 13. The inclusion of clinically diagnosed cases for Hubei followed the guidelines set forth in the *5th Edition of the Diagnosis and Treatment Scheme for Pneumonia from Novel Coronavirus (Trial Version)* issued February 5. The NHC said at the time that it had changed the case definition for Hubei to allow more patients to receive earlier treatment, as there was a lag in lab-tested confirmation. The NHC did not state in the new *6th Edition* guidelines why they had changed the confirmed case definition for Hubei back to only including lab-confirmed cases. According to Professor Feng Zhanchun, of the School of Medicine and Health Management of Tongji Medical College of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, reasons for the change included considerations such as chest imaging alone not being the standard for diagnosis and limited availability of testing kits and testing capabilities in Hubei province [NOTE: It is unclear if he is speaking in a capacity as someone who had a role in the changing of these guidelines or if this is related to the official reason for the change].

(U) Updated NHC Case Definition Guidelines

	All Provinces
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Suspected case	<p>A: Epidemiological history 14 days before the onset</p> <p>A1: travel to or resident in Wuhan or area nearby, or an affected community</p> <p>A2: exposed to infected person who has tested positive</p> <p>A3: exposed to person with fever or other respiratory symptoms and who is from Wuhan or an area nearby, or an affected community</p> <p>A4: cluster</p>
	<p>B- Clinical criteria</p> <p>B1: fever and / or respiratory symptoms</p> <p>B2: radiographic pneumonia</p> <p>B3: Normal or decreased white blood cell count in the early stages of onset; or decreased lymphocyte count</p>
	<p>Suspected case if:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1. Meets any one of the epidemiological histories and any two of the clinical criteria</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2. Meets all three clinical criteria</p>
Confirmed case	<p>Suspected case + one of the following test results:</p> <p>Respiratory or blood specimens test</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RT-PCR positive for SARS-CoV-2 2. Viral gene sequencing is highly homologous with known SARS-Cov-2

Data source: The 6th Edition of the Diagnosis and Treatment Scheme for Pneumonia of New Coronavirus Infection issued by the National Health Commission

<http://www.nhc.gov.cn/yzygj/s7652m/202002/54e1ad5c2aac45c19eb541799bf637e9.shtml>

<http://www.nhc.gov.cn/yzygj/s7653p/202002/8334a8326dd94d329df351d7da8aefc2.shtml>

4. (U) Decline in Officially Reported Nationwide Cases As Definitions Changed Again:

China’s National Health Commission (NHC) reported 394 new cases in Mainland China on February 19 as of 24:00, bringing the total number of officially reported cases to 74,576 ([link](#)). The number of newly reported cases on February 19 dropped by 1,490 compared to the average for the previous three days. [Note: The sudden drop appears to reflect yet another change in the definition of confirmed cases, introduced by the NHC on February 19 ([link](#)). Per the newly revised guidelines for diagnosis and treatment (the sixth edition), only cases confirmed in the laboratory through a respiratory or blood sample test will be counted as “confirmed,” thus removing the difference in the definition for confirmed cases between Hubei and other provinces. Hubei Health Commission’s latest case report issued on February 20, after the publication of the new NHC guidelines, does not mention the change, however ([link](#)). **End note.**] Total deaths rose to 2,118, an increase of 114 over the previous day. In addition, 1,277 new suspected cases were reported on February 19, with the total number of currently suspected cases now down to 4,922. The number of close contacts under medical observation declined to 126,363.

Table 1: Total and Active Cases in Mainland China as of End of February 19

Province/City/Region	Active Cases	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Discharged	Newly Discharged
Anhui	557	987	1	6	--	424	63
Beijing	238	395	2	4	--	153	8
Chongqing	281	560	6	5	--	274	20
Fujian	180	293	--	1	1	112	16
Gansu	24	91	--	2	--	65	3
Guangdong	708	1,332	1	5	--	619	48
Guangxi	156	245	1	2	--	87	11
Guizhou	73	146	--	2	--	71	2
Hainan	80	168	5	4	--	84	5
Hebei	150	307	1	5	1	152	16
Heilongjiang	341	476	6	12	--	123	15
Henan	632	1,265	4	19	--	614	62
Hubei*	49,665	62,031	349	2,029	108	10,337	1,209
Hunan	424	1,010	2	4	--	582	36
Inner Mongolia	64	75	--	--	--	11	2
Jiangsu	306	631	--	--	--	325	29
Jiangxi	501	934	1	1	--	432	70
Jilin	50	91	1	1	--	40	4
Liaoning	62	121	--	1	--	58	3
Ningxia	29	71	--	--	--	42	--
Qinghai	2	18	--	--	--	16	1
Shaanxi	139	245	3	1	1	105	16
Shandong	304	546	3	4	1	238	23

<i>Shanghai</i>	145	333	--	2	1	186	9
<i>Shanxi</i>	63	131	--	--	--	68	7
<i>Sichuan</i>	319	520	6	3	--	198	21
<i>Tianjin</i>	73	130	2	3	--	54	6
<i>Tibet</i>	0	1	--	--	--	1	--
<i>Xinjiang</i>	55	76	--	1	--	20	6
<i>Yunnan</i>	111	172	--	1	1	60	--
<i>Zhejiang</i>	566	1,175	2	--	--	609	65
Total (Provincial Reports)	56,298	74,576	396	2,118	114	16,160	1,776
Total (NHC Reported)	56,303	74,576	394	2,118	114	16,155	1,779

Note: * Per the new NHC diagnosis guidelines (6th edition), clinically diagnosed cases for Hubei are no longer included in the total number of confirmed cases. Only lab-confirmed cases are included for all provinces; "Active cases" are total confirmed cases net of deaths and the number of patients treated and discharged from the hospital. Sources: NHC and provincial health commissions.

Beijing

5. (U) **Xi Calls for Greater Protections for Healthcare Workers:** President Xi Jinping said in public remarks that there exists a greater need to protect and care for medical workers to ensure they stay healthy and are not infected with COVID-19. Xi made the remarks at a recent event to train military medics participating in the COVID-19 prevention and control.

6. (U) **Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences President Warns Coronavirus May Be Here to Stay:** Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences president Wang Chen February 19 told CCTV in an interview that COVID-19 "may become a long-term disease that coexists with humans, just like flu."

7. (U) **Government Offices Resume Partial Operation:** Contacts at China's Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), and Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) told Embassy Beijing that national government offices had reopened and are currently operating under rotating shifts, with only some staff reporting to work each day.

Chengdu

8. (U) **Chongqing** municipal health authorities report that in recent days, **most newly confirmed cases have been asymptomatic carriers** identified through epidemiological studies.

Guangzhou

9. ~~(SBU)~~ Guangdong will make all-out efforts to promote economic stability and development, first by pushing forward the safe resumption of production, Party Secretary Li Xi said during a February 19 party meeting, echoing Governor Ma Xingrui's February 15 and 16 calls for the same. In this spirit, more Guangdong municipalities announced companies could resume operations without special approval, including Zhongshan, Jiangmen, and several more districts in Shenzhen and Zhuhai. In an early sign that Guangdong cities may be moving to ease

monitoring of inter-city travel, Zhongshan announced February 19 it would remove 41 checkpoints on inter-city highways and roads, and Shenzhen announced loosened procedures for frequent travelers. In Guangxi, Jinjing town (Mashan county, Nanning municipality) has closed all inbound and outbound vehicular traffic effective February 18 following a confirmed cluster of nine COVID-19 cases. To date, Post has not noticed easing of residential closed management procedures in South China.

Shanghai

10. ~~(SBU)~~ Active cases of COVID-19 continue to track downward across East China, according to official statistics. Businesses across Shanghai and the region continue to reopen, though many face labor shortages and logistics challenges. Local governments across East China are using chartered trains, buses, and planes to bring back workers from low-risk regions to address the labor shortage. More public transportation routes and roads are resuming operations across the region.

11. (U) In a February 19 briefing for Consuls General organized by the Shanghai FAO, officials provided the following updates:

- (U) **According to the Shanghai Health Commission, Shanghai has not experienced sustained person-to-person transmission.** Shanghai has received permission from the National Health Commission to develop its own treatment protocols, which are not identical with the National Treatment Guidelines but have proven to be equally effective. The demographics of Shanghai's cases are statistically the same as the national averages.
- (U) **Shanghai Party Secretary Li Qiang has noted it is urgent to verify the reliability of COVID-19 tests** and has instructed officials to strengthen capabilities to detect new infections by linking epidemiology studies with testing and with the efforts of the district, local, and neighborhood units. Checkpoints in the city will focus on identifying people from high-risk areas to ensure they follow the required quarantine protocols. Local and neighborhood units will provide assistance in sterilizing, ventilating, and cleaning public spaces.
- (SBU) A Shanghai Civil Affairs Office official acknowledged that **some neighborhood committees have taken measures much more stringent than required by official guidelines**, so the Civil Affairs Bureau is reminding them not to go beyond the official guidance. Only foreigners returning to Shanghai who have traveled to high-risk areas are required to self-quarantine. (Note: As reported previously, some neighborhoods are barring all outsiders from entering a residential area, are requiring quarantines for individuals beyond those recommended by the city, are requiring passes for residents to enter or leave, etc. End note.) Officials noted neighborhoods should establish checkpoints at the point of entry; measure the temperature of anyone seeking to enter, optionally registering people seeking to enter or depart; and enforce contactless deliveries of food and goods. Anecdotal information from American citizens and other foreigners who have returned to Shanghai suggests that despite municipal officials directing neighborhood committees to not implement measures stricter than required by the guidelines, many neighborhood committees continue to do so. When FAO has been contacted about these cases, they have continued to advise that while self-quarantine is

not required, residents should follow the directions of neighborhood committees.

- (U) A senior official with the Development and Opening Commission said **Beijing has issued instructions to boost the growth of the construction sector and consumption.**

As a result, the Commission is actively looking for shovel-ready construction and infrastructure projects that can be commenced as soon as possible after the crisis.

12. (U) The Zhejiang Health Commission updated its Five-color Risk Map on February 19, **moving Yueqing from red (“high-risk”) down to orange (“relatively high-risk”).** There are currently no areas categorized as high-risk. The total number of areas categorized as high- or higher-risk was reduced from 11 to seven.

13. ~~(SBU)~~ **More municipal and provincial governments continue relaxing restrictions on intra-city and intra-provincial transport.** Additional public bus routes in Wenzhou and Ningbo in Zhejiang, and Lu’an, Anhui, and Yancheng, in Jiangsu resumed on February 20. Additional expressways opened in Hangzhou and Suzhou. Suzhou announced some local parks are reopening on February 20, with additional parks opening on February 26.

Shenyang

Heilongjiang

14. (U) **Officials caution against blanket closed management:** Heilongjiang’s People’s Congress held a meeting to discuss the closed management mechanisms currently implemented throughout the province. While the People’s Congress emphasized that Heilongjiang must continue to apply stringent measures to control the spread of the virus, members also cautioned that officials do not have a blank check to implement any and all measures that could potentially impact economic activities and infringe upon peoples’ livelihoods. Rather than applying blanket measures city-wide, members of the People’s Congress encouraged officials to strategically implement measures only in key areas of concern.

15. (U) **Heilongjiang Focuses on Supporting Four Types of Enterprises Resuming Operations:** On February 18, the Department of Industry and Information Technology of Heilongjiang conducted a video conference meeting to promote the resumption of industrial enterprises in the province to minimize the impact of the epidemic on the industrial economy. The top priority discussed was to highlight the support of four types of enterprises to resume operations: 1) Prevention and control material production enterprises, 2) Basic needs production enterprises, 3) Agricultural and animal husbandry production enterprises, and 4) Enterprises that support regional economic growth. Officials also noted that masks, disinfectant, and other protective equipment is “stabilizing” and medical supply reserves are expanding as the province continues to increase funding for PPE production.

16. (U) **Harbin dispatches robots to hospitals:** Harbin announced that the city has dispatched “highly intelligent” robots to Harbin’s People’s Hospital and the Central Isolated Hotel in Pingfang district to be used for delivering food and medicine to patients. Developed by Lingyuan Technology Co. of the Institute of Automation of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, officials said that using robots for patients’ basic needs would greatly reduce the risk of medical personnel contracting the virus and improve quality of treatment.

*Jilin***17. (U) Development of COVID-19 Antibody Detection Kit in Jilin Enters Clinical Trial**

Stage: A new COVID-19 antibody detection kit was recently developed by Jilin Shuang Zheng Medical Technology Company and the Joint Research Institute of Transitional Medicine at Jilin University. Clinical evaluation was completed in relevant medical institutions and is currently in the application stage for emergency approval through green channels of the State Drug Administration. The detection kit provides a simple, accurate and rapid tool that can be complemented with nucleic acid reagents to shorten the detection of COVID-19, accelerate the diagnosis of suspected cases and fast-track screening of close contacts.

Liaoning

18. (U) Liaoning Party Secretary visits foreign companies: Liaoning Party Secretary Chen Qiufa on February 19 visited South Korean companies POSCO Auto Parts Manufacturing and CJ Biotechnology, as well as German-owned Mubea Auto Parts Company to thank South Korea and Germany for supporting Liaoning and to learn about how foreign companies are preparing to resume operations. Both the ROK and German Consul Generals thanked Chen for his support and expressed confidence in Liaoning's effort to control the spread of the virus.

19. ~~(SBU)~~ Dandong contacts relieved businesses are reopening but concerned about PPE

shortage: After a 22-day suspension, eight bus routes in Dandong city in Liaoning have resumed operations (Note: Dandong is the focal point for China-DPRK commerce that sits at the mouth of the Yalu River and across the border from North Korea. End Note). According to officials, each bus will have a police officer on board to ensure every passenger is wearing a mask and to prevent overcrowding and close contacts between riders. Media reported that senior citizen cards and cash were no longer acceptable forms of payment; therefore, elders were forced to either download WeChat or obtain a metro card—the only two accepted methods of payment. Dandong officials also announced that large department stores were permitted to resume operations, but cautioned that all businesses must take proper precautions to ensure safety of all customers and employees. Dandong contacts told ConGenOffs that while they are relieved to see more businesses and transportations resuming operation, Dandong residents' primary concern is PPE shortage. Some contacts asked ConGenOffs if Consulate Shenyang could provide medical supplies or help purchase PPEs online.

20. (U) Liaoning has not yet decided when schools can return: *Correction regarding yesterday's sitrep: CG Shenyang reported February 19 that "Liaoning authorities released a statement that high school and middle school students who are taking entrance exams this summer may resume classes on March 2, while rest of the high school and middle school students could not return until March 9. Elementary students from grades 4-6 could resume classes on March 16 but authorities have not yet announced a specific date for grades 1-3 and kindergarten. Liaoning officials noted that having students return in different stages would help minimize the risk of students and teachers contracting the virus."* Liaoning has not/not released any statement detailing when students can return to school. Liaoning Department of Education on January 31 said schools were not allowed to reopen before February 17, and that specific dates for resuming classes would be announced later. While international schools in Shenyang are planning to resume classes in March, since January 31, Liaoning has not released any information on when schools could reopen. CG Shenyang LES said that they also have not heard from

schools when their children would be able to return to class.

21. (U) Shenyang's First Batch of Automatic Mask Production Lines to Launch Soon:

Shenyang Xinsong Group formed a project team to streamline automatic mask production lines in order to meet the current mask supply demands in the market. The company successfully developed fully automated medical and surgical mask production lines using state-of-the-art technology. The first batches of masks will be off the production lines soon and are expected to assist greatly with mask supply needs in the area.

Wuhan

22. (SBU) Military Enforcing Wuhan Residential Quarantines: A contact of an evacuated CG Wuhan officer reported that the arrival of military guards at residential communities in Wuhan has resulted in stricter quarantine enforcement. The contact, a PRC citizen, said military guards augmented the housing development's private guard force on February 17. She previously could only leave her house once every three days but could still freely move from one part of the large housing development to another (the housing development was built in stages, with each stage housing thousands of people). However, starting February 17, the newly arrived military guards began strictly enforcing the rule on leaving your house once every three days.

23. (SBU) (b)(6) Drop in Nearby Wuhan City Cases: (b)(6)

(b)(6) in a satellite city one hour outside of Wuhan said (b)(6) city's strict 21-day home quarantine is coming to an end. (b)(6) new cases in the city had dropped from dozens a day to two a day and (b)(6) hopeful that the quarantine (b)(6) would end soon. (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(U) COVID-19 DEVELOPMENTS

Guangzhou

24. (U) Zhong Nanshan, the Guangzhou Institute of Respiratory Health, and Shenzhen-based Evergrande property developer has joined forces with Harvard Medical School (HMS) to establish the "Sino-U.S. New Coronavirus Scientific Research Expert Group," [according to press reporting](#). The group held its second video conference February 19 to exchange and discuss cooperation on rapid detection and diagnosis, clinical treatment, drug screening, and vaccine development, according to [separate reporting](#). HMS participants included George Q. Daley, MD, PhD, Dean; David Golan, MD, PhD, Dean for Research Operations and Global Programs; Arlene Sharpe, MD, PhD, Director of the Department of Immunology (HMS) and Co-Director of the Evergrande Center for Immunologic Diseases at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital; Bruce Walker, Director of the Ragon Institute of Mass General, MIT, and Harvard. Evergrande committed 800 million RMB (118 million USD) over five years to support the research. Over the long-term, the group will focus on virus traceability, infection and pathogenic mechanisms, rapid immunological detection methods, scientific research cooperation in ten major fields including genomic mutation and evolution.

25. (U) Guangdong provincial health authorities said February 19 at the daily [press conference](#) that about 89 percent of patients taking traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) medications have

either recovered or exhibited improvements in their condition. The application of TCM in Hubei by a team of 312 Guangdong TCM medical professionals has shown that - combined with Western medicine - TCM shortens the treatment process, increases recovery rates, and reduces mortality. In Guangdong, TCM treatment combined with Western medicine has been applied to 93 percent of COVID-19 patients to help lower fevers and relieve fatigue. TCM treatment is reportedly most effective in early and mid-stages of infection.

Chengdu

Sichuan

26. (U) From February 17-18, **Sichuan Party Chief Peng Qinghua conducted an inspection tour** in rural areas surrounding Leshan and Liangshan, during which he focused on epidemic response, poverty reduction, resumption of business, and aid for migrant workers returning to their places of employment. Peng directed local authorities to focus on the following issues:

- Preventing social gatherings.
- Improving local capacity to receive suspected COVID-19 cases.
- Improving “health-data systems” to review migrant workers’ health status.
- Managing charter buses for migrant workers returning to work.

27. (U) Peng also said that local officials should “resolutely prevent and correct” extreme behaviors, including the overzealous implementation of epidemic response measures and excessive use of law enforcement. Peng said that local governments should continue to protect people’s legitimate interests and rights; gain the people’s understanding and support; proactively deal with employment issues arising from the COVID-19 epidemic; and further ideological education and propaganda work.

28. (U) On February 19 the **Chengdu Municipal COVID-19 Epidemic Response Command issued a notice announcing the resumption of some passenger train lines** previously shut down as a result of the epidemic.

29. (U) On February 19, **Sichuan’s provincial government issued guidance on the reopening of enterprises in key sectors.** Districts and counties without confirmed COVID-19 cases should begin pushing for private enterprises to reopen, particularly companies in sectors focusing on energy, transportation, and the production of essential commodities, so long as they maintain a well-controlled and safe work environment. SOEs should take the lead in returning to work, according to the guidance. Owners of enterprises will assume full responsibility for a safe and healthy work environment. All facilities which plan on reopening should implement epidemic prevention measures and emergency reaction plans. The provincial government said it will closely work with other stakeholders to provide transportation to migrant workers.

30. (U) **Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Western Sichuan remains the**

most severely impacted region of the province outside of metropolitan areas. On February 19, Tawu (Daofu) County in Kardze had 60 confirmed cases, 34 suspected patients, and 391 close contacts are under medical observation. Local health officials reportedly administered 8,309 viral RNA tests among close contacts of persons associated with the two initial cluster outbreak sites between February 12-18. The Sichuan provincial and Kardze prefectural CDC offices have sent 660 personnel to Daofu, along with PPE supplies, according to official statements. Authorities have designated the Kardze Prefecture People's Hospital and Daofu County People's Hospital as appropriate facilities for receiving COVID-19 patients, with technical support provided by Chengdu-based Huaxi Hospital. The county has also renovated another hospital and a government facility in Daofu, and reportedly has 129 beds on standby. The county is also planning to build another makeshift hospital using other facilities.

31. (U) Health authorities in Nanchong city have reported no further cases of H5N6 avian flu outbreak since February 9. While the outbreak of avian flu impacted several thousand poultry stock in the area, there were no reported cases of human transmission.

Chongqing

32. (U) **All residents of Chongqing continue to face strict movement controls** and are only permitted to leave their residential areas to procure basic supplies every few days or to report for essential work, according to Canadian diplomats. All people entering Chongqing are required to self-isolate for 14 days or report to a government isolation center if they do not have a permanent Chongqing address. Diplomats are exempt only if they arrive directly from another country. The vast majority of businesses remain closed, and the process to receive approval to reopen is strict and unclear. Hotels are closed to short-term guests, with a possible handful of exceptions among luxury hotels.

33. (U) **Chongqing Party Secretary Chen Min'er chaired an extended meeting of the Chongqing municipal party standing committee on February 18, during which he said the city has achieved "positive results"** in previous phases of epidemic response, and is now moving into a new phase of "combining epidemic response with the resumption of production." Districts and counties should make sound judgements on the risk level that they are facing to avoid unnecessarily onerous restrictions and one size fits all approaches, Chen said.

34. (U) During the same February 18 meeting of the municipal party standing committee, Chen Min'er announced that Chongqing will initiate preferable tax policies, ensure the sufficient supply of energy and utilities, and facilitate project financing for enterprises affected by the virus outbreak. The municipal government also will support migrant workers returning to their places of employment and match workers with local job opportunities, he said. Chen again emphasized the importance of Xi Jinping's leadership in the combat against the epidemic.

35. (U) On February 18, Chongqing Mayor Tang Liangzhi met with a visiting State Council Epidemic Response Group. Tang thanked the group for its guidance in the prevention and control efforts in Chongqing. Sun Xinhua, head of the visiting group, praised Chongqing for its

quick action.

36. (U) Following a similar announcement by the Sichuan government on February 19, the **Chongqing municipal government said that it will roll out a “four-tiered, risk-based assessment system” to advise firms on resumption of normal operations.** According to the classification system, firms in “low-risk zones” that have had no COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days can resume work. Firms in “medium-risk” zones with fewer than 50 COVID-19 cases can reopen in a “quick but orderly” manner. Firms in high-risk zones with more than 50 cases or in zones with clustered outbreaks in the last 14 days can only resume production “gradually and on a case by case basis.”

37. (U) Following similar moves in Yunnan, the Chongqing government announced on February 19 that it will introduce a health QR code system to monitor citizens’ health status. Residents will be required to swipe a QR code when entering or exiting public spaces and communal workspaces. Foreign residents are being advised to register on Chongqing’s official WeChat account. The system will be piloted by a series of companies starting February 22.

38. (U) On February 19 Chongqing’s Finance Bureau noted that the municipal government had spent 1.9 billion RMB (\$270 million) on epidemic response so far, an increase of 350 million RMB (\$50 million) over the last 11 days.

Yunnan

39. (U) Yunnan Party Secretary Chen Hao, who so far has maintained a low profile during the COVID-19 epidemic, visited the Yunnan Central Water Diversion Project Administration Bureau on February 19, during which he highlighted the importance of resuming major infrastructure projects.

40. (U) According to a February 19 press release, **Kunming municipality will continue rigid closed management practices in rural areas** and re-issued a list of 12 epidemic control measures.

41. (U) On February 19, **Yunnan province announced the gradual resumption of inter-provincial bus services** starting February 21, with the exception of lines to Hubei or destinations over 800 km.

42. (U) The Yunnan government announced on February 19 that it will roll out the same four-tiered, risk-based assessment system recently announced in Chongqing and Sichuan, in which authorities will allow enterprises to reopen depending on whether they are located in low-risk, medium-risk, or high-risk areas. Risk levels are determined by the number of COVID-19 cases in a given area during the preceding 14-day period.

Guizhou

43. (U) **Traffic in Guizhou has reportedly tripled after the removal of road blockades on February 16** and is expected to continue growing rapidly, according to a statement issued by the Guizhou Provincial Transportation Department on February 18. The Department’s current

priorities include preventing individuals infected with COVID-19 from entering the province, containing the spread of the virus, and normalizing traffic to ensure logistics and supply chains.

(U) INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

44. (U) **China Sends Testing Kits to Japan:** China's *Global Times* reported that the PRC government has donated COVID-19 nucleic acid testing kits to Japan ([link](#)). A spokesperson at the PRC Embassy in Japan told press that BGI in Shenzhen and Shenzhen MengMa Charity Foundation had donated the kits to National Institute of Infectious Diseases of Japan.

45. (U) Fosun Pharma's Vice President announced they ordered 140 non-invasive ventilators, with a total value of RMB 15 million (USD 2.1 million), from their affiliate Breas Medical Group in Sweden for donation to 14 Hubei hospitals. (*CG Shanghai*)

46. (U) Essilor Group, a French visual health company, donated RMB 1.5 million (USD 210,000) and 200,000 pairs of goggles to medical staff in Hubei Province, fever clinics in other parts of the country, and traffic and medical staff at Shanghai's highway checkpoints. (*CG Shanghai*)

47. (U) Shanghai-headquartered video sharing site Bilibili is donating RMB 10 million (USD 1.4 million) to Wuhan, together with RMB 300,000 (USD 42,200) worth of medical supplies. The company is also offering free monthly subscriptions to 100,000 housebound viewers in Hubei and Sichuan provinces. (*CG Shanghai*)

(U) THIRD COUNTRY RESPONSE EFFORTS AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

48. (U) Nothing to report.

(U) ECONOMIC AND SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT

49. (U) **PBOC Claims Strong Fundamentals and Limited Impact of Virus on the Economy:** In a report release by PRC's central bank the PBOC (People's Bank of China) February 19, the PBOC listed the control of the epidemic as its top priority and asserted that the impact of the coronavirus on the economy will be limited "as the epidemic has not changed the country's economic fundamentals." PBOC stated it will help companies affected by the epidemic by lowering lending rates, increasing credit support, and providing more medium- to long-term loans. It urged national and local banks to take full advantage of the liquidity released through the central bank re-lending program to provide targeted credit support for companies that directly participate in epidemic control effort. The central bank said it would monitor short-term fluctuations in the consumer prices, adding that "there is no basis for long-term inflation or deflation."

50. (U) **SMEs Struggle to Stay Afloat Despite Government Relief Policies** To address the plight of SMEs, local authorities have reduced or exempted rents and payment of social insurance. PRC's State Council announced it would eliminate or reduce required corporate

contributions to employee social, medical, and unemployment funds for a period of time. However, many SME owners said these policies alone will not help address their immediate cash flow issues.

51. (U) Closed Schools and Self-Quarantined Teleworkers A Boon for Alibaba and Tencent APPs: Closed schools and homebound office workers have created a huge demand for virtual office tools, with Chinese tech firms Alibaba and Tencent being the main service providers. Alibaba's DingTalk is the most download free App in China's iOS App store, followed by Tencent Conference. DingTalk has been particularly swift in spotting the emerging need in the education sector. Nearly 600,000 teachers reported using DingTalk to conduct their online classes. According to media reports, some international schools have had to moved away from foreign online platforms due to slow Internet speed or VPN problems and instead have been using "more local friendly" online tools such as DingTalk and Tencent Conference. On February 17, PRC's Ministry of Education launched a national cloud learning platform for millions of students who are restricted to their homes over safety concerns arising from the Covid-19 outbreak.

52. (U) Covid-19 Outbreak Reduced Spring Festival Travel by Half: Passenger trips during the Chinese New Year Spring Festival period dropped by more than 50 percent this year, the country's top transport authority said on Wednesday. In December 2019, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) forecasted 3 billion trips during the holiday travel period from January 10 to February 18, however the actual figure was approximately 1.48 billion. The country recorded 210 million rail trips during the period— 196 million fewer than during the same period a year ago, a decrease of 48.3 percent, according to China State Railway Group.

53. (U) Heavily indebted private-sector conglomerate HNA Group will be taken over by the Hainan provincial government and its assets divided, according to international [press reports](#). The Hainan-based HNA operates Hainan Airlines – which has 13 China-U.S. routes, all of which were suspended amid COVID-19. HNA Group has been shedding foreign assets since 2018.

54. (U) State-owned Guangzhou Auto Corp. (GAC) announced it would begin mass production of facemasks on February 20 using five production lines. GAC said the masks would be distributed by Guangzhou authorities to medical personnel and public transit workers. The firm on February 12 had said it wanted 12 production lines running by February 22, with eventual goal of 30.

55. (U) Hainan Governor Shen Xiaoming visited Qionghai city February 18, home of the [Bo'ao Forum for Asia](#), to observe epidemic-control efforts on the site, according to [press reports](#). The Forum, which annually convenes senior Chinese officials and high-level foreign attendees, is currently scheduled for March 24-27.

56. (U) Officials at a State Council press conference on February 19 announced more than 50 percent of large enterprises in Shanghai and Jiangsu had returned to work, while small and medium-sized enterprises faced more challenges resuming work and production. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Commerce Commission also reported on February 19 that of 697 companies surveyed, 86 percent had received permission to restart. Breaking the numbers down,

approximately 93 percent of service sector businesses surveyed are working, including retail, food, delivery, and accounting firms. Deloitte and UPS are among the firms that authorities highlighted as open. However, officials noted that the service sector, which they said accounts for 70 percent of GDP, has been hit very hard in the short-term (though online grocery shopping more than doubled). Eighty percent of manufacturing firms surveyed have received approval to restart, including Tesla and J&J. Fortune 500 companies are doing better than average – over 90 percent surveyed have received permission to restart. (Note: It is unclear how representative surveyed companies are of the overall business landscape in Shanghai. End note.) Shanghai and State Council officials both acknowledged problems related to a shortage of returning workers, poor transportation and logistics, and difficulty in supporting the industrial chain. Officials in Shanghai encouraged eligible companies to take advantage of 28 business support policies issued by the city on February 5.

57. (U) **Shanghai law enforcement officials announced on February 19 that 14 percent of small vendors that have reopened (approximately 12,000) have been ordered to improve virus prevention measures.** These measures include registering health information for all employees, ensuring those returning from key areas complete a 14-day self-quarantine, wearing facemasks, performing daily temperature checks, and disinfecting the business every day.

58. (U) **Shanghai officials announced on February 19 that chartered trains and buses can be used to bring workers back to the city.** These trains will transport migrant workers from areas where the epidemic has been brought under control and remains stable, such as Sichuan, to the Yangtze River Delta region through March 31. The Municipal Road Transportation Management Bureau announced businesses can apply to arrange chartered buses to bring back employees. Since Sunday, trial trains ran from Guizhou, Henan, Anhui, and Sichuan provinces to transport migrant workers to Hangzhou and Ningbo in Zhejiang. Local governments in Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces can apply for such trains and buses. Similarly, Taizhou, Zhejiang announced February 16 it will charter flights to bring workers from Chongqing, Guiyang, Chengdu, Kunming, and Xi'an back to Taizhou.

59. ~~(SBL)~~ **The Shanghai and Ningbo ports are facing a shortage of reefer plugs, leading to delays and additional costs for importing items in refrigerated containers.** These challenges are leading international container and shipping companies to suggest customers change the destination of shipments, especially for fresh and chilled commodities. One diary importer reported to CG Shanghai's Agricultural Trade Office that supply chain challenges associated with coronavirus had caused recent shipments from Europe to be diverted or delayed due to labor shortages.

60. (U) **Ningbo launched China's first epidemic prevention insurance policies for small and micro enterprises.** The policies will pay up to RMB 100,000 (USD 14,200) for enterprises that stop work or stop production due to infectious diseases. The government will subsidize half of the RMB 2,000 (USD 285) premium for each enterprise.

61. (U) **Suzhou on February 18 announced additional measures to help businesses resume operations,** including employment subsidies per worker, subsidizing unemployment insurance,

deferring payment of social security premiums, reducing interest rates on loans, etc.

62. ~~(SBU)~~ **COVID-19 Impact on JD.com Shenyang:** A delivery personnel at JD.Com Shenyang branch told ConGenOff that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the company's operations. JD Shenyang's inventory is rapidly decreasing since many manufacturing companies have not yet resumed operations, and those that have resumed were behind schedule. Additionally, delivery service and supply chain continue to be a challenge, as JD trucks from other provinces face difficulty entering Shenyang due to roadblocks and highway closures. He lamented that delivery service within Shenyang has also slowed down because trucks are stopped multiple times at checkpoints for body temperatures and questioning by the authorities. Moreover, customers take longer time to pick up their packages due to closed management, forcing delivery personnel to wait much longer than usual at residential complexes. Checkpoints and movement restrictions combined with dwindling inventory has led JD Shenyang to reduce its daily delivery schedules.

63. ~~(SBU)~~ **Contact says company's delivery process significantly impacted by COVID-19 and closed management:** A contact at the Zhengsheng Husbandry Co, a Shenyang-based animal feed production company, told ConGenOff that one of the biggest challenges the company faces is transportation and delivery. The contact noted that in addition to roadblocks and highways, another major problem for the company is that some truck drivers are unwilling to drive across provinces to deliver the products because they think they are at higher risk of contracting the virus driving long distances through multiple provinces (Note: CG Shenyang was told by other business contacts that their operations have also been impacted due to workers' fear of the virus. For example, Walmart Liaoning said that nearly half of Sam's Club Shenyang employees have resigned since COVID-19 outbreak, and a contact in Dalian told ConGenOff that seafood processing companies are concerned about resuming their businesses because many of their workers are hesitant to return due to growing fear of the virus. End Note). Additionally, contact noted that delivering products to rural areas are even more problematic since authorities there are generally stricter about allowing entry to outside trucks and personnel. In some rural areas, authorities require delivery personnel to drop off supplies at the border and force the customers to come pick up the packages themselves which slows down the overall delivery process that is already delayed due to roadblocks and checkpoints.

64. (U) While the central government has introduced a series of measures to ensure an adequate supply of **animal feed** to help agricultural companies restore production as soon as possible, in Sichuan local contacts report **their business operations remain at 70 percent of their normal capacity**. The national Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs have reportedly instructed local governments not to intercept or detain vehicles transporting feed, live animals, or animal products if they have a necessary traffic permit.

65. (U) According to CG Chengdu contacts at China Xiangtai Food Co., Ltd., the company has seen a 300 percent increase in supermarket sales over the 2020 Chinese New Year season compared to the same period last year, despite the COVID-19 outbreak. Headquartered in Chongqing, China Xiangtai is a new food company primarily engaged in pork processing, as well as selling beef, lamb and poultry products.

(SBU) SUPPORT FOR U.S. CITIZENSChengdu

66. ~~(SBU)~~ As of February 20, Chengdu ACS has received no new information of American citizens who have been ordered to self-quarantine or been sent to a controlled quarantine facility. Chengdu ACS has observed more discussions on AmCit WeChat groups about people planning their return to China. As AmCits return, they will likely face a 14-day period of self-quarantine in most major cities in Southwest China. Many AmCits who have remained in China throughout the epidemic note that their residential communities have implemented "closed-management" restrictions. Many Americans in Chengdu are only allowed to leave their apartment once per day or once every two days to get supplies.

Shanghai

67. ~~(SBU)~~ The Consulate continues to reach out to the FAO to get clarity on **self-quarantine regulations in Shanghai** on behalf of returning American citizens who have been ordered by their neighborhood committee to complete a 14-day quarantine. As reported above, while Shanghai only requires this for those who have traveled to high-risk areas, in practice, many locations are requiring an in-home quarantine for anyone returning to Shanghai, regardless of from where.

Wuhan

68. (U) Wuhan Maternity Hospital **Unable to Provide Birth Certificate to U.S. Citizen**: An American citizen reported that a private maternity hospital in Wuhan was unable to provide a birth certificate after she gave birth. The hospital said they had too few staff to handle administrative tasks such as birth records. The hospital could not give a date for when they would be able to provide a birth certificate.

69. ~~(SBU)~~ **U.S. Citizen in Changsha Reports Free Movement**: A U.S. citizen in Changsha reported that he was able to move around freely as long as he carried a resident's card. He reported that American Citizen WeChat groups in the city were largely concerned with how to get paid for missed work, how to work from home, and, in some cases, more restrictive housing policies. He noted that he had not heard of any problems from U.S. citizens in Changsha and that those who have stayed in the city to this point are not planning on leaving.

~~(SBU)~~ **POST OPERATIONS**Chengdu

70. (U) Civil aviation is still operating from Chengdu, **though with decreased viable flights for USG personnel to depart Chengdu for the United States**. Viable transit destinations remaining include Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, and Hong Kong. Only two international flights from Chongqing, to Bangkok and Hong Kong, remain in operation.

Guangzhou

71. ~~(SBU)~~ **Post Medical Provider returned to Guangzhou February 19 with medical equipment that can test for a variety of respiratory viruses and bacteria**. While it cannot test for COVID-19, it can test for 22 other respiratory pathogens and give medical personnel a better

picture of any illnesses that occur at Post.

(U) MEDIA ROUNDUP

72. ~~(SBU)~~ **South China PAS media contacts posted satirical comments on the government's response to COVID-19.** The manager of an online media outlet in Guangzhou noted that with the increasing closed management policies of cities and provinces in the COVID-19 campaign, there has also been an uptick in the blocking of WeChat groups, Weibo posts, and other websites. A leader of a WeChat public account in Guangzhou posted commentary that the government should gain respect and authority to govern by not completely squashing rumors. A Guangzhou-based blogger had written about a January order given by the Director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology to the staff in January to not discuss COVID-19. This post has since been blocked on social media. *(CG Guangzhou)*

73. (U) Guangzhou netizens shared comments made by Wang Chen, the Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Engineering who said that **society should prepare for long-term co-existence with COVID-19** after this year, with commenters expressing concern. They also discussed reports that nine individuals are being investigated by the Guangzhou police for obstructing the COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control measures, including deliberate concealment of symptoms and refusal to quarantine, with some netizens commenting that these individuals should be severely punished for their actions. *(CG Guangzhou)*

74. (U) On February 16, **Wuhan authorities announced that a medical team from Liaoning will take over management of 17 of the 32 wards at Leishenshan Hospital**, one of two emergency hospitals built in Hubei in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Since early February, Liaoning province has sent more than more than 1,000 workers to Hubei to assist with relief efforts. Media reports and updates regarding the news quickly went viral on social media platforms in Northeast China under the hashtag #Liaoning Medical Team Takes Over Management at Leishenshan Hospital#. By February 20, it had become a top trending topic with a viewership of 15 million and more than 11,000 comments. Chinese netizens in the region expressed mixed opinions on the issue. Most praised the high-caliber medical skills of Liaoning medical personnel and welcomed the inspiring and positive news, however some netizens complained about underreporting of the actual contribution of relief efforts from Liaoning and national bias towards people from Northeast China. Others voiced concerns about the impact sending medical workers to Hubei would have on local medical services and unequal access to medical treatment in the country. The following additional topics were also trending on social media sites in Northeast China: 1) Over 100 patients cured and discharged in Heilongjiang, 2) 1,100 milliliters of plasma donated by healed patients in Jilin, and 3) Changchun medical waste treatment plant runs around-the-clock. *(CG Shenyang)*

75. (U) **Social media users continued to criticize a propaganda video released by authorities in Gansu province showing female health workers crying as their heads are shaved**, ostensibly to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Social media users questioned whether such measures were necessary and urged local government officials to remember that health workers are still human beings.

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

Signature: Branstad

Drafted By: BEIJING:Multiple Mission China Drafters

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