

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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The China–Taiwan Weekly Update is a joint product from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute. The update supports the ISW-AEI Coalition Defense of Taiwan project, which assesses Chinese campaigns against Taiwan, examines alternative strategies for the United States and its allies to deter the Chinese Communist Party’s aggression, and—if necessary—defeat the People’s Liberation Army. The update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and cross–Taiwan Strait developments.

People’s Republic of China (PRC) military officers have visited Russian-held territory in Ukraine and toured the frontlines, according to a former Western official speaking to Reuters.[1] These visits highlight PRC efforts to learn from the Russia-Ukraine war in preparation for modern warfare. PRC military thinkers have previously noted the cost effectiveness of using drones to destroy high-value targets, such as air defense systems, based on their observations from the war.[2] The lessons that the PRC draws from the war will likely inform its doctrine, training, and development of capabilities moving forward.

The PRC has likely already used some of these lessons to develop new counter-drone systems.[3] PRC weapons manufacturer Norinco claimed in its monthly publication that it has built the world’s first close-in, anti-drone barrage system, which it named the Bullet Curtain. The chief engineer of the system claimed that it uses a 4 x 4 array of 35-millimeter barrels to fire a “curtain” to intercept projectiles, such as aircraft, drones, and missiles. The system appears designed to counter swarm attacks in particular. It uses volleys of rapid, overlapping fire and reloads quickly, according to Norinco.[4] The PRC investment in the Bullet Curtain may be in part a response to the reduced effectiveness of electronic warfare against drones in the Russia-Ukraine war, as both sides have developed fiber-optic systems that can resist jamming.[5]

The PRC is emphasizing counter-drone capabilities likely in preparation for the fighting that it would face in a Taiwan invasion scenario. US and Taiwanese concepts for defending the island heavily feature cheap and mobile drones to repel the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). [6] Taiwan has already acquired advanced US drones and plans to produce four domestic systems as well. An unnamed Taiwanese official told the *Liberty Times* that Taiwan plans to double its production of attack drones in order to

turn the Taiwan Strait into a “hellscape” for the PLA. [7] The term “hellscape” refers to US plans to heavily involve drones across all domains to fight the PLA around Taiwan.[8]

The PRC has increased its military cooperation with Russia to improve PLA readiness, further highlighting how Russia is helping the PRC prepare for future wars. The PLA has very little combat experience and struggles to run realistic exercises, which could compromise its readiness. The PLA has accordingly expanded its training with Russia in recent years, particularly to improve interoperability and the realism of exercises.[9] PRC-Russia joint military exercise reached a record high in 2024, highlighting this expanding cooperation.[10]

The PRC has separately provided economic support, including dual-use goods, to Russia throughout the Russia-Ukraine, despite consistently claiming to be an impartial mediator and voice for peace.[11] PRC-Russia economic cooperation has deepened in recent years and spiked in 2024, when bilateral trade reached a record high.[12] The PRC has supplied Russia with 90 percent of legacy chips and 70 percent of machine tools needed to sustain the war in Ukraine. [13] NATO has called the PRC the “decisive enabler” of the Russian war against Ukraine.[14] The PRC support to the Russian defense industry may provide the PRC opportunities to learn about wartime production, including about the types of technologies that Russia is fielding in the war.

Unnamed US officials said that over 100 PRC nationals fighting for Russia are likely mercenaries with no connection to the PRC government. The officials told *Reuters* that the soldiers have minimal training are unlikely to have a significant impact on Russia’s war effort.[15] The comments follow Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky claiming that Ukraine is aware of 155 PRC nationals fighting in Ukraine and has captured two of them. Zelensky accused Russia of using social media to recruit PRC fighters. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained that the PRC government mandates its citizens to avoid conflict zones, however.[16]

North Korea conducted a special operations forces (SOF) exercise, which similarly appeared to incorporate lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw a SOF exercise on April 4, which involved camouflage operations, including ghillie suits. North Korean state media described the exercise as featuring “adaptations to modern warfare.”[17] The term “modern warfare” in North Korea often refers specifically to the Russia-Ukraine war.[18]

The North Korean emphasis on camouflage may be part of its effort to develop its counter-drone doctrine, which could immediately benefit its soldiers fighting Ukraine. Ukraine has reportedly killed and injured many North Korean soldiers in recent months with drones, likely prompting the North Korean military to explore how to better evade these attacks.[19] The camouflage that the North Korean SOF practiced may be ineffective against Ukrainian motion-detecting and thermal optic drones in wide-open field environments. But the use of camouflage to evade drones could be useful in the event of a

war with South Korea, which would occur over more mountainous terrain. Kim’s visit to the exercise coincided with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol’s impeachment, indicating that North Korea may be trying to signal its military readiness amid South Korea’s leadership vacuum and subsequent security vulnerabilities.[20]

The PRC may have detained Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice Chairman General He Weidong or removed him from his post. A Chinese Communist Party (CCP) purge of He would indicate that PRC President Xi Jinping’s distrust of the loyalty of the military extends to members of the top brass and his own inner circle. A *Newsweek* article on March 27 reported rumors that He had been arrested, citing an independent investigative journalist.[21] He subsequently missed a tree-planting event that all other members of the CMC attended on April 2 and was the only Politburo member absent from the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries on April 8–9. PRC officials have provided no explanation for his absence.[22] The *Financial Times* reported on April 10 that the CCP had removed He from his post in recent weeks, according to five “people familiar with the matter, including current and former US officials.[23] PRC Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Wu Qian said that he had no information to offer when asked about rumors of He’s arrest. The ministry omitted the question from its transcript of the press conference. This response contrasted markedly with its unambiguous denial in late 2024 that Defense Minister Dong Jun was under investigation.[24]

He is (or was) the second highest-ranking general in the PLA after fellow CMC Vice Chairman General Zhang Youxia. He would be the first CMC vice chairman to be purged since Zhao Ziyang in 1989 and the first uniformed vice chairman to be purged since He Long in 1969. Both Zhao and He Long were purged during periods of severe political upheaval in the PRC; Zhao was removed due to his support for the student protesters at Tiananmen Square, while He Long was purged during the Cultural Revolution.

He Weidong would be the highest-ranking military official to fall victim to Xi Jinping’s far-ranging, anti-corruption campaign. The CCP has investigated, removed, or otherwise punished several senior military officials since 2023, including CMC Political Work Department Director Miao Hua, former defense ministers Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe, former PLA Rocket Force Commander Li Yuchao, and most recently the deputy secretary of the CMC Discipline Inspection Commission Tang Yong.[25] Many of these “disciplinary” cases were connected to alleged corruption, particularly in the PLA Rocket Force and military procurements. Some more recent cases, including that of Miao Hua, may have supported an effort to enforce ideological orthodoxy within the PLA, including by emphasizing the Xi-centered Chairman Responsibility System over collective leadership. The PRC issued directives in February 2025 that strengthened oversight of military-related publications after multiple PLA-affiliated organizations published articles that emphasized tenets of collective leadership and intra-party democracy.[26]

The reasons for He’s alleged removal are unclear. He has publicly showed loyalty to Xi, referencing the Chairman Responsibility System in speeches at the annual Two Sessions every year since becoming a CMC vice chairman in 2023.[27] He has a personal history with Xi as a member of the “Fujian Clique”—one of two major groups of officials that Xi promoted to high roles after working with them earlier in

his career.[28] Suspended CMC political commissar Miao Hua was a member of this clique as well, however, and the independent journalist whom *Newsweek* cited claimed that a third member—former director of the CMC Logistic Support Department Zhao Keshi—was also arrested along with He.[29] It is possible that He committed unknown criminal offenses, rather than being targeted for perceived disloyalty or ideological differences. The ongoing PRC purges and corruption investigations against high-ranking military members reflects Xi’s continued mistrust of the military leadership, which may hinder future war plans. General He previously led the PLA’s Eastern Theater Command from 2019 to 2022. The ETC is the theater command responsible for Taiwan and the East China Sea.[30]

Key Takeaways

- **PRC:** PRC military officers have visited Russian-held territory in Ukraine and toured the frontlines, according to a former Western official speaking to *Reuters*. These visits highlight PRC efforts to learn from the Russia–Ukraine war in preparation for modern warfare. This comes as the PRC has increased its military cooperation with Russia to improve PLA readiness.
- **North Korea:** North Korea conducted a special operations forces (SOF) exercise, which appeared to incorporate lessons from the Russia–Ukraine war. The North Korean emphasis on camouflage may be part of its effort to develop counter-drone doctrine, which could be especially applicable in a war with South Korea.
- **PRC:** The PRC may have detained CMC Vice Chairman General He Weidong or removed him from his post. A CCP purge of He would indicate that the distrust that PRC President Xi Jinping has toward the military extends to members of the top brass and his own inner circle.

Taiwan

Taiwan charged a PRC ship captain for intentionally damaging undersea internet cables for the first time, highlighting Taiwanese efforts to protect critical infrastructure against PRC sabotage. Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration (CGA) intercepted the Togo-registered vessel *Hong Tai 58* in February 2025 after it severed an undersea cable connecting Taiwan to its outlying Penghu islands. It detained the captain—identified as “Wang”—alongside seven other crew members, who were all PRC nationals.[31] Wang allegedly ordered his crew to release the ship anchor and drag it along the seabed in order to sever the cable.[32] The Tainan District Prosecutors’ Office charged Wang with violating the Telecommunications Management Act but deported the other seven crew members, citing insufficient evidence to charge them.[33] Wang, who previously used fake documents to enter Taiwan’s Keelung Port, has refused to reveal the ship owner or the identity of the individual who directed him to cut the cable.[34]

PRC authorities deflected Taiwan’s accusations against Wang. PRC Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian used the incident to criticize Taiwan’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) on April 16, saying that undersea cables can break via natural causes and that Taiwan’s judicial system “has

become a political tool of the DPP authorities to ‘resist China.’”^[35] The PRC similarly denied that the bulk carrier *Yi Peng 3* severed two cables in the Baltic Sea in November 2024. Sweden’s Accident Investigation Board found insufficient evidence to prove intentional sabotage but reportedly stated that PRC authorities limited its access to the ship for the investigation. Swedish authorities are continuing to investigate the incident in a separate probe, however.^[36]

Taiwan’s reliance on undersea internet cables is a vulnerability that offers the PRC a deniable means of harassing and isolating Taiwan. The PRC has claimed that damage to cables is unintentional, but their development of cable-cutting technologies undermines this claim. A PRC engineering journal released a design for a cable cutting device in March 2025, shortly after Taiwan intercepted the *Hong Tai 58*.^[37] Taiwan observed PRC fishing boats and foreign-flagged PRC cargo vessels passing over its undersea cables around the time that the cables were severed. Cables connecting Taiwan to its outlying Matsu islands have been severed at a rate of five times per year—fifty times the global norm of 0.1–0.2 times per year.^[38]

Taiwan’s efforts to prosecute Wang highlight its growing responsiveness to the threat of a PRC-imposed communications blockade. The Taiwanese National Defense Ministry launched on January 15 new protocols that supported surveillance and law enforcement efforts against vessels that authorities suspect of sabotaging undersea cables in Taiwanese waters.^[39] Taiwan also raised penalties for damage to undersea cables, and its Coast Guard Administration (CGA) created a “blacklist” of ships deemed threatening after a different cargo ship severed a cable north of Taiwan.^[40] These efforts accompany initiatives to enhance Taiwan’s digital resilience. Taiwan’s Digital Affairs Ministry has taken steps to diversify the Taiwanese digital landscape by installing 773 low-earth-orbit satellite reception stations at key military and logistical locations.^[41] The ministry has made similar efforts to improve cable redundancy by offering subsidies to operators who build backup systems and international cable landing stations.^[42]

Taiwanese authorities arrested a former aide to then-Foreign Affairs Minister Joseph Wu for spying on behalf of the PRC. Taiwan is uncovering a concerted PRC effort to infiltrate the DPP. Taipei prosecutors detained the aide—Ho Jen-chieh—and searched his home on April 10 on allegations that he provided intelligence to PRC agents. ^[43] Ho worked as an aide to Joseph Wu when Wu served as foreign minister from 2018 to 2024. Wu is currently the secretary general of Taiwan’s National Security Council. The ruling DPP held an emergency meeting on April 13 and unanimously voted to expel Ho from the party. ^[44] Ho’s arrest follows a string of espionage cases within the DPP; three other DPP staffers were arrested earlier in April for selling and leaking information to the PRC.^[45] The PRC considers the DPP to be a party of separatists. It suspended government exchanges with Taiwan after Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP won the presidency in 2016. The DPP has the toughest stance on the PRC among mainstream Taiwanese political parties.

The William Lai Ching-te administration is seeking reforms to address the growing threat of PRC espionage, but Taiwanese law has very lenient sentences for espionage compared to most countries.^[46] Sentences under Taiwan’s National Security Act are typically between three and 10 years.^[47] Sentences under the 2020 Anti-Infiltration Act are “not more than five years,” and the fine is limited to “not more

than 10 million new Taiwan dollars (around 300,000 US dollars).[48] The National Security Bureau (NSB) reported a threefold increase in the number of espionage cases from 2021 to 2024.[49] The National Defense Ministry proposed an amendment in March 2025 to imprison active-duty military personnel who expressed support for the PRC for one to seven years.[50] The Lai administration is seeking for Taiwan’s military to reinstate the military trial system to prevent and deter PRC espionage within the armed forces.[51]

The PRC is promoting itself as an alternative trade partner to Taiwan amid the United States’ implementation of tariffs. PRC rhetoric on US-Taiwan trade relations is amplifying voices in Taiwan’s opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party advocating for closer trade cooperation with the PRC. PRC state media outlet Xinhua promoted KMT Mainland Affairs Department Director Lin Chu-chia’s call for Taiwan to diversify its export markets and increase exports to the PRC by restoring cross-strait relations.[52] Xinhua repeated Taiwanese academic Hsu Wen-chung’s appeal for Taiwan to pursue cross-strait cooperation, take advantage of the PRC demand, integrate into the Belt and Road Initiative, and bolster Taiwan’s service industry by allowing PRC tourists and students.[53]

KMT Chairman Eric Chu Li-lun criticized Taiwan’s overreliance on the United States on April 9 and accused the DPP of “relying on the United States to oppose China,” using language evocative of the common PRC platitude that the DPP is “relying on the United States to seek independence.”[54] Chu advocated for adopting a policy of being “pro-US and friendly to the PRC” to reduce economic reliance on the United States and practice more independent trade policy.[55]

The PRC framing of Taiwan’s response to US tariffs aligns with its broader narratives portraying the Lai administration as a willing pawn of the United States. PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) spokesperson Zhu Fenglian accused President Lai on April 16 of servility to the United States for responding to the recent US tariff announcements with a proposal to increase purchases of US goods and investment in the United States.[56] Zhu claimed that many countries have sided with the PRC in confronting the United States and that the Taiwanese public admires the mainland’s confidence.[57] This framing aims to undermine cooperation with the United States and weaken political support for the DPP while extolling the benefits of closer cross-strait engagement. The PRC will likely amplify calls for Taiwan to increase economic cooperation with the mainland as Taiwanese domestic political discourse focuses on insulating Taiwan from the impact of US tariffs.

The China Coast Guard (CCG) conducted patrols in Taiwan’s restricted waters around Kinmen two days in a row. Four CCG ships simultaneously patrolled in different areas of Kinmen’s restricted waters on April 10-11. The CCG has intruded into Kinmen’s waters 68 times since February 2024, according to Taiwan’s CGA.[58] Kinmen is a Taiwan-administered archipelago located two miles from the PRC and entirely surrounded by PRC internal waters. Taiwan does not claim territorial waters or a contiguous zone around Kinmen due to the islands’ proximity to the PRC but maintains “prohibited” and “restricted” waters that are functionally equivalent. The CCG began conducting “law enforcement” patrols in Kinmen’s restricted waters in February 2024 to erode Taiwan’s control over the waters and assert the PRC’s legal jurisdiction there. It has since normalized three to four incursions

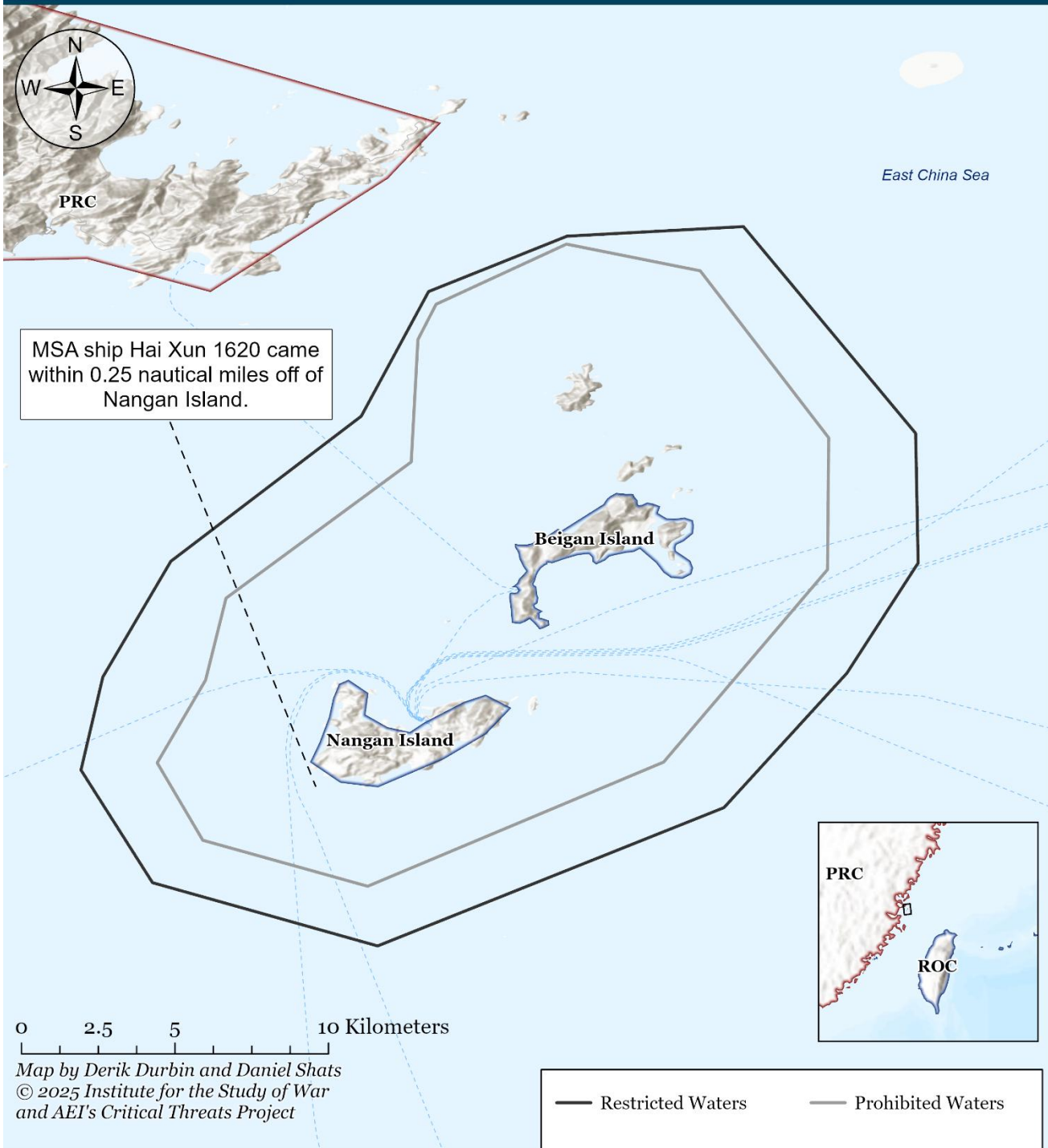
per month. The CCG is a paramilitary organization under the CMC and its activities around Taiwan serve Beijing’s strategic goals.

A PRC law enforcement ship separately entered the prohibited waters around Taiwan’s Matsu Islands for unknown reasons on April 14. The ship—called the *Haixun 1620*—is a “navigation mark ship” belonging to the PRC Maritime Safety Administration (MSA)—a civilian law enforcement agency under the PRC’s Ministry of Transportation. The ship is equipped to deploy buoys to aid navigation.^[59] ISW verified through Automated Identification System (AIS) tracking that the ship sailed in a straight line into the prohibited waters around Nangan Island and came within 0.25 nautical miles of the island before turning around and sailing away. It is unclear whether it deployed a buoy in Taiwan’s waters, but the PRC has previously deployed navigational markers in disputed waters in the South China Sea.^[60] The PRC uses ostensibly “law enforcement” ships and methods to lend an air of legitimacy to its efforts to assert control over disputed waters.

China Coast Guard Violations of Kinmen Restricted Waters April 10-11



PRC Law Enforcement Violation of Matsu Islands Prohibited Waters April 14



China

The PRC is exploiting controversies surrounding the United States’ economic and foreign policy to conduct information operations portraying the United States as “unstable” and potentially dangerous. PRC state media outlet *Xinhua* published a commentary on April 8 contrasting US “protectionism” with the PRC desire for increased connectivity and foreign trade.^[61] The commentary lauded the PRC’s economic vitality and culture of innovation and its positive contributions to global development through the Belt and Road Initiative and foreign investment. The commentary also stated that the PRC will continue “moving forward in the storm,” indicating that the PRC will not submit in the mounting trade war with the United States.^[62] The PRC announced that it raised tariffs on US goods from 84 percent to 125 percent on April 11 following US President Donald Trump’s decision to raise US tariffs on the PRC to 145 percent.^[63] PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian said in an April 10 press conference that the US tariff policies “selfishly” posed a risk to the global economy.^[64] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a video in English calling for the global community to cooperate and build a better future, presenting the PRC as a country for peace and opportunity and implying that US global leadership is responsible for global instability and hardship.^[65]

The PRC appears to be exploiting shocks created by US tariffs to seek increased trade opportunities and economic cooperation with other countries. PRC President Xi Jinping embarked on a five-day tour of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia, which faced 46 percent, 49 percent, and 24 percent tariffs from the United States, respectively, until Trump announced a 90-day pause.^[66] Xi rarely travels to meet foreign leaders. His presence thus sends a message to Southeast Asian leadership about the significance the PRC places on this engagement. Xi and Vietnamese General Secretary To Lam signed 45 agreements on April 13, calling for greater cooperation on trade and supply chain security amid US tariffs.^[67]

Date	Event
February 1	The United States announced 10% tariffs on all PRC imports effective Feb. 4. ^a
February 4	The PRC Finance Ministry announced 15% tariffs against the US on coal and liquified natural gas products, and 10% tariffs on crude oil, agricultural machinery, and large-engine cars effective February 10. ^b The Ministry of Commerce announced export controls on critical minerals . ^c
March 3	The United States announced additional 10% tariffs on all PRC imports effective Mar. 4, making it a 20% tariff in total. ^d
March 4	The PRC Finance Ministry announced 15% tariffs effective Mar 10 against the US on fruits and vegetables, chicken, corn, cotton, and wheat, as well as 10% tariffs on pork, beef, dairy products, aquatic products, soybeans, sorghum, etc. ^e 10 American companies were added to the “unreliable entities” list and 15 companies were added to an export control list.
April 2	President Trump announced a 34% “reciprocal” tariff against the PRC effective Apr. 9 on in his “liberation day” announcement in addition to the previous 20% tariff increases earlier in his term. ^f He also issued an executive order to eliminate the duty-free de minimis policy . ^g
April 4	The PRC Finance Ministry responded with 34% tariffs of its own against the United States and added 11 American companies to the “unreliable entities” list. ^h The Ministry of Commerce also announced additional export controls on critical minerals . ⁱ
April 7	President Trump threatened an additional 50% tariff if the PRC did not cancel the 34% tariff. ^j
April 8	The PRC Ministry of Commerce responded that “China will fight to the end” and called the threat of additional tariffs “blackmail.” ^k
	The United States announced a tariff increase from 34% to 84% against the PRC effective Apr. 9. ^l De minimis tariff rates tripled from the original Apr. 2 announcement. ^m
April 9	The PRC Finance Ministry announced a tariff increase from 34% to 84% effective Apr. 10. ⁿ The PRC Ministry of Commerce added another six American companies to the “unreliable entities” list and added 12 American companies to a control list restricting the export of dual-use items. ^o
(Midday)	The United States announced reciprocal tariffs against all countries except for the PRC were suspended for 90 days, but PRC reciprocal tariffs increased to 125% effective Apr. 10, a 145% increase from when Trump took office. ^p De minimis tariff rates quadrupled from the original Apr. 2 announcement.
April 10	The PRC announced import restrictions on Hollywood movies. ^q
April 11	The PRC announced 125% tariffs against the United States effective Apr. 12. The State Council Tariff Commission stated that it was becoming a numbers game and that this would be the last tit-for-tat tariff increase from the PRC. ^r
April 12	The United States Customs and Border Protection announced reciprocal tariff exemptions on some PRC electronics such as chips, computers, and phones. ^s
April 13	President Trump posted on Truth Social: “There was no tariff exception announced on Friday.” ^t

a <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-imposes-tariffs-on-imports-from-canada-mexico-and-china/>

b https://www.mof.gov.cn/zhengwuxinxi/caizhengxinwen/202502/t20250204_3955222.htm

c https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zwgk/zcfb/art/2025/art_e623090907fc4e1092foa4db72f57b95.html dot

d <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/further-amendment-to-duties-addressing-the-synthetic-opioid-supply-chain-in-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

e http://gss.mof.gov.cn/gzdt/zhengcefabu/202503/t20250304_3959228.htm

f <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/regulating-imports-with-a-reciprocal-tariff-to-rectify-trade-practices-that-contribute-to-large-and-persistent-annual-united-states-goods-trade-deficits/>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Annex-I.pdf>

g <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/regulating-imports-with-a-reciprocal-tariff-to-rectify-trade-practices-that-contribute-to-large-and-persistent-annual-united-states-goods-trade-deficits/>

h <http://www.news.cn/politics/20250404/99ce49d54cd84a3c8075729df46a3d55/c.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/04/business/china-trump-tariffs-retaliation.html>

i http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zwgk/zcfb/art/2025/art_9c2108ccaf754f22a34abab2fedaa944.html

j <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114297331052690348>

k https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfb/xwfyth/art/2025/art_a71b07a2ea724050b9c8a46ee4bdf4f6.html dot

l <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/amendment-to-recipricol-tariffs-and-updated-duties-as-applied-to-low-value-imports-from-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

m <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/amendment-to-recipricol-tariffs-and-updated-duties-as-applied-to-low-value-imports-from-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

n https://gss.mof.gov.cn/gzdt/zhengcefabu/202504/t20250409_3961684.htm

o https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/zwgk/zcfb/art/2025/art_c6b190344a154e6f831e0fd190e41e.html dot

p <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/modifying-reciprocal-tariff-rates-to-reflect-trading-partner-retaliation-and-alignment/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/10/business/economy/china-tariffs-145-percent.html>

q <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/beijing-bites-back-us-tariffs-by-curbing-hollywood-imports-2025-04-10/>

r https://gss.mof.gov.cn/gzdt/zhengcefabu/202504/t20250411_3961823.htm

s https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USDHSCBP-3db9e55?wgt_ref=USDHSCBP_WIDGET_2

t <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114332337028519855>

The PRC issued risk warnings for citizens traveling and studying in the United States, exploiting changes in US policy to portray the United States as dangerous. The PRC Ministry of Culture and Tourism issued a warning on April 9 that urged PRC tourists in the United States to “travel with caution.” It stated that the warning was due to deteriorating US–PRC economic and trade relations and US domestic security.[68] The PRC issued similar warnings in the first US–China trade war in 2019. The PRC Ministry of Education issued a warning to students seeking to study abroad or pursue a degree in the United States following the passage of Ohio state legislation that imposed restrictions on US–PRC academic exchanges. [69] Multiple PRC students have had their US student visas and immigration statuses revoked in recent months, with some being forced to leave the United States.[70] The PRC will likely use these cases as evidence in information operations to portray the United States as increasingly isolationist and dangerous for the PRC nationals and the international community.

Unnamed US officials claimed that PRC officials indirectly admitted to them that the PRC was responsible for cyberattacks on US infrastructure in retaliation to US military support for Taiwan. Unnamed US officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Coordinator for Cyber and Digital Affairs Wang Lei insinuated that US military support for Taiwan resulted in hacking attempts on American civilian infrastructure at a Geneva summit with US officials in December 2024.[71] Wang’s comment implied but did not explicitly say that the PRC government was responsible for cyberattacks on US infrastructure, which US officials reportedly interpreted as an attempt to deter US military intervention in defense of Taiwan. The Geneva summit was focused on the Volt Typhoon hacking incidents. Volt Typhoon is a PRC state-sponsored hacking group that successfully infiltrated computer networks in critical infrastructure while remaining undetected.[72] US and foreign partner cybersecurity and intelligence agencies in their February 2024 report assessed with high confidence Volt Typhoon intended to leverage its access to critical infrastructure to disrupt key operational technology functions against the United States.[73] Microsoft corroborated with moderate confidence that Volt Typhoon is trying to develop capabilities to disrupt United States-Asia regional communication infrastructure.[74] Volt Typhoon operated undetected from at least 2021 to 2023.[75] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied the allegations from the *Wall Street Journal*. [76] PRC public statements on the topic have consistently dismissed allegations of hacking against the United States or blamed the hacking on criminals.

The PRC government has developed a state-sponsored hacking industry with sophisticated cyberattacking capabilities. Volt Typhoon is one of several groups, such as Salt Typhoon and Silk Typhoon, that the United States has accused of hacking US critical infrastructure and companies. Hacking organizations in the PRC are profit-driven and sell the data that they obtain to the highest bidder. PRC government entities are among the potential buyers.[77] Volt Typhoon notably also targeted and infiltrated Guam’s critical infrastructure, which may affect US time-phased force deployments into the Indo-Pacific, especially in the event of conflict against the PRC.[78]

The PRC is exploiting the reduction of the US federal workforce to increase its intelligence collection. The US National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC) issued an advisory on April 7 warning that PRC intelligence entities are using evolving online methods to target

former federal employees searching for new employment.[79] The advisory highlighted deceptive tactics that PRC intelligence operatives use to target individuals unwittingly, including posing as legitimate job recruiters on social media, professional networking sites, and online job boards. The advisory warned of mitigation strategies and indicators of deceptive job recruiters, such as offers of unusually high salaries and urgency to speed along the recruitment process. The PRC has long exploited professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn, for espionage purposes.[80]

US intelligence concluded that the PRC and Russia directed their intelligence agencies to increase recruitment of US federal employees working in national security amid workforce reduction, according to anonymous sources speaking to CNN.[81] The NCSC advisory indicates that false online job advertisements are likely the PRC's modus operandi to achieve this.

Northeast Asia

Japan

Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) scrambled jets 464 times in response to PRC military flight activities around Japan's southwestern Nansei islands in Fiscal Year 2024. The Japanese Defense Ministry confirmed 23 instances of PRC drone activity near the islands—almost triple the number in Fiscal Year 2023. The ministry stated that PRC aircraft activities have expanded further east and closer to Japan's main islands since Fiscal Year 2015.[82] PRC aircraft operated east of Okinawa and between Okinawa and Sakishima Islands. JASDF Southwestern Air Defense Force, which is responsible for defending the airspace of the Nansei Islands, accounted for approximately 60 percent of all scrambles. The concentration of PLA aircraft activity around the Nansei Islands is likely driven by PLA operations around Taiwan, which is just southwest of the islands. A PLA Air Force Y-9 intelligence gathering aircraft entered Japan's territorial airspace near Nagasaki in August 2024—the first time a PRC military aircraft violated Japanese airspace.[83] JASDF similarly scrambled jets 237 times in response to Russian aircraft operating near Hokkaido and over the Sea of Japan. JASDF scrambled jets 704 times in total in Fiscal Year 2024.

The PRC is likely collecting information about areas around Taiwan while testing boundaries in Taiwan's surrounding airspace. The increased use of drones likely signals the PLA's matured drone capabilities. PRC officials have not responded to the Japanese defense ministry statement, but PRC Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Wu Qian in October 2024 downplayed Japan's protest of its airspace violation as an attempt to shift international attention away from Japan's military expansion by hyping up the China threat.[84]

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte visited Japan to expand defense cooperation in response to the PRC's growing military threat. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian said that the PRC opposed Japan's "unwarranted interference in China's internal affairs" after a joint statement by Rutte and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba noted the PRC's destabilizing activities in the Indo-Pacific.[85] Lin criticized growing Japan-NATO relations as collusion to spread fear and "Cold War thinking" in the region. Lin also called for NATO to "not exceed the geographical scope stipulated in its own treaty and expand its power beyond its boundaries."

Japan's 2025 Diplomatic Bluebook—released on April 8—echoed Rutte's concerns about the PRC's military activities in the Indo-Pacific. The Bluebook highlighted the importance of stability across the Taiwan Strait and Japan's opposition to unilateral changes to the status quo through force in the East China Sea and South China Sea.[86] Lin accused the Bluebook of following old clichés of accusing and smearing the PRC, exaggerating the "China threat," and unjustifiably interfering in the PRC's internal affairs.[87] The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had released similar statements to criticize NATO and Japan since NATO began inviting its Indo-Pacific partners (Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand) to its annual summit in 2022.[88] The criticisms reflect the PRC's dissatisfaction with the growing Western-aligned coalition in the Indo-Pacific region. The PLA also conducted large-scale military exercises near Taiwan during NATO's July 2023 summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, and after US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth declared strong support for Japan to counter PRC aggression during his visit to Tokyo in March 2025.[89]

North Korea

North Korea's largest guided-missile frigate entered the fitting-out phase, reflecting a rapid expansion of North Korean naval forces. Satellite imagery released by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) revealed the new warship on April 6. The imagery suggests that the warship may be capable of operating helicopters, which would make it only the second time the North Korean Navy has fielded such a capability. The frigate is approximately 144 meters in length and appears to be outfitted with missile-launch systems.[90]

This new vessel is part of a broader effort to enhance North Korea's naval power, aligning with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's plan to make the navy "play a key role in the nuclear deterrence," announced in September 2023.[91] North Korea also unveiled what it claims is a nuclear-powered strategic guided-missile submarine in March 2025. The operational readiness of these new assets remains unclear. Still, these developments reflect North Korea's ongoing efforts to modernize its outdated naval fleet.

South Korea

The PRC hopes to strengthen ties with South Korea under a potential Lee Jae-myung presidency. Lee is shifting away from his party's previous PRC-friendly positions to win over moderate voters, however, amid rising anti-PRC sentiment in South Korea. Former Democratic Party (DP) leader Lee Jae-myung officially announced his bid on April 9 to run for the early presidential election on June 3.[92] Lee revealed his foreign policy agenda during the campaign announcement and emphasized South Korea's security alliance with the United States. He did not mention any policy direction regarding the PRC. His announcement came four days after the South Korean Constitutional Court removed President Yoon Suk-yeol from office following his martial law declaration in December 2024. *Xinhua* reported on Yoon's impeachment verdict and presented Lee as the election frontrunner, citing opinion polls.[93]

A PRC delegation led by Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Losang Jamcan met with South Korea's National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik in Seoul, South Korea, on April 10. The two discussed PRC President Xi Jinping's potential visit to South Korea for the

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit.[94] The bilateral meeting comes after Woo's meeting with Xi in February 2025.[95]

The PRC is seeking an opportunity to improve relations with South Korea under a potential Lee presidency, given his party's relatively sympathetic stance toward the PRC. The PRC's positive media coverage of Lee reflects a preferential treatment of the DP in contrast to the incumbent People Power Party (PPP). Nevertheless, Lee has kept distance from promoting pro-PRC policies, unlike the previous progressive Moon Jae-in administration. President Moon had adopted a relatively PRC- and North Korea-friendly posture during his presidency, such as calling to reassess the deployment of the US-provided Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system following PRC criticisms.[96] Lee framed his foreign policy as "pragmatic," in contrast, implying that he would maintain the security relationship with the United States while seeking economic cooperation with the PRC.[97] His policy shift aims to attract moderate and conservative voters who are skeptical of South Korea's relationship with the PRC and North Korea. The PRC and North Korea are less likely to see foreign policy pledges favorable to them in Lee's campaign, given the rising anti-PRC and anti-North Korea sentiment among South Korean voters.[98]

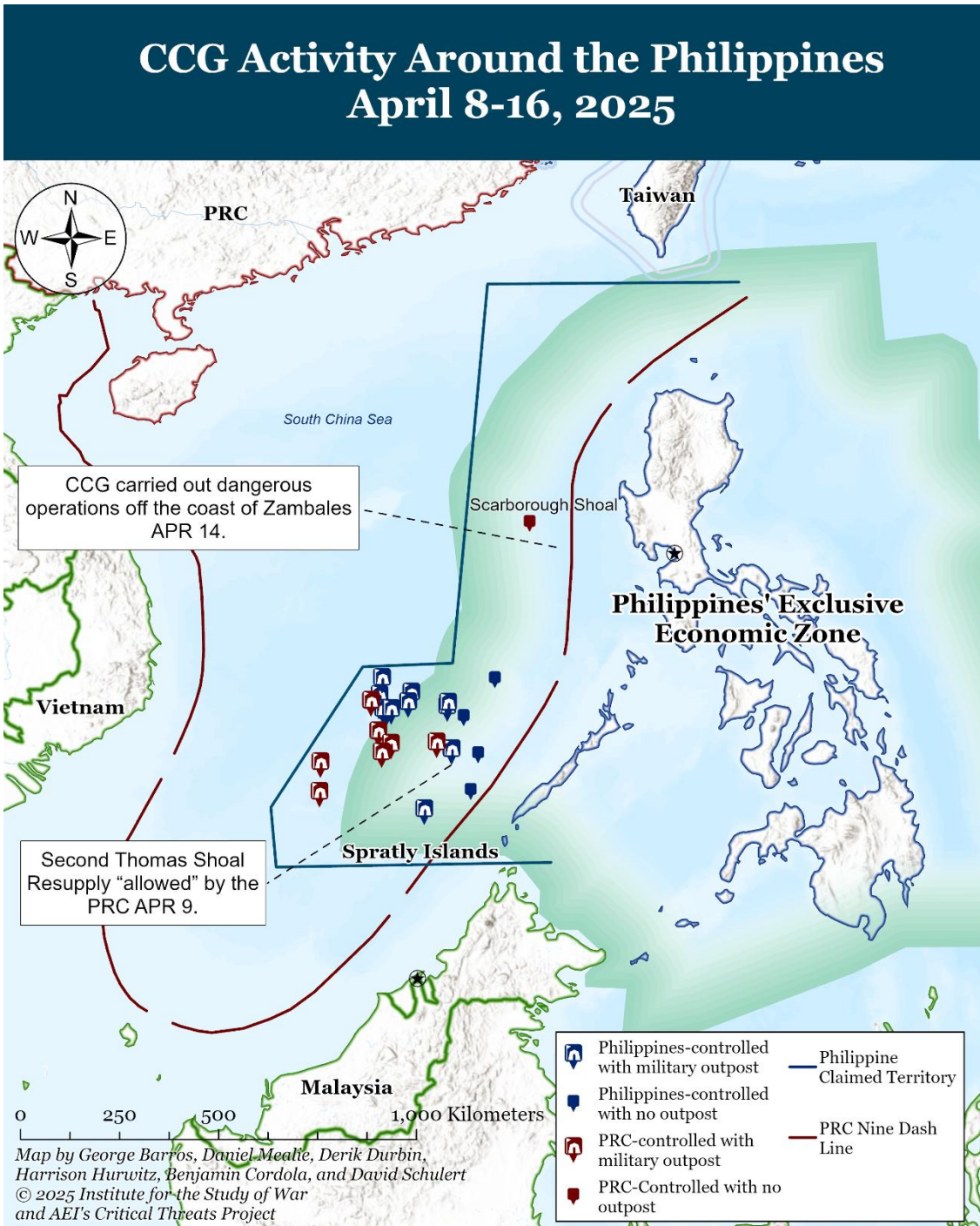
Southeast Asia

Philippines

The CCG claimed that it "allowed" another Philippine resupply mission to the *Sierra Madre* in Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC framing likely aims to bolster the credibility of its sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced that it conducted a troop rotation and resupply mission to the *BRP Sierra Madre* on April 9.[99] The PRC and Philippines negotiated a provisional agreement in July 2024 to avoid confrontations during the latter's resupply missions to the *BRP Sierra Madre*, which has resulted in a cessation of PRC harassment up to the present.[100] A violent confrontation between the PRC and Philippines over an attempted resupply of the *Sierra Madre* in June 2024 marked a peak in PRC-Philippines tensions.[101] This marks the seventh resupply mission to the *BRP Sierra Madre* since the signing of the provisional agreement. The *BRP Sierra Madre* is a grounded warship that has served as an AFP military outpost in the Second Thomas Shoal since 1999. CCG spokesperson Liu Dejun released a statement saying that the Philippines' resupply mission to the "illegally grounded" BRP Sierra Madre was conducted "with China's permission." [102] The PRC has previously framed its non-interference as "allowing" the Philippines' resupply missions to occur. This framing aims to give the impression that the PRC has legal jurisdiction over the Second Thomas Shoal, which the Philippines rejects.

The Philippines Coast Guard (PCG) accused the CCG of dangerous operations off the coast of Zambales near Scarborough Shoal, marking the second week of confrontations between the PCG and CCG in this area of the Philippines EEZ. Scarborough Shoal is a disputed atoll in the South China Sea that the PRC seized from Philippine control in 2012. PCG spokesperson Jay Tarriela reported that the PCG ship *BRP Cabra* engaged with *CCG-21612* as the CCG ship conducted patrols that the PCG suspected to be illegal survey operations within the Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).[103] The *CCG-21612* sailed very close to the *BRP Cabra*'s left side, blocking its navigational path as the PCG issued warnings that the vessel was in violation of Philippine territorial rights. The CCG issued a statement accusing the Philippines of acting in violation of international law

and conducting dangerous operations.[104] The PCG deployed the *BRP Cabra* on April 5 to monitor CCG activity around Zambales in Central Luzon, resulting in a near collision in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal.[105] Philippine media reported that these two incidents mark the CCG's return to the coast of Zambales (near Scarborough Shoal) after a brief lull. The CCG maintained a consistent presence in the area from late 2024 to early 2025.[106]



Iran

The United States sanctioned two more PRC oil storage facilities as part of a continued sanctions campaign against the Iranian oil trade. The US Department of State announced April 10 that the United States would sanction Guangsha Zhoushan Energy Group Co., Ltd., for hosting a terminal used to store approximately 2 million barrels of Iranian crude oil deposited in 2021. The terminal again received approximately 1 million barrels of Iranian crude in February 2025. US-sanctioned vessels deposited the oil in both cases.^[107] The United States sanctioned Shandong Shengxing Chemical Co., Ltd., another “teapot” oil refinery, on April 16. The US Treasury Department reported that Shandong Shengxing had imported over one billion dollars’ worth of Iranian crude oil. These imports included shipments from China Oil and Petroleum Company Limited (COPC), a front company for the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force.^[108]

US sanctions have sought to target PRC support for Iran’s illicit oil economy, which uses a “ghost fleet” of vessels to transport crude oil to international buyers. The United States sanctioned another PRC “teapot” oil refinery in March 2025 and has likewise sanctioned PRC tankers involved in the Iranian oil trade.^[109] This new round of sanctions highlights the deep cooperation between the PRC and Iran as the Trump administration pursues a “maximum pressure” policy against the latter. The PRC is the largest importer of Iranian oil in violation of US sanctions, importing around 90 percent of Iran’s oil.^[110]

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