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CHINESE REGIME

Beijing Accelerating Timeline for Possible Taiwan Invasion, Expert Warns

FRANK FANG

TAIPEI, Taiwan—The Chinese communist regime is accelerating its plans to invade Taiwan, an expert warns, as Beijing ratchets up military maneuvers against the island.

Twenty Chinese military aircraft—including four nuclear-capable H-6K bombers, 10 J-16 fighter jets, two Y-8 anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and a KJ-500 airborne early warning and control aircraft—entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) on March 26, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense. It was the largest incursion ever reported by the ministry.

Taiwan's ADIZ, located adjacent to the island's territorial airspace, is an area where incoming planes must identify themselves to the island's air traffic controller.

The incursion was the most serious incident amid a significant increase in hostility by Beijing against Taiwan since 2020. Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, reelected last January, has taken a hard line against threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), while the island has deepened its cooperation with the United States—prompting the regime to escalate its warmongering toward the island.

The CCP sees Taiwan as a part of its territory and has threatened war to bring the island into its fold. The self-ruled island is a de facto independent country with its own democratically elected government, military, constitution, and currency.

The Republic of China (ROC)—Taiwan's official name—overthrew China's Qing Dynasty emperor in 1911. After the ROC retreated to Taiwan upon being defeated by the CCP during the Chinese Civil War, the CCP established a communist state called the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, while Taiwan gradually transitioned to democracy. To this day, the Chinese regime has refused to recognize Taiwan's sovereignty.

Last year, the Chinese air force flew about 380 sorties into Taiwan's ADIZ, the highest number in a given year since 1996. So far this year, the Chinese military has been sending aircraft into the ADIZ on a near-daily basis.

The island's coast guard on April 1 announced that Beijing has been flying unmanned drones near Taiwan's Dongsha Island, located in the northern part of the South China Sea. The authority said it couldn't rule out that Beijing was using the drones for reconnaissance purposes.

Alongside military actions, the regime has sharpened its rhetoric toward the island. Earlier this year, a Chinese defense spokesperson threatened war against Taiwan if it declared independence.

On March 31, Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of the hawkish state-run media Global Times, wrote on his social media that he would like to order able-bodied men to go blow up bunkers in Taiwan in the event of war.

Taiwan's missiles are 'a clear message that they're going to reach out and inflict cost.'

John Mills, former director of cybersecurity policy, strategy, and international affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense

Chinese soldiers from the People's Liberation Army line up after a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of China's entry into the Korean War, in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on Oct. 23, 2020.



SAM YEH/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

An unnamed Chinese pilot, who flew one of the Chinese aircraft crossing into Taiwan's ADIZ on March 29, said, "This is all ours" after being asked to leave the airspace by the pilot of a Taiwanese interceptor aircraft, according to local media, which obtained a recording of the pilot's remark from the Facebook page "Southwest Airspace of TW."

Preparing to Invade

Beijing's incursions are part of a series of dry runs in preparation for an invasion of Taiwan, John Mills, former director of cybersecurity policy, strategy, and international affairs at the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, told The Epoch Times.

Mills projects that these exercises could culminate in a large-scale dry run in the next two years. These dry runs are necessary, Mills said, given the complexity of amphibious landing operations—as well as the fact that the Chinese military has never conducted a force landing on a hostile power in a real-life situation before.

Any amphibious assault on Taiwan may also involve swarms of Chinese civilian merchant vessels and fishing boats, he said.

He believes an invasion could come in the next three years—much sooner than the six-year estimate given by U.S. Adm. Philip Davidson, head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), during a congressional hearing in early March.

"If they haven't done it in 10 years, I think [Chinese leader] Xi [Jinping] will probably have been removed from office. I think even six years is pushing it," Mills said. He added that Xi could come under pressure to attack Taiwan to deflect attention away from internal problems, such as an economic crisis.

U.S. Adm. John Aquilino, the nominee to replace Davidson as head of INDOPACOM, at his confirmation hearing in March declined to endorse Davidson's six-year estimate, but said the threat of a Chinese invasion is "much closer to us than most think."

This point was echoed by former national security adviser H.R. McMaster, who in March said Xi believes "he has a fleeting window of opportunity that's closing" for attacking Taiwan. McMaster said the period from 2022 onward marks the time "of greatest danger" to Taiwan, coinciding with the conclusion of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

The Chinese military isn't yet ready for an attack against the island, Mills said. The problem is, however, that the longer it waits, the more ready and fortified Taiwan will be.

"We all need to be aware of and be ready for an acceleration of these timelines," he said.

Beijing's Taiwan ambitions stem primarily from its desire to acquire the island's semiconductor-making capability, according to Mills. Taiwan is home to TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker.

China is heavily dependent on foreign semiconductors—tiny chips that power everything from cellphones to missiles. According to Bloomberg, China imported \$380 billion in chips in 2020, accounting for about 18 percent of all its imports.

The regime is now struggling to secure foreign semiconductors following a series of sanctions slapped on Chinese companies by the Trump administration. U.S. sanctions have crippled the smartphone business of Chinese tech giant Huawei; Chinese chipmaker SMIC

KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES



Taiwan, located on the first island chain, would be among the first targets of any Chinese military aggression in Asia. For decades, the CCP's military strategists have seen the first island chain as a barrier to the regime's air and naval power, leaving the second island chain and beyond out of its reach.

the United Nations, was originally going to visit Taiwan in mid-January, before her trip was canceled at the last minute.

Defending Taiwan

In the face of an escalating military threat from China, Mills said the Biden administration should adopt an unambiguous policy of deterrence toward the CCP. Specifically, he said the United States should have a visible naval and air force presence around Taiwan, as well as in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.

Boosting Taiwan's self-defense capability is also important, and the Biden administration should sell the island any weapons it asks for, in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, according to Mills. Under the legislation, the United States is obliged to supply the island with weapons needed for its self-defense.

Finally, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI), created under the fiscal 2021 Pentagon spending bill, would also be vital for U.S. forces in defending the region, Mills added. The PDI, akin to the European Deterrence Initiative, is aimed at securing advanced military capabilities to deter China's military threats in the Indo-Pacific region.

To defend against a possible invasion, Taiwan "can never have enough ammunition," Mills said, adding that the island's recent move to begin producing long-range missiles that could reach deep into mainland China was a "big deal."

Taiwan's missiles are "a clear message that they're going to reach out and inflict cost," according to Mills.

Soong suggested that the Biden administration could support Taiwan in two ways: assisting Taiwan to participate in international organizations and welcoming Taiwan to become a part of a "trusted industry alliance."

In February, Biden signed an executive order to begin a 100-day review of U.S. supply chains in several key sectors, including semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and rare-earth minerals.

The American Institute in Taiwan, the de facto U.S. embassy in Taiwan, announced on April 1 that a virtual forum was held between high-level Taiwanese and American officials to discuss the effort to expand Taiwan's participation in "U.N. organizations and other international fora," including the World Health Organization (WHO).

Taiwan isn't currently a member of the WHO because of Beijing's objections.

The Biden administration could also take active steps to enforce several pieces of pro-Taiwan legislation that were signed into law by former President Donald Trump, Soong said. The legislation includes the Taiwan Travel Act, the TAIPEI Act, and the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act.

Taiwan, located on the first island chain, would be among the first targets of any Chinese military aggression in Asia. The first island chain is an arbitrary demarcation from the southern Japanese island of Kyushu, Taiwan, the Philippines, to Indonesia. For decades, the CCP's military strategists have seen the first island chain as a barrier to the regime's air and naval power, leaving the second island chain and beyond out of its reach.

As a result, Soong said that some European and Asian countries, in particular Japan and Australia, are observing Taiwan closely to see whether cooperation between Taipei and Washington is solid.

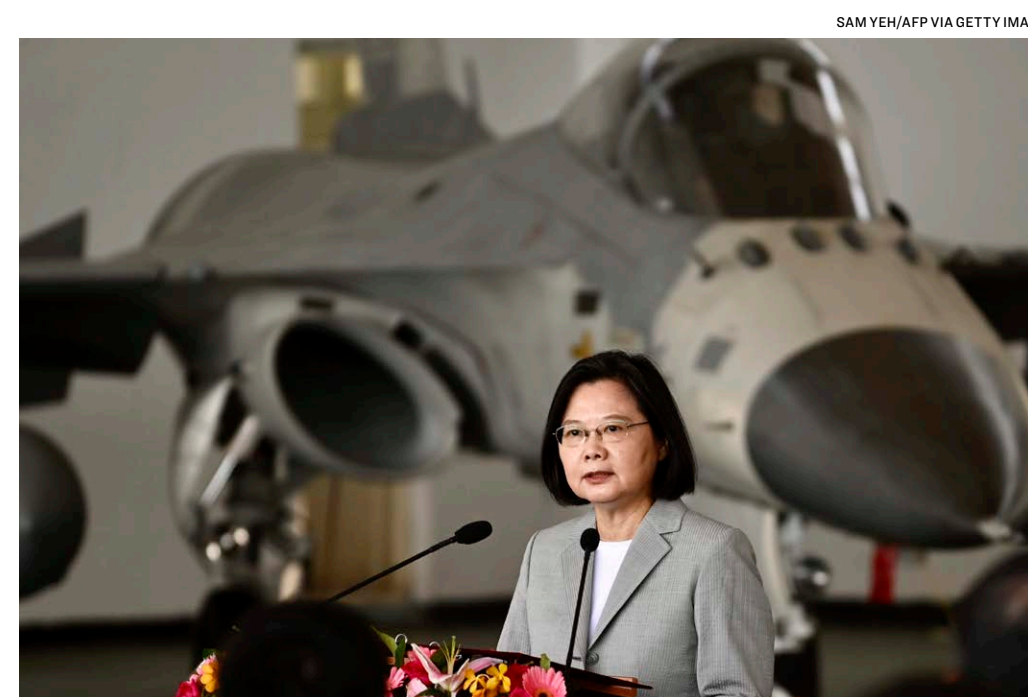
"These countries are watching how the U.S. government will enact these legislation, questioning whether it will pay lip service [about U.S. commitment to allies' security] under certain situations," Soong said.

The Biden administration has said its commitment to Taiwan is "rock-solid." But according to Soong, how serious the administration is in defending the island remains to be seen, especially given that Biden himself has never used the word "threat" to describe the CCP.

Biden has instead framed the regime as America's "most serious competitor." Soong said he foresees the United States and China engaging in small-scale military conflicts in the near future, especially around two Taiwan-controlled islands in the South China Sea—Dongsha and Taiping.

"I believe the United States and China are in a new cold war," Soong said.

Cathy He contributed to this report.



SAM YEH/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

has also been put on a trade blacklist.

Hitting Back at US

Soong Hseik-wen, a professor at the Institute of Strategic and International Affairs (ISIA) of Taiwan's National Cheng Cheng University (NCCU), told The Epoch Times that the Chinese regime was making a statement with its incursion on March 26, in response to actions by the U.S. government in March.

These events included President Joe Biden's first summit with Quad leaders from Australia, India, and Japan; the meeting in Tokyo between Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin, and their Japanese counterparts; and the Sino-U.S. talks in Anchorage, Alaska, according to Soong. "These three events showed that there are structural conflicts between China and the United States, and they cannot be resolved through diplomatic negotiations," he said.

The two-day talks in Anchorage were marked by heated exchanges on March 18, during which top CCP diplomat Yang Jiechi lashed out at U.S. foreign and trade policies over what he said was the United States' struggling democracy and poor treatment of minorities.

The meeting highlighted how far apart the Chinese regime and United States are on critical issues, as the Chinese delegation rejected U.S. concerns about Beijing's human rights abuses in Xinjiang, its crackdown on freedoms in Hong Kong, and its intimidation of Taiwan, on the grounds that they are China's "internal affairs."

Viewing U.S. actions as escalating efforts to confront the regime, Beijing decided to flex its military muscle by sending a large aircraft squadron into Taiwan's ADIZ on March 26, Soong said. A bilateral agreement on coast guard cooperation between Taiwan and the United States—signed the day before the incursion—may have played into Beijing's plan to take military action against Taiwan on March 26, Soong added. The agreement, he said, was a clear attempt to push back against Beijing after it passed a law in January to allow its coast guard to fire on foreign ships if needed.

With the agreement, the U.S. government was "explicitly saying" that the coast guard would also be a part of its maritime strategy to secure peace and stability in the region, Soong said. China's coast guard law has drawn widespread concern from its neighbors, including Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

On March 28, U.S. Ambassador to Palau John Hennessey-Nilan arrived in Taiwan as part of a Palau delegation headed by President Surangel Whippas. Palau is one of Taiwan's 15 diplomatic allies.

Soong suggested that Beijing could have received intelligence of the U.S. ambassador's visit to Taiwan, which would have prompted Beijing to show its disapproval since the visit marked the first time a sitting U.S. diplomat has traveled to Taiwan since Washington ended diplomatic ties in favor of Beijing in 1979.

Kelly Craft, former U.S. ambassador to

Two 8-inch self-propelled artillery guns are fired during the 35th Han Kuang military drill in southern Taiwan's Pingtung county on May 30, 2019.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen speaks in front of a domestically produced F-CK-1 indigenous defence fighter jet at Penghu Air Force Base on Magong island in the Penghu islands, Taiwan, on Sept. 22, 2020.



Construction debris cover printing press machines after attackers threw it on equipment at the print shop of the Hong Kong edition of The Epoch Times on April 12, 2021.

Attack on Hong Kong Epoch Times' Printing Press Draws International Condemnation

The attack, the latest in a string of sabotage attempts on the facility, highlights diminishing press freedoms in the city

CATHY HE

In the early hours of April 12, four men wearing masks barged into the printing press that services the Hong Kong edition of The Epoch Times. Two of the black-clad intruders wielding sledgehammers then started smashing up machinery and a control panel, while another man threw concrete rubble onto the equipment.

After two minutes, the four men fled in a white van, making off with a computer. No staff members were injured during the incident. Police were called and are currently investigating the incident.

The attackers heavily damaged the printing press's control panel, transmitter, and several computers. June Guo, director of the Hong Kong edition, said at a press conference in Washington on April 13. As a result, the outlet has been forced to temporarily suspend distribution.

Cheryl Ng, a spokesperson for the Hong Kong edition, believes that the

On April 13, the United States condemned the attack and urged Hong Kong authorities to "thoroughly investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice," according to a U.S. State Department spokesperson.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) hired thugs to carry out the attack on the outlet to silence its independent reporting in the city.

The Hong Kong police confirmed in a written statement to the Committee to Protect Journalists that the Tsuen Wan Regional Anti-Triad Police Unit would be responsible for investigating the attack. Police also stated that they hadn't arrested any suspects as of April 13.

Not Backing Down

This is the latest in a series of acts orchestrated by the CCP aimed at sabotaging The Epoch Times' Hong Kong operations, Guo said.

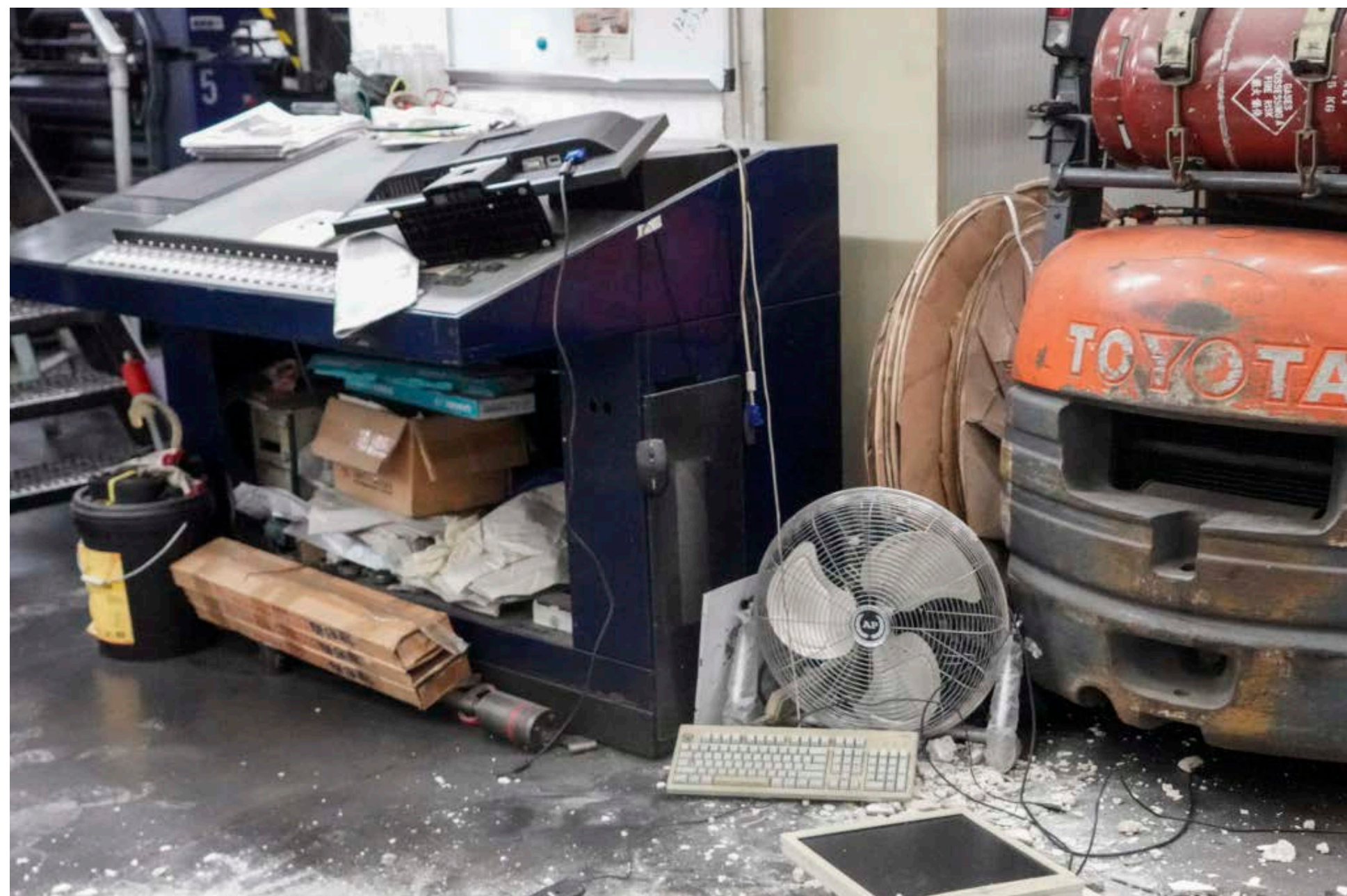
In October 2019, during the height of the mass pro-democracy protests in the city, four masked men broke into the same printing facility and set fire to the equipment. Staff managed to put out the fire before major damage occurred. The printing press has been targeted three other times since it opened in 2006.

Since October 2020, several employees of the print shop have reported being followed and monitored by an unknown van.

In March, a Hong Kong host of the outlet's online current affairs programs received a message, delivered by a relative, from mainland Chinese police: Stop broadcasting or face arrest under the new national security law.

Since July 2020, the CCP has drastically tightened its grip on the city after the imposition of the national security law—legislation that punishes vaguely worded crimes including secession and collusion with foreign forces with sentences of up to life in prison.

Advertisers and retailers that distribute the paper have also been pressured by the CCP, Guo said. In July 2019, 7-Eleven, which carried the newspaper across hundreds of stores in the city, abruptly pulled out of its contract with the Hong Kong edition, forcing it to leave the chain store.



(Above) Damaged computers and construction debris on the floor.

Cédric Alviani, the East Asia bureau director at Reporters Without Borders (RSF), said at the time that RSF couldn't see any reason "but pressure from the Chinese authorities" for the chain store's withdrawal.

"It is obvious that the attacks to the printing facility, the pullout of our retailers, and the threats to our reporters are carefully planned and timed to sabotage The Epoch Times because we are an independent voice in Hong Kong," Guo said.

Guo vowed to resume distribution by April 16, when seven prominent democracy supporters are due to be sentenced after a conviction that sparked international condemnation.

"We will not back down, and will never bow to evil forces," she said.

Three journalist groups also condemned the attack, calling for the perpetrators and planners to be brought to justice.

Sweeping Condemnation

Officials, journalist groups, and rights advocates from around the world have denounced the ransacking.

On April 13, the United States condemned the attack and urged Hong Kong authorities to "thoroughly investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice," according to a U.S. State Department spokesperson.

"The United States is concerned by increased efforts to silence independent media and otherwise suppress freedom of expression, including the politically motivated targeting of journalists," the spokesperson said in a statement to The



(Right) A CCTV screenshot shows intruders dressed in black, wielding sledgehammers, damaging printing press equipment at the print shop of the Hong Kong edition of The Epoch Times on April 12, 2021.

Epoch Times.

Many said they wouldn't be surprised if the CCP was behind the attack.

"The Chinese Communist Party is a 'thugocracy' that relies on intimidation, extortion, and violence to suppress freedom and those who strive for truth and self-government by consent," Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pa.) said in a statement.

"It would be no surprise if the CCP were behind such an attack as they consistently seek to extinguish any light that exposes the dark sea of repression that keeps their illegitimate government afloat."

Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described the assault on press freedom in Hong Kong as "appalling, but not unexpected."

"The Chinese Communist Party continues to demonstrate they will not honor their agreement on the freedom of the

people of Hong Kong," Pompeo said in a statement to The Epoch Times.

Three journalist groups also condemned the attack, calling for the perpetrators and planners to be brought to justice.

Others lamented the attack as symptomatic of the overall deterioration in freedoms in the city at the hands of the Chinese regime.

"If the Hong Kong authorities really were independent champions of their democratic system, they'd defend the Epoch Times," stated a spokesperson for the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China.

"That they won't tells you all you need to know: Hong Kong has slipped into the grips of an authoritarian communist party that will tolerate no criticism."

Eva Fu contributed to this report.

REACTIONS TO ATTACK ON THE EPOCH TIMES



“The attack on The Epoch Times and on the free press in Hong Kong is appalling, but not unexpected. The Chinese Communist Party continues to demonstrate they will not honor their agreement on the freedom of the people of Hong Kong.

Former Secretary of State
Mike Pompeo



“Reports of attacks on free press are extremely concerning. ... Now more than ever, the United States must stand up for democracy and human rights, and fight against Communist China's aggression and quest for global dominance.

Sen. Rick Scott



“The repeated, violent attacks on The Epoch Times shock the conscience. Clearly, the Chinese Communist Party and its street thugs cannot abide any media outlet reporting the facts about the Party's depredations.

Rep. Devin Nunes



“It would be no surprise if the CCP were behind such an attack as they consistently seek to extinguish any light that exposes the dark sea of repression that keeps their illegitimate government afloat.

Rep. Scott Perry



“The attack on The Epoch Times Hong Kong is a direct assault on Hong Kong's free press. The Chinese Communist Party cannot continue to intimidate and infringe on freedom of the press in Hong Kong. If it is true that the CCP was behind these attacks, they must be held accountable.

Rep. Michelle Steel



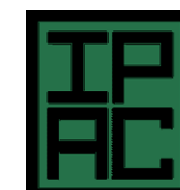
“The freedom of the press in Hong Kong is under attack from the Chinese Communist Party.

Rep. Jim Banks



“The Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hong Kong strongly condemns the attack on The Epoch Times' printing presses and calls for the perpetrators to be brought swiftly to justice.

Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong



“If the Hong Kong authorities really were independent champions of their democratic system, they'd defend The Epoch Times. That they won't tells you all you need to know: Hong Kong has slipped into the grips of an authoritarian communist party that will tolerate no criticism.

Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China



“This attack on The Epoch Times is yet another deplorable example of increasing threats to media freedom and freedom of expression in Hong Kong, and should be condemned unequivocally.

Benedict Rogers, co-founder and chief executive, Hong Kong Watch



“The attack on the Epoch Times printing press is part of the totalitarian takeover of Hong Kong by the CCP. Tyrants are threatened by truth, and so have sought to intimidate The Epoch Times by repeatedly attacking their offices.

Reggie Littlejohn, founder and president, Women's Rights Without Frontiers

ORGAN HARVESTING

US Lawmakers Seek Accountability for Organ Harvesting in China

EMEL AKAN

WASHINGTON—A bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers last month introduced the first legislation to combat global organ trafficking, which, if approved, would end U.S. silence on the lucrative and illegal practice perpetrated by the Chinese communist regime, according to experts.

U.S. lawmakers in early March reintroduced legislation in the Senate and the House to stop China's state-sanctioned practice of forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience. Similar legislation was introduced in the previous session of Congress in December last year.

The United States and the international community have remained silent on the forced organ harvesting issue, despite the evidence of this practice, for far too long. Kristina Olney, director of government relations for the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, told The Epoch Times.

Noting that the first congressional hearing on the issue was held in 1996, she said the United States and other rights-respecting nations should confront the evidence and hold the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) accountable "for its complicity."

There have been a number of congressional hearings and resolutions condemning forced organ harvesting. But until now, there has been no comprehensive legislation signed into law requiring the U.S. government to take action on the issue.

Hence, the new bill, the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act, is an important step in that direction, according to human rights advocates. "The bill comes at an incredibly important time, since Beijing's genocidal actions in Xinjiang makes very clear the lengths to which the CCP is willing to go to control Uyghur Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities in China," Olney said.

If enacted, the measure would authorize the U.S. government to identify, expose, and sanction individuals and government officials responsible for human trafficking or organ harvesting across the world. The United States would be able to deny or revoke passports for people who engage in the illegal purchase of organs.

The bill also requires an annual report by the U.S. State Department on human organ trafficking in foreign countries. The report would introduce a tiered ranking system for determining the countries that have the lowest (tier one), intermediate (tier two), and the highest (tier three) levels of organ harvesting and trafficking. This reporting system would expose governments that are directly or indi-



Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), lead sponsor of the bill to combat forced organ harvesting, on March 10, 2021.

rectly involved in the crime.

"Organ harvesting is an egregiously barbaric and inhumane act that has no place in our world," Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), lead sponsor of the House bill (H.R.1592) said, in a statement on March 10.

Smith, who has fought the issue of forced organ harvesting for more than 20 years, said that the United States "must do more to put an end to the horrific abuse by international human trafficking gangs, terrorist organizations, and even some governments—China's Communist regime in particular—who kill innocent people and sell their organs for profit."

The House bill was co-sponsored by Reps. Thomas Suozzi (D-N.Y.), Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.), and Brian Babin (R-Texas), while the Senate bill (S.602) was reintroduced by Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.).

The China Tribunal

Allegations of China's forced organ harvesting for transplant surgery first surfaced in 2006. Former Canadian Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) David Kilgour and human rights lawyer David Matas conducted independent investigations and later published a report, after finding more than 18 different kinds of evidence to support the allegations. Adherents of Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that's also known as Falun Dafa, were prime victims of China's lucrative organ transplant trade, they concluded.

Investigative journalist Ethan Gutmann also conducted an independent investigation and published his findings in the book "The Slaughter: Mass Killings, Organ Harvesting, and China's Secret Solution to Its Dissident

Problem."

"There has been a reticence in the international community, and even in the human rights community to speak about this issue, and that is precisely because of the propaganda that has been advanced on this issue by the Chinese Communist Party," Olney said, adding that a recent development has turned the tide.

While evidence of forced organ harvesting in China was already present in highly credible reports, including those released by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, it was the judgment of an independent tribunal, released in 2020, that was a real game-changer, according to Olney.

Following its investigation, the China Tribunal, an independent people's tribunal based in London, concluded that forced organ harvesting had taken place in China for years "on a significant scale," with Falun Gong practitioners being the "principal source" of human organs.

The tribunal was chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, who previously led the prosecution of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for war crimes.

Independent Assessment

The China Tribunal's decision has made "a substantial difference" in the fight against CCP's forced organ harvesting trade, according to Susie Hughes, executive director of the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC).

"The Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act is one of the most significant international responses to the China Tribunal's judgment to

date," Hughes said in a statement on March 10.

The bill is also one of the most comprehensive ever introduced, Hughes noted, as it seeks to combat both global organ trafficking and the state-sanctioned trade in China.

The bill sets up a reporting mechanism in which the State Department would be responsible for assessing whether a country is designated as tier one, tier two, or tier three. Thus, the U.S. government wouldn't rely on the views of other parties such as the World Health Organization (WHO), and this is an important feature of the bill, Hughes told The Epoch Times.

Researchers have criticized international medical bodies, including the WHO and The Transplantation Society, for parroting CCP talking points denying evidence of mass organ harvesting.

In a UK House of Lords debate on forced organ harvesting in China, for example, the country's reliance on the WHO's views was raised. During the debate, the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office informed the House of Lords that the WHO, who had previously advised that China's transplant system is ethical, responded that "the evidence that it uses is based on the self-assessment made by the country that is a signatory, and in this case that is China."

The Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act removes this problem by ensuring the U.S. government independently evaluates the level of organ trafficking in countries of concern. Under the bill, a country would be rated tier three if it carried out a high level of forced organ harvesting or trafficking with direct or indirect support from its government.

Matas, who has been investigating China's forced organ harvesting practice for more than a decade, told The Epoch Times that the U.S. bill is unique and important because it sets up a reporting mechanism.

While the bill wouldn't restrict organ transplant tourism, he said, it would mandate an annual report on collaboration between the U.S. institutions and foreign entities involved in forced organ harvesting. This would allow the U.S. government to determine whether organ transplant surgeons in a tier-three country were trained by U.S. hospitals or universities. The bill would also prohibit the export of transplant surgery devices to entities involved in organ harvesting.

The bill could inspire more governments to take similar actions, Matas said.

More evidence of organ transplant crimes continues to emerge, even after the China Tribunal's final judgment, which underscores the urgency of passing a measure to hold the Chinese regime accountable. Investigative reports show that the number of organs harvested from prisoners of conscience continues to rise and that organs are available on demand, with short waiting times.

ETAC warned that the current mass incarceration of Uyghurs in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang could provide a new pool of victims. It's estimated that up to 1.5 million Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities are detained in internment camps in Xinjiang.

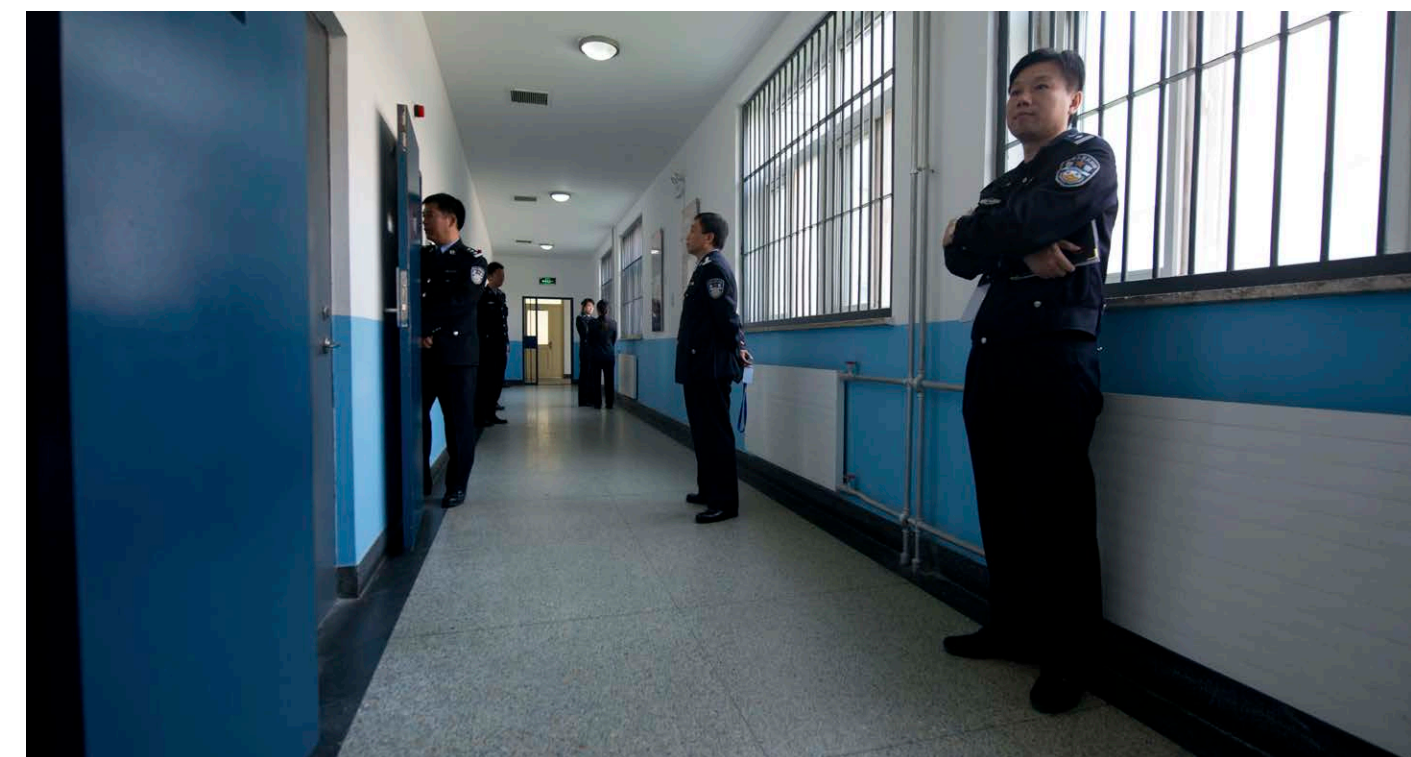
According to human rights experts, China is the only country that's known to conduct state-run organ harvesting, a large-scale orchestrated crime involving the country's health institutions, judiciary system, prison system, detention camps, military, and military hospitals.

"This bill will identify and punish CCP members involved in forced organ harvesting," Cotton said in a statement. "It's past time to hold Beijing accountable for these heinous acts."

Coons, a co-chairman of the Senate Human Rights Caucus, described forced organ harvesting as "inhumane, immoral, and cruel" and urged the U.S. government to do everything to "fight this despicable practice."

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Chinese Regime Lowers Age of 80-Year-Old Believer in Order to Jail Her



EVA FU

The Chinese regime recently sentenced an 80-year-old Falun Gong practitioner to 1 and a half years in jail by claiming she was five years younger.

In China, the law provides more leniency for minors and the elderly, and the age of 75 sets the bar.

The woman, Chen Guifen, received the court verdict at the hospital bed as she underwent treatment for half paralysis and cerebral thrombosis, both symptoms she developed in September last year during her detention.

Chen was arrested while distributing materials about the regime's ongoing persecution of her faith in a residential compound in her hometown Chongqing, a city in southwestern China, according to the U.S.-based Minghui.org that tracks the oppression campaign.

Chen had defended herself in a July 2020 court hearing by explaining how she had benefited personally from the practice. On Sept. 17—two weeks after she was hospitalized, the local court conducted a show trial at the patient room and proclaimed her guilty.

The witnesses listed on the court document were five police officers from Degan Police Station, the same facility that had ordered Chen's arrest, according to Minghui. She was also fined 1,000 yuan (around \$153).

The Chinese spiritual discipline Falun Gong teaches five sets of slow-moving exercises and asks adherents to improve their moral upbringing by following three core tenets: truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. An estimated 70-100 million people took up the practice by 1999, when the regime deemed its popularity a threat and began a ruthless campaign designed to wipe it out.

'Definitely Illegal'

Wu Shaoping, a former human rights lawyer in Shanghai, believed that the authorities had deliberately changed Chen's age with the goal of inflicting harsher punishment.

Under Chinese criminal law, seniors who are 75 or older should receive more

leniency. Drawing on his experience, Wu said that authorities have typically given suspended sentences under similar circumstances unless the case falls into eight most egregious categories—intentional homicide, arson, spreading hazardous substances, robbery, rape, kidnapping, bombing, and aggravated assault—none of which applies to Chen's case.

The court's action was "definitely illegal," said Wu in a phone interview with The Epoch Times.

"Manipulating people's date of birth is in itself a breach of the law," he said. "Especially given that their goal is to throw innocent persons into jail."

In past political campaigns, Chinese police were often under pressure to fulfill quotas, according to human rights watchers. To appease their bosses and get monetary rewards, police sometimes would make arrests without caring so much about evidence, according to Wu.

"Even when there isn't a case, they would come up with one. It's quite scary," he said.

He added that in China, "normal citizens are no better than ants."

"When facts are missing, they just make up the facts. If they can do this to one person, they can do the same thing to another."

"[They] can fabricate any facts at will to frame you and get you into prison."

Chen had been a regular target of police harassment prior to her arrest, with her house raided at least twice in 2016 and 2019. In one house visit in 2017, the police and local officials asked her to write "repentance statements" to renounce her faith and stop spreading literature about the practice, threatening to send her to the brainwashing center if she refused to comply.

In 2020, at least 114 Falun Gong practitioners were sentenced over their belief, including Chen. The oldest among them was 88.

The year saw 42 elderly deaths under the persecution. Nearly 1,200 others—a great majority of them aged between 70 and 94—reported arrests or harassment.

Sherry Dong contributed to this report.

Chinese doctors carry fresh organs for transplant at a hospital in Henan Province on Aug. 16, 2012.



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