

WEEK 34, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

A cannabis growing operation
next to Fiddlestix vineyards
in the Santa Ynez Valley
northwest of Santa Barbara,
Calif., on Aug. 6, 2019.

CHINA EYES US MARIJUANA MARKET

See Page 4



A Chinese military helicopter flies past Pingtan island, one of mainland China's closest points from Taiwan, in Fujian Province, China, on Aug. 4, 2022.

TAIWAN

China Edges Toward Armed Conflict With Unprecedented Military Threats Against Taiwan: Experts

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

News Analysis

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched its largest-ever military exercises this month in retaliation for U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) visit to Taiwan, the self-ruled island that the regime in Beijing considers as its territory.

Experts are divided, however, as to whether the drills are mere bluster or present an escalation toward armed hostilities.

The drills resulted in a de facto blockade of Taiwan that interfered with international travel and shipping lanes, and included the launch of at least 11 hypersonic missiles, some of which flew directly over Taiwan and landed in the waters of Japan's exclusive economic zone.

The White House said that China had positioned its military for further moves in the region, but didn't specify what that future action might be.

Defense and security experts disagree on the purpose of the exercises. Some consider the CCP's hawkish behavior to be propaganda designed to garner domestic support ahead of an important political meeting later this year. Others believe the regime is preparing for an invasion of Taiwan.

CCP Is 'Trying to Look Strong'

Greg Copley, president of the International Strategic Studies Association, says that the CCP's bluster surrounding Pelosi's visit was probably more closely linked to China's domestic politics than any ambition to conquer Taiwan.

The scale of the exercises, he added, indicated that they had been planned months in advance.

"They've been thinking about this for

some time," Copley said in an interview with NTD, sister media outlet of The Epoch Times.

"They probably would have found another excuse to mount those war games before the 20th Party Congress in Beijing in November."

The CCP's Party Congress is a vital event in Chinese politics, as it will include an election to determine if CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping receives a historic third term in office.

Copley says Xi was likely attempting to placate hawks at home with his aggressive military posturing, and could become more emboldened and jingoistic should he be reelected in November.

"It's all about trying to look strong in the run up to the 20th Party Congress to avoid being eclipsed by any domestic adversary,"

he said. "While Beijing thinks that it can tighten the noose around the neck of Taiwan, it's still a very difficult proposition for the Communist Party to entertain."

Copley added that leadership in the CCP's military wing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), doesn't believe a full-scale invasion of Taiwan is a good idea in any circumstance.

Rather, he said, CCP authorities "painted themselves into a corner" by relying on threats that failed to dissuade Pelosi from visiting Taiwan, and left the regime little option but to fall back on bluster to save face.

"They had plenty of time to prepare considered responses to [the visit], but they did not," Copley said. "Instead, they returned to their old methodology of threats, bluster, intimidation, and the old 'wolf-warrior' diplomacy."

That aggressive diplomacy was on full display in the leadup to Pelosi's trip, as regime authorities from Xi downward doubled down on bellicose rhetoric.

Xi himself told President Joe Biden that he was "playing with fire" over the Taiwan issue, and a propagandist aligned with state-run media outlets urged the PLA to shoot down Pelosi's plane if it entered Taiwan's airspace with a military escort.

The escalating rhetoric and exercises demonstrated that the regime isn't willing to initiate a "hot" war with Taiwan, but was instead preparing forceful measures short of war to coerce Taiwan, Copley said.

"I think one of the things the war games showed us was not that they were preparing an imminent physical invasion of Taiwan, but rather they were looking at methods short of a physical invasion," he said.

"In other words, a quarantining of all trade into and out of Taiwan by being able to blockade ocean and air links and the like."

Creeping Escalation

Others believe that the CCP's efforts to demonstrate its blockade capacity show a serious will to escalate toward conflict with Taiwan.

Speaking during the height of China's exercises, John Culver, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, said that the real tell of China's intent would be precisely whether the regime completed its exercises by practicing blockades and bombing runs around Taiwan.

"If what we're seeing might be a rehearsal of kind of the standard war plan, which begins with a joint firepower strike carried out largely by ballistic and cruise missiles, and then is followed by naval and air exercises, if what they are kind of rehearsing or demonstrating here is the ability to

use joint firepower strikes for a blockade, the next step should be air and naval maneuvers," Culver said during a talk with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank.

The war games showed us was not that they were preparing an imminent physical invasion of Taiwan, but rather they were looking at methods short of a physical invasion.

Greg Copley, president, International Strategic Studies Association

The CCP did just that, closing its drills with "joint blockade, sea assault, and land and air combat trainings," according to Chinese state-owned media. Those drills were then followed by an announcement of "normalized" patrols of Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) and incursions across the median line of the Taiwan Strait, the 110-mile wide body of water separating the island from mainland China.

While the regime has launched incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ for several years, the CCP's newly established and apparently permanent presence on the eastern side of the median line presents a real gain for the Chinese regime's claims that the region is its territory.

Moreover, the CCP seems intent on keeping those gains.

To that end, Culver says that the CCP has the capacity to inflict devastating harm on Taiwan, while simultaneously deterring the United States from intervening.

"They have enormous capability to cut

Taiwan off from the outside world, to disrupt its information, to drop the power grid, to strike every significant military target on the island, and to strike every U.S. base in the region, and to attack U.S. warships that ingress beyond, within the range of Chinese long-range precision strikes," he said.

"This is a very capable, highly modern, well-equipped military that's been preparing for this mission, the Taiwan mission, for all of those years since the mid-'90s when China had little capability to actually effect military force to compel unification."

Still, Culver says the global consequences that would naturally stem from such an attack, including a potential worldwide economic collapse, indicates that the prospect of a full invasion of Taiwan is one the CCP isn't excited about pursuing.

As such, current events are better seen as a sort of creeping series of escalations rather than a true embrace of conflict.

"I still believe that for Xi Jinping and the Communist Party Politburo Standing Committee, Taiwan is a crisis to be avoided, not an opportunity to be seized," Culver said, referring to the seven-member body of the CCP's top leadership.

While the CCP may not actively be seeking war with Taiwan, Culver said, its encircling of Taiwan and expansion beyond the median line is a definitive move away from the status quo that has guided Sino-U.S. relations for more than 50 years.

"I think that this is the new normal," he said. "The Chinese want to show, as they have in previous Taiwan Strait crises, that a line has been crossed by [Pelosi's] visit."

"We can debate if we think that's a legitimate beef by the Chinese. But I think we're in a new era."

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ANALYSIS

Raids on Chinese-Linked Drug Operations Put Spotlight on China's Ambitions in US Marijuana Market

VENUS UPADHAYAYA

China is closely watching the increasing debate on the federal decriminalization of marijuana in the United States and the rapid growth in its market as it provides an overarching business opportunity.

However, experts say that unlike other international players in the U.S. marijuana market, the Chinese regime can bring in national security threats, social challenges, enhanced criminalization, and a direct threat to the market ethos of democracy.

The global legal marijuana market, including medical, recreational, and industrial, was valued at \$13.2 billion in 2021; and out of this, the U.S. market share was \$10.8 billion, according to Grand View Research statistics. This U.S. market is expected to grow at 14.9 percent in the next decade.

The increasing decriminalization or legalization of marijuana, increasing diversification in its use as a product matched by advancing research in the field, is driving the exponential growth in the global market that predominantly constitutes the United States. The 2020 election ballot played a major role in this trend as voters across the United States approved a series of statewide ballot proposals legalizing the use and distribution of marijuana.

"The 2020 [U.S. presidential] election was a victory for cannabis [users], with many states lifting their bans on the drug on election nights. This has turned out to be an excellent business opportunity for China," He Qinglian, a prominent Chinese author and economist, told The Epoch Times in an email. "Many universities in the United States now offer courses on cannabis, and there are surely some Chinese students taking them. In a way, [the college courses] have become a way to understand the U.S. market [on cannabis]," she said.

Only seven countries in the world have legalized the recreational use of marijuana, while 44 countries have legalized its medical use. While campaigning in 2019, then-presidential candidate Joe Biden came out in favor of federal decriminalization that would prevent U.S. citizens from being imprisoned for possessing marijuana and obliterate prior criminal records for possession. In July, the president said he's working on his plan to fulfill his campaign promise.

The Chinese economy has an increasing interest here, according to attorney Jonathan Bench, a regular contributor to China Law Blog and Canna Law blog. He said China is "purposely competing" with the United States in every possible industry.

"China's 2015 plan called Made in China 2025 involved a lot of high tech industries, including agricultural high tech. And so I see China looking at cannabis and especially hemp because China does not allow marijuana in the



COURTESY OKLAHOMA BUREAU OF NARCOTICS

A multi-agency investigation shut down a criminal marijuana growing operation in Henryetta, Okla., according to an Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics release on April 26, 2022.

country but has a thriving hemp industry," Bench told The Epoch Times.

"China's growth and research and China's reaching out to U.S. agricultural groups to develop relationships is all part of China's greater global plan to supplant the U.S. as the dominant economic player in the world. I see the cannabis market as one of those components."

'Great Green Rush'

The marijuana market in the United States is highly saturated. Thus, whenever a new market opens up to recreational marijuana, there's a massive influx of players. And if the state lacks sufficient regulation on the industry, confusion and challenges ensue for the domestic growers, the government, and the broader society, according to experts and domestic growers.

"Like, for instance, in Oklahoma, the state did not have certain safeguards, such as a limit on the total number of licenses. And we see a huge number of players pouring in with both U.S. domestic and international money. Anyone [who] can make money will do it because they see it as the Great Green Rush," said Bench, who is also the chair of Harris Bricken's corporate practice group and managing attorney of the firm's Salt Lake City office.

"The players Bench is talking about are domestic and international investors who follow the legal framework. However, law enforcement gets to deal with many unlawful players as well. Both actors—lawful and unlawful investors—increase exponentially when the market opens, and both arenas have Chinese players.

Oklahoma licensed the use, sale, and growth of marijuana for medicinal purposes as a result of a 2018 ballot measure called the Oklahoma Question 788, the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Legalization Initiative.

This brought in a sea change in the law in the state and created challenges for the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control (OBN), partners in public health, public safety, and the Oklahoma legislature, according to a white paper by OBN, published in May and peer-reviewed by 11 organizations and individuals, including the Association of Oklahoma Narcotic En-

forcers and the President of Oklahoma District Attorneys Association.

Criminal enterprises are seeking to relocate to Oklahoma to take advantage of Oklahoma's medical marijuana laws, the paper said, citing OBN's law enforcement partners in other states.

"Furthermore, law enforcement in other areas have stated that Oklahoma is now clearly a source state for black market marijuana across the nation," said the white paper.

OBN has evidence of not only the domestic drug trafficking organization moving into Oklahoma to exploit the laws but foreign national crime syndicates from at least 12 countries on three continents operating in the state to traffic marijuana in the black market, according to the paper.

The narcotics bureau in the state is currently probing the connection between Chinese nationals ready to pay exorbitant prices for land in Oklahoma and then develop marijuana grow operations that channel large amounts of marijuana into the black market, reported South West Ledger.

The bureau is also probing links between Chinese nationals and black market marijuana after a large bust in Logan County on April 23 when 22 people, mostly Chinese nationals, were arrested after a two-month investigation by OBN agents, according to the media outlet.

China's growth and research and China's reaching out to U.S. agricultural groups to develop relationships is all part of China's greater global plan to supplant the U.S. as the dominant economic player in the world. I see the cannabis market as one of those components.

Jonathan Bench, regular contributor, China Law Blog

Without naming any nationals, the bureau reported a similar bust-up on April 26 in Henryetta on its Facebook page. Its spokesperson refused to "confirm" the involvement of Chinese nationals to The Epoch Times but said that "we suspect them" and investigations are still ongoing. The Homeland Security investigators who attended the scene and conducted interviews didn't respond to a query from The Epoch Times.

These busts have happened while a bill that requires license holders to disclose any "foreign financial interest" in marijuana businesses is moving through the state legislature.

A couple founded one of Oklahoma's first cultivation licenses for medical purposes in 2018 in Shawnee, and their dispensary and grow operation began before mid-2019. In August 2020, a group of Chinese men procured an 80-acre farm and set up a huge marijuana farming compound in their neighborhood.

The couple told The Epoch Times on conditions of anonymity that they are overwhelmed by the influx of Chinese owners and workers in their neighborhood, particularly since the pandemic started. They argue that the state laws do not protect the interest of locals.

"The way the law was written, there was a gaping loophole allowing foreigners the opportunity to use their cash to lure rural landowners into selling property well over market value," the woman said in an email, calling it the "American Greed."

Oklahoma was entirely unprepared for the rush of licenses and the law stated that each facility should be inspected by the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority (OMMA) twice, but that hasn't been happening, according to the woman.

"We opened our dispensary in May of 2019 and our grow operation began in June of 2019. Yet, we didn't have one OMMA inspection until July of 2021. Neither did most of the dispensaries in our area. We were aware of some sketchy business going on at a dispensary across from us. But only an inspector would be able to determine whether what they were doing was legal/illegal," she wrote.

OMMA Public Information Officer Porsha Riley told The Epoch Times in an email that earlier, the department was understaffed. Still, now with an increased number of "compliance inspectors on staff," the department should be able to inspect every marijuana facility at least once by the end of 2022. Riley added that state law requires OMMA to perform inspections twice a year.

"When Oklahoma voters authorized the state's medical marijuana program

AP PHOTO/STEVE HELBER, FILE



A cannabis plant that is close to harvest grows in the Greenleaf Medical Cannabis facility in Richmond, Va., on June 17, 2021.

in 2018 with State Question 788, the Health Department was given very little time [60 days] to stand up to this new department. SQ 788 was also written in a way that created low barriers to entry into the market. Oklahoma is experiencing the type of early expansion challenges that other states have after the adoption of medical marijuana, including rapid market growth and illicit activity," said Riley.

The couple believes that this entire situation has left the rural areas in Oklahoma open to "invasion" by foreigners with "lots of cash," and while the state is still preparing to deal with the legal license holders, it's very unprepared to deal with the "loophole" ones that came in from other countries.

"Our county (Pottawatomie) has no zoning regulations, making it easy to put up whatever they wanted without restriction. There are hoop houses and grow houses covering hundreds of acres of farmland around us. When we were able to get inside one Chinese grow, we walked upon an open septic tank—someone had apparently driven over the top, and it broke. Raw sewage was full to the top—without any attempt to place even a temporary cover over," said the couple.

In other parts of the country, law enforcement has dismantled other Chinese-linked marijuana operations. One was involved in a two-year investigation leading to the arrest of five Chinese nationals in central Oregon in mid-June, resulting in the dismantling of an international operation tied to a Chinese cartel, according to a statement on June 14 by the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) Team.

CODE said the investigation spanned over 18 months and involved detectives, special agents, and intelligence analysts "conducting hundreds of hours of physical and electronic surveillance on over twenty-three members of the organization, twenty properties, bank accounts, and Chinese-food restaurants around the Pacific Northwest and Asia."

Law enforcement was tipped-off through community complaints after the region surrounding the illegal operation began struggling with a severe drought.

The operation had "diverted or stolen significant water from nearby homes, commercial farms, or directly from pumps connected to underground sources in the arid central Oregon high desert," said the agency in its statement. Sergeant Kent van der Kamp from CODE told The Epoch Times in an email that the case is "pending Grand Jury indictment and charges are now being considered by the U.S. Attorney's Office." Specific details about the location of the Chinese cartel weren't available, and the publication couldn't ascertain the Chinese cartel's exact whereabouts or global operations.

Is It Geopolitical?

Since the bilateral relations between the United States and China have been on a downside, there have been apprehensions that hostile geopolitics might be involved in marijuana farmland deals and Chinese involvement in illegal operations. But experts told The Epoch Times that the Chinese regime is engaged in marijuana competition with the United States in the same way it's involved in competition with it in the other fields.

"This is not an international political issue. Rather, it is about competition caused by potential profits in the cannabis market. After the legalization of cannabis farms, it is said that most U.S. cannabis farmers face the problem of decreasing profits," said He Qinglian, the economist. Oversaturated markets generally eliminate any sort of financial incentive one might have to enter legally, and there are reports in the media about the woes of the Marijuana growers who have complained about profit margins going too narrow.

"It happens that this [phenomenon] has occurred in the midst of deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and China. Consequently, there are those who seek to weaken their competitors in order to maintain their dominant position [in the market]," said He.

Bench said he's not sure if the Chinese regime's plans to expand its market share in global hemp operations can be linked to what's currently happening in the recreational marijuana market in the United States. Still, he certainly sees Chinese-origin players involved in the U.S. marijuana market.

He sees the competition in the marijuana market between the United States and China more as an agricultural-level competition than as one related to the illicit drug market because hemp is also used extensively as an industrial material in the textile industry. He said the competition between the two adversaries in this context would continue to increase.

"We'll see continued competition as China tries to develop stronger hemp strains that are more resilient in different geographical areas and different growth climates. I think we're going to assess that more as an agricultural level of competition rather than something that relates to the illicit drug market," said Bench.

With the busting of an illegal operation in Oklahoma early this year and the arrest of its owner, Dao Feng, who had recently moved from Colorado, authorities also disrupted a "ghost ownership" racket in Oklahoma. Feng farm's co-owner, a Tulsa resident, later surrendered 300 medical marijuana licenses. She was listed as a majority owner but wasn't entitled to any profits and was given yearly fees instead.

Attorney General John O'Connor filed charges on June 16 against Logan Jones, 56, and Eric Brown, 41 of the Jones Brown Law Firm for directing medical marijuana businesses to sign consulting agreements with Jones Brown employees, who would act as ghost owners of the company for people from out of state, according to an

OBN statement.

Feng's farm's co-owner was a former Jones Brown Law firm employee, according to media reports. The ghost ownership arrangement met the in-residency requirements for businesses and agricultural operations.

The Epoch Times hasn't been able to ascertain if these ghost owners in Oklahoma included foreign or Chinese national owners. A report by Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting has alleged that foreign-owned agricultural land is inaccurately tracked by the government and that ghost ownership has given secret access to foreigners, including Chinese nationals.

But He Qinglian said that resolving the problem of "ghost owners" is unlikely to ease the competition between the United States and China in the marijuana market. She said that to counter China's designs, the United States would have to take firmer actions to decouple economically from the communist regime.

Bench, meanwhile, believes the ghost ownership phenomenon indicates the

entrepreneurial nature of Chinese owners because they are looking for a safe place to invest their money and grow their capital without much regard for the laws and regulations regarding ownership.

"Chinese people are always looking for safe places to invest their capital, to the extent that they can get money out of China, which is very difficult. They also don't want that money to go back to China. The U.S. is a much safer market," said Bench, adding that real estate, including agricultural land, is considered a very good investment option by Chinese nationals in the United States.

"This real estate influx is similar to what's happened in Canada in urban markets like Toronto and Vancouver, where Chinese purchasers have driven up prices to staggering levels," he said.

Bench said it's a matter of public policy regarding how much land in the United States should be in the hands of foreign owners since the country is looking at "food security" as an ongoing global security issue.

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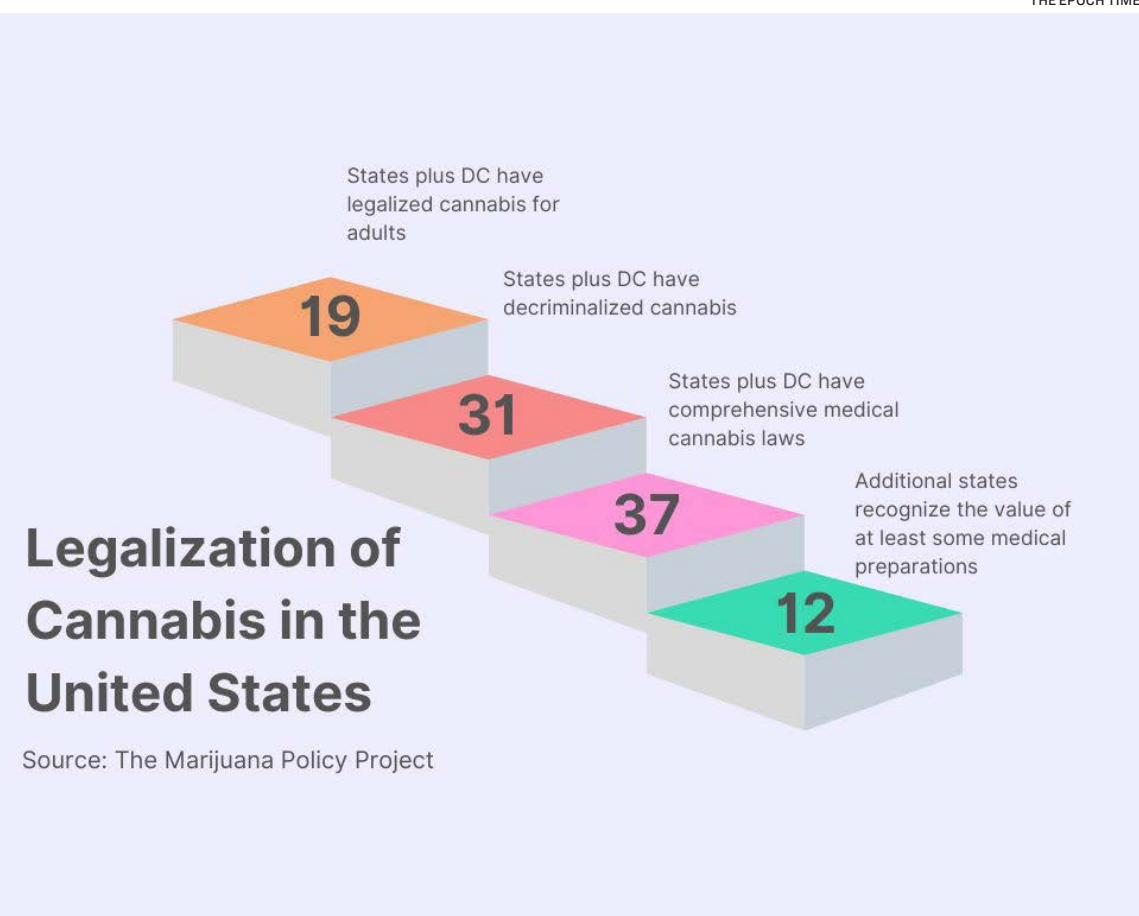
A multi-agency investigation shut down a criminal marijuana growing operation in Henryetta, Okla., according to an Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics release on April 26, 2022.

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES



Candy bars laced with medical marijuana are displayed at the Alternative Herbal Health Services cannabis dispensary in San Francisco on April 24, 2020.

An overview of the legal context of marijuana within the United States based on statistics from The Marijuana Policy Project.





A local woman spreads hay before planting trees in the desert at Mingqin county in Wuwei, Gansu Province, China, on March 28, 2019.

ENERGY

China to Activate Experimental Nuclear Molten Salt Reactor, Hopes to Obtain Full Intellectual Rights

KATIE SPENCE

In China's remote northwest Gansu province, Chinese scientists successfully designed, and built, an experimental thorium-powered molten salt reactor—and they're about to power it up.

Initially, 2024 was the projected completion date for the prototype; but a healthy research and design budget, plus a push from Beijing, thrust completion of the reactor ahead of schedule.

The technology behind the molten salt reactor isn't new—Alvin Weinberg at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory operated a similar prototype in the 1960s; but conventional water-cooled reactors were put in use instead.

Pointedly, if the Chinese successfully switch from uranium to thorium and prove commercial viability of their new nuclear reactor, they hope to gain full intellectual property rights.

'First of Its Kind'

In January 2011, the Shanghai Institute of Applied Physics (SIAP) launched a \$444 million research and design program for a thorium-breeding molten salt reactor (TMSR). The R&D was successful, and in September 2018, construction on the TMSR began, with an estimated completion time of 2024.

However, 2024 was too far out for some. After successfully expediting construction, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment approved SIAP's request to start its 2 megawatts thermal (MWt) reactor on Aug. 2, according to the World Nuclear Association.

"Our bureau has conducted a technical review of the application documents you submitted, and believes that your 2 MWt liquid fuel thorium-based molten salt experimental reactor commissioning plan is acceptable and is hereby approved."

The Ministry stipulated that if any "major abnormality occurs" during the commissioning process, the abnormality needs to be reported to the Northwest Nuclear and Radiation Safety Supervision Station "in time."

Concerning energy generation, 2 MWt can power approximately 1,000 homes, meaning the prototype won't generate a significant amount of energy compared to traditional nuclear reactors. But if the prototype is successful, China hopes to build a 373 MWt by 2030.

Initially, thorium will only account for 20 percent of TMSR's fuel source. The plan is

to work up from 20 percent thorium fission to 80 percent.

China is closely guarding its TMSR design. However, the World Nuclear Association reports that the new design builds on Oak Ridge National Laboratory's 1965 molten salt reactor experiment (MSRE).

Like China, Oak Ridge's MSRE started with a fuel mixture of depleted and enriched uranium. Then in 1968, uranium-233 was added to the mix—thorium doesn't split and release energy; instead, thorium transmutes to the isotope uranium-233 when it absorbs a neutron.

Importantly, the core of a molten salt reactor consists of liquefied salt and converted thorium, making it possible for the liquid to act as both coolant and fuel. As an added benefit, molten salt reactors operate at lower pressure reducing the risk of explosive meltdowns, experts claim.

After including U-233, Oak Ridge's MSRE operated successfully until Dec. 1968. However, advances in competing nuclear technology and a lack of political support led to its closure. Consequently, Oak Ridge Lab's MSRE never reached commercial viability.

Thorium Versus Uranium

Current nuclear technology relies on uranium ore for fuel, which is about as common as zinc or tin but is not a renewable resource.

Moreover, while total world resources of uranium aren't known, current known sources are enough to supply conventional

reactors for approximately 90 years. While that may sound concerning, it's a "higher level of assured resources than is normal for most minerals," according to the World Nuclear Association.

Still, there are several drawbacks to uranium nuclear reactors, not the least of which is that uranium waste is radioactive for thousands of years.

Conversely, thorium is also abundant, possibly three times more than uranium, and produces less radioactive waste with a hazardous life of about 300 years. It's also more chemically stable and is relatively inert, making storage and disposal simpler.

As an added benefit, molten salt reactors don't require water for cooling, meaning they can operate in desert regions.

China plans to take full advantage of this factor by building TMSRs across its western desert regions, Nuclear Engineering International reports.

Still, thorium reactors do have some drawbacks.

For example, the materials used to manufacture components for molten salt reactors have to maintain their integrity in highly corrosive and radioactive environments.

In 1995, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board reviewed the MSRE at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. "The Fuel Drain Tanks are believed to be corroding and the potential exists for stress corrosion cracking in the off-gas system piping and charcoal bed vessel," the report found.

A related problem involves radioactive fission products. Specifically, fission products and actinides are radioactive, and their chemical effects can eat away at the containment and migrate to other areas, which happened to the Oak Ridge MSRE.

"Since the Molten Salt Reactor Experiment shut down 25 years ago, several kilograms of fissile uranium (mostly 233U) have migrated from the Fuel Drain Tanks through the piping of the off-gas system and deposited in a short section of a charcoal bed," the Defense Nuclear Board report states.

Regardless of the drawbacks, China believes the future of nuclear power involves thorium molten salt reactors. And if China successfully proves commercial viability of its TMSR, the Chinese Academy of Sciences plans to pursue full intellectual property rights on the technology, according to the World Nuclear Association.



British Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne speaks with Taishan Nuclear Power Joint Venture general manager Guo Liming in front of a nuclear reactor under construction at a nuclear power plant in Taishan, Guangdong Province, on Oct. 17, 2013. The Chinese regime is trying to win several contracts to build nuclear power facilities in other countries.

WANG HE/GETTY IMAGES

COURTESY OF HONGYU ZHANG



COURTESY OF MINGHU LONG



(Top left) Hongyu Zhang (L) and her parents in 2009. Her mother died of torture in police custody in 2013. Her father was arrested on Aug. 10 and has been held in a police station since. (Bottom left) The Masanjia Labor Camp in China's northeastern Liaoning Province. (Above) Hongyu Zhang spoke at a rally in New York, calling for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong, in April 2018.



COURTESY OF HONGYU ZHANG

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

'What My Family Has Been Through Is Just the Tip of the Iceberg'

A Young Woman's Journey Through Fear

KELLY SONG

Hongyu Zhang will never forget the day in 2014 when she escaped China leaving her father behind, alone. Just 6 months prior, she lost her mother who died of torture in police custody. Zhang, now a permanent resident of the United States, said that her biggest fear is losing connection with her father in China. On Aug. 13, when she could not reach her father by phone, she knew it was time to face her biggest fear.

Zhang and her parents are practitioners of Falun Gong, a mind-body practice that consists of meditative exercises and moral teachings. The practice garnered over 70 million followers in the late 1990s in China because of its health benefits and moral improvements. The Chinese regime, out of a fear of Falun Gong's rapid growth and popularity, launched a persecution against the group in July 1999.

The persecution continues today. Zhang found out from her relatives that on Aug. 10 her father was taken away by police, who also ransacked her father's home. Zhang's father, Ming Zhang is being held in a local police station in Dandong city of

China's northeastern province of Liaoning. The police station has since denied visitation by Zhang's relatives.

Ming Zhang, 64, started practicing Falun Gong in 1996. His health condition drastically improved shortly after he took up the practice. He stopped smoking and drinking. He worked at the Bank of China before switching jobs to a district court in Dandong city, and received praise from his coworkers and supervisors.

The entire family enjoyed the blessings of following Falun Gong's moral teachings, which center around the values truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.

Turbulent Years Under the Persecution

Then the persecution started and "everything turned upside down," Zhang said, "but we never gave up our belief. From my teenage years, I experienced separation from my parents multiple times."

In 2001, Zhang's father went to Beijing just to tell the Central government that Falun Gong is good. But he was sent to a forced labor camp for 3 years.

In 2007, Zhang's mother was detained and severely tortured at the notorious

Masanjia Labor Camp. After over three months of torture in the labor camp, she was on the brink of death. The labor camp sent her home fearing that she would die in the camp.

What my family has been through is just the tip of the iceberg of this senseless genocidal persecution of innocent people.

Hongyu Zhang

In September 2013, Zhang's mother was again arrested because she was talking about Falun Gong to people outside of her home. Then the police took Zhang and her father into custody as well. They were harshly interrogated. Zhang witnessed her mother being tortured. She was confined to a metal chair for a long period of time with her wrists and ankles tied to the chair.

Eventually, Zhang's mother's whole body became swollen. She developed urinary

incontinence, and her blood pressure shot up to 230. Once again, the police sent her home when she was in critical condition. But this time, she did not survive.

Zhang's mother died in November of that year, two months after she was arrested.

That was when Zhang made the difficult decision to leave China so that she can help end the persecution by telling people her family's story.

In June 2018, Zhang's father was arrested while distributing informational pamphlets about Falun Gong. He was sentenced to one year in prison. Zhang spoke at human rights rallies, went to protest in front of the Chinese Embassy, and wrote to U.S. officials about her father's condition.

'Only the Tip of the Iceberg'

Fearing that her elderly father would not be able to withstand the tortures, Zhang has been pleading with elected officials for help. "I have lost my mother due to the persecution. I don't want it to happen again to my father."

"What my family has been through is just the tip of the iceberg of this senseless genocidal persecution of innocent people. In China, millions of Falun Gong practitioners have lost their jobs, lost their loved ones, or had their families broken," Zhang said.

"Yet, according to Chinese Constitution and law, practicing Falun Gong is legal in China. However, the communist regime has been sustaining this persecution via propaganda, violence, and coercion."

"I am very fortunate to be in the free land of the United States. I wish people can get a glimpse of the evil of communism through the story of my family," Zhang said. "I hope to be able to connect with my father again soon."

PROPAGANDA

China Uses Pandemic Propaganda to Spread Totalitarian Ideologies: HK Columnist

HANNAH NG & JAN JEKIELEK

The Chinese regime leveraged its propaganda in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic to spread its totalitarian ideologies to the West, according to former Hong Kong Apple Daily columnist Simon Lee.

"When COVID started, China [was] concerned only on one thing—how can they capitalize on this crisis to show the world that China's system is superior to the rest of the world," Lee recently told EpochTV's "American Thought Leaders" program.

Lee singled out how the regime highlighted its capability to build a quarantine hospital in a week, "then they propagandized the achievement as 'this is the Chinese efficiency.'"

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took it a step further by spreading the rhetoric: "We China control the disease from spreading. Your countries, the Western world, should learn from us on how to manage this virus," according to Lee.

Whenever other countries failed with their lockdown policies, China said, "Look, this is the failure, the weakness of the Western democratic institutions, because you cannot get things done."

Exporting Totalitarianism

The West had bought the regime's rhetoric and applied its totalitarian ideologies, Lee opined.

He further pointed to Dr. Anthony Fauci advocating for strict COVID-19 control, saying: "He thought he was defending against the virus, but he is introducing an ideological virus of totalitarianism to his nation."

"Whether people can develop immunity, whether your health care system can cope with the disease, that is a very objective, scientific issue," Lee said.

In Lee's opinion, the CCP is still insisting on a zero-COVID policy because "they want to tell the world that if you have people dying from the disease, it was because your government is incompetent."

"The world is not only immune to COVID, the world is actually more immune to the crazy idea that you need a strong government to keep people healthy," he said.

The Epoch Times has reached out to Fauci for comments.

The Threat of Freedom

The regime sees freedom as a threat that needs to be subjected to elimination, according to Lee.

"It is in their nature to destroy everything that represents freedom. They wanted to destroy freedom of their own people and of the people of other nations, consciously [and] intentionally," Lee said.

Lee further explained why the regime treats both Hong Kong and Taiwan as a threat to its existence.

THE EPOCH TIMES



Simon Lee, a former columnist at Apple Daily, at the FreedomFest conference in Las Vegas on July 15, 2022.

"Firstly, Hong Kong provided an alternative for Chinese people. Hong Kong shows that Chinese can live in a free society and prosper," Lee said.

"When Chinese in an authoritarian regime can not prosper, then everyone will ask the question, 'Why can't we be more like Hong Kong?'" he added.

According to Lee, the same logic is applied in relation to Taiwan.

In Lee's opinion, Taiwan shows that Chinese people can have an open, functioning, democratic society and have a civil society that advocates for the people.

"When things are not going right in China, like now with the implosion of the economic real estate bubble ... people will ask, 'Why can't we be more like Taiwanese, having this certain, humble, but free life?'" Lee said.

China "has to eliminate Hong Kong and Taiwan, so that at least they can tell the world that there is only one possibility for

Chinese society," he added.

One Country, Two Systems Firewall

Lee pointed to the constitutional principle of "One country, two system" describing the governance of Hong Kong after the territory was returned to China. It was formulated in the early 1980s during negotiations over Hong Kong between China and the United Kingdom.

The columnist called the principle as "a firewall protecting the one country and the one system that they have."

"It is a firewall that protects China from changing itself, because most of the time, if you need access to the international financial market, you have to change your rules," he said.

"China successfully transformed its state-owned sector [and] modernized it without changing the totalitarian culture of the nation. Actually, it becomes even more totalitarian than before," Lee added.

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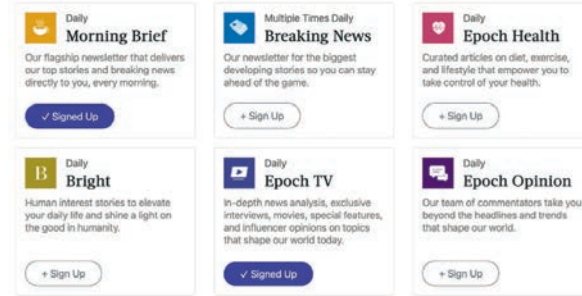
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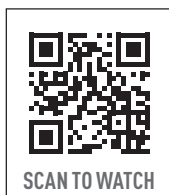


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