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Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023 • **\$3**

China's cyber army targets key U.S. services

Officials say intrusions have hit ports, utilities but not led to disruptions

BY ELLEN NAKASHIMA
AND JOSEPH MENN

The Chinese military is ramping up its ability to disrupt key American infrastructure, including power and water utilities as well as communications and transportation systems, according to U.S. officials and industry security officials.

Hackers affiliated with China's People's Liberation Army have burrowed into the computer systems of about two dozen critical entities over the past year, these experts said.

The intrusions are part of a broader effort to develop ways to sow panic and chaos or snarl logistics in the event of a U.S.-China conflict in the Pacific, they said.

Among the victims are a water utility in Hawaii, a major West Coast port and at least one oil and gas pipeline, people familiar with the incidents told The Washington Post. The hackers also attempted to break into the operator of Texas's power grid, which operates independently from electrical systems in the rest of the country.

Several entities outside the United States, including electric utilities, also have been victimized by the hackers, said the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the matter's sensitivity.

None of the intrusions affected
SEE CHINA ON **A4**

Partial decoupling: House panel backs an economic reset. **A4**

Pharmacies give records to police with no warrant

BY DREW HARWELL

The nation's largest pharmacy chains have handed over Americans' prescription records to police and government investigators without a warrant, a congressional investigation found, raising concerns about threats to medical privacy.

Though some of the chains require their lawyers to review law enforcement requests, three of the largest — CVS Health, Kroger and Rite Aid, with a combined 60,000 locations nationwide — said they allow pharmacy staff members to hand over customers' medical records in the store.

The policy was revealed in a letter sent late Monday to Xavier Becerra, the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Reps. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) and Sara Jacobs (D-Calif.).

The members began investigating the practice after the Supreme Court's decision last year in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ended the constitutional right to abortion.

The revelation could shape the debate over Americans' expectations of privacy as Texas and other states move to criminalize abortion and drugs related to reproductive health.

Pharmacies' records hold some
SEE RECORDS ON **A22**

STALEMATE UKRAINE'S FAILED COUNTEROFFENSIVE



A campaign of incremental gains

Kyiv's long-awaited drive hits thick Russian defenses

BY WASHINGTON POST STAFF

ZAPORIZHZHIA, UKRAINE — Soldiers in the 47th Separate Mechanized Brigade waited for nightfall before piling — nervous but confident — into their U.S.-provided Bradley Fighting Vehicles. It was June 7 and Ukraine's long-awaited counteroffensive was about to begin.

The goal for the first 24 hours was to advance nearly nine miles, reaching the village of Robotyne — an initial thrust south toward the larger objective of reclaiming Melitopol, a city near the Sea of Azov, and severing Russian supply lines.

Nothing went as planned. The Ukrainian troops had expected minefields but were blindsided by the density. The ground was carpeted with explosives, so many that some were buried in stacks. The soldiers had been

trained to drive their Bradleys at a facility in Germany, on smooth terrain. But on the mushy soil of the Zaporizhzhia region, in the deafening noise of battle, they struggled to steer through the narrow lanes cleared of mines by advance units.

The Russians, positioned on higher ground, immediately started firing anti-tank missiles. Some vehicles in the convoy were hit, forcing others behind them to veer off the path. Those, in turn, exploded on mines, snarling even more of the convoy. Russian helicopters and drones swooped in and attacked the pileup.

Troops, some experiencing the shock of combat for the first time, pulled back to regroup — only to attack and retreat, again and again on successive days, with
SEE STALEMATE ON **A12**

THE DISCORD LEAKS

Disclosures burst a Washington information bubble

After bleak analysis on Ukraine war spilled into view, U.S. launched damage-control offensives

BY JOHN HUDSON
AND MISSY RYAN

When U.S. officials were busy resupplying Ukraine's depleted forces in the spring for what was expected to be a coming counteroffensive against entrenched Russian troops, the Pentagon sprung a leak.

Photographs of about 50 highly classified documents — detailing secret intelligence on challenges as diverse as the war in Ukraine, Iran's nuclear program, Chinese aircraft carriers and the killing of Islamic State terrorists — started appearing online.

"We were blindsided and furious," said a U.S. official who fielded dozens of media inquiries about the leaks. The official, like others interviewed for this article, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the disclosure of classified documents.

At the time, neither the Pentagon, the White House nor the 18 agencies of the U.S. intelligence community had any sense of the scope of the classified material exposed. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin immediately established a Defense Department task force, part of an urgent effort across the government to identify and mitigate the damage.

"The first job was to just get



WOJCIECH GRZEDZINSKI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Rescuers search for victims after an apartment complex in Dnipro, Ukraine, was hit by Russian forces in January. The Discord leaks pierced Washington's rosy public assessments of Ukraine's war effort.

our arms around what was out there ... what information may have been compromised," a senior defense official said. "Particularly before the investigation had really identified any suspects, it was trying to quickly understand

and make some sense of the information."

Government spokespeople solicited information from media organizations about what they were planning to publish, and scrambled to track down specific

intelligence documents from their classified systems, even as law enforcement agencies were
SEE LEAKS ON **A8**

'Spillage': Once secrets are online, there is no containing them. **A9**

Plea for Ukraine falls flat on Hill

AID STALLS AS GOP DIGS IN ON BORDER

Zelensky, in D.C., warns of dire consequences

BY ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER,
LEIGH ANN CALDWELL,
TYLER PAGER
AND LIZ GOODWIN

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky failed on Tuesday to secure a breakthrough with Congress as it remains firmly deadlocked over President Biden's request for additional U.S. military assistance for Ukraine, even though many lawmakers appeared to agree that the war's outlook would only worsen without a continuation of American support.

Zelensky told lawmakers that his country will never give up in its fight to expel invading Russian forces, but he warned that without more aid, the conflict will turn far more brutal as his military inevitably cedes ground to its determined and well-armed adversary.

His visit to Washington, coordinated by the White House as Ukraine edges closer to running out of weapons and cash, coincided with the standoff on Capitol Hill, where Republicans have demanded sweeping changes to U.S. immigration law in exchange for granting Biden's request for more than \$60 billion to keep Kyiv supplied. It was the Ukrainian leader's second time barnstorming the Capitol in the past three months, but his reception was comparatively cool as Republicans
SEE UKRAINE ON **A15**

Cyberattack: A massive mobile service outage hits Ukraine. **A15**

Biden says bombings cost Israel support

BY RUBY MELLEN,
TOLUSE OLORUNNIPAA,
ADAM TAYLOR
AND HAZEM BALOUSHA

President Biden offered sharp criticism of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's conduct of the war on Hamas in Gaza on Tuesday, suggesting that Israel's closest ally and biggest donor is souring on a campaign that has killed thousands of Palestinians and sparked a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

Biden told supporters that "the indiscriminate bombing that takes place" was beginning to cost Israel support around the world.

"Bibi's got a tough decision to make," Biden said, referring to Netanyahu by his nickname. "I think he has to change, and with this government, this government in Israel is making it very difficult for him to move."

The comments, delivered at a fundraiser in Washington, stood out as some of the most direct
SEE ISRAEL ON **A17**

Hostage-family divide: One gets a reunion as the other waits. **A17**

IN THE NEWS

Asteroid analysis NASA gave scientists a first description of material recovered during a multiyear mission tied to the origins of life. **A3**

Doomsday cuts Metro outlined a spending plan that would include higher fares, longer waits and nearly 2,300 layoffs without an infusion of hundreds of millions of dollars. **B1**

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Harvard President Claudine Gay will remain in her role despite calls for her removal. **A6**
ER visits for covid, flu and RSV collectively reached their highest levels since February. **A7**

THE WORLD
China could beat its goal on carbon emissions, but you won't hear it bragging. **A10**
The Arctic continues to get wetter and greener, says a report that details warming's signs. **A11**

THE ECONOMY
"Skibidi Toilet" on YouTube is this year's biggest online phenomenon. Gen Alphas love it, but Gen Zers aren't so sure. **A18**
With inflation dropping to 3.1 percent in November, the Federal Reserve is unlikely to raise rates this week. **A22**

THE REGION
The selection of Greenbelt as the next home of the FBI went before a hearing of skeptical lawmakers Tuesday. **B1**
A management firm settled a D.C. lawsuit and said it will ensure its software doesn't discriminate based on housing subsidies. **B1**

STYLE
"Home Alone" is one of the 25 movies newly selected for preservation in the Library of Congress's film registry. **C1**
FOOD
Get the scoop on five sour cream dip recipes for the holiday season that are simple and quick to prepare.

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