



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

China to hold air defense alarm test in Lhasa Sept. 19

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September 15, 2020

Amid growing tensions with India, China has said it will conduct an “air defense alarm” test in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa on Sept. 19, 2020.

In an announcement dated Sept. 14, 2020, the Lhasa city government said the test will serve “to improve the general public's conception of national defense and civil air defense awareness, and in order to implement the air defense alarm test day system and test our air defense alarm facility.”

On the face of it, the test seems to be part of annual National Defense Education Day, which is observed on the third Saturday of each September, usually with publicity activities.

The only other time in the recent past when such an alarm test was conducted in Lhasa was in 2009. There are reports of similar air defense alarm tests conducted in Beijing in the past.

Message to India

However, in the current period of ongoing tension between China and India along the Tibetan border, there is certainly cause to question the need for such a test in Lhasa, unless the point is to send a message to India.

In recent months, Indian and Chinese troops have clashed along the border in the Indian state of Ladakh following Chinese incursion into Indian territory.

Following the initial clash between Chinese and Indian troops in June, China conducted several military drills in Tibet, leading to the further militarization of a country that once served as a peaceful buffer between India and China before China's conquest of Tibet in the 1950s.

Chinese state media also reported that State Counselor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited a border region in Tibet during his trip there in August.

Observers have linked that visit to the proceedings of the seventh Tibet Work Forum meeting in Beijing at the end of August, during which Chinese President Xi Jinping, who presided over the gathering, reiterated his call for securing the border in Tibet as part of bringing stability to China.

“More difficult to suppress Tibetans than before”

Hu Ping, a US-based Chinese scholar, felt that although the meeting was about Tibet, Xi's speech mainly related to the recent conflict with India.

He also said Wang Yi's trip had nothing to do with Tibet, but with China-India relations: "I don't think the CCP has any new policies or new practices in Tibet, but because of the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations, it has become more difficult for the CCP to suppress Tibetans than before."

Although the Lhasa government announcement asks people not to panic, the extensive military drills in the recent past, coupled with a general air defense alarm at this point in time, have the dangerous potential to destabilize Tibet and to create a climate of fear among the people in Lhasa.

Government announcement

Following is the ICT translation of the full text of the Lhasa government announcement.

Announcement regarding the air defense alarm test in Lhasa City

In accordance with the spirit of the "People's Air Defense Law of the People's Republic of China" and the "Measures for Implementing the 'People's Air Defense Law of the People's Republic of China' in the Tibet Autonomous Region," in order to improve the general public's conception of national defense and civil air defense awareness, and in order to implement the air defense alarm test day system and test our air defense alarm facility, the Lhasa Municipal People's Government decided to sound the air defense alarm from 12:00 to 12:15 on September 19, 2020. We hope that all residential communities, government agencies, enterprises, institutions, and social organization members will pay attention to listening, distinguishing, and understanding different acoustic signals. When they hear the air defense alarm, they don't have to panic; citizens' normal life, including production, work, study and social activities will not be affected and can be carried out normally.

The difference between the different signals of air defense alarm is as follows:

12:00-12:03: Trial sounding of the "pre-alarm," sounding for 36 seconds, stopping for 24 seconds, and lasting for 3 minutes;

12:06-12:09: Trial sounding of the "air raid alarm," sounding for 6 seconds, stopping for 6 seconds, and lasting for 3 minutes;

12:12 to 12:15: Trial sounding of the "all clear alarm," continuously sounding for 3 minutes.

Special announcement

*Lhasa City People's Government
September 14, 2020*



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