



# CHINA'S ACTIVITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

## February 2021

The following is a summary of open-source media reporting on China's presence and activities in Latin America and the Caribbean in February 2021. This is not a complete list of media reports on China's activities in Latin America but are some of the most relevant articles and reports selected by SFS researchers and fellows. The monitor does source a limited amount of media reports from state-owned or -controlled media outlets, which are carefully selected and solely intended to report on news that is not reported on by other media and is relevant for understanding VRIC influence in the region. This report is produced as part of our VRIC Monitor published monthly by the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), a non-profit, national security think tank based in Washington D.C.



- State media reports the Venezuelan government ratified its commitment to strengthen bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China, while congratulating the Chinese people and authorities for the advent of the Lunar New Year. - [Prensa Latina on 11-FEB](#)
- Mainland China is the world's top consumer of seahorse, buying some 500 tonnes per year. Although the export of seahorses from Mexico without the proper permits carries up to nine years in prison, trafficking to Asia has escalated in recent years, enabled by incompetence and impunity on both sides of the trade. There have been no dried seahorses imported legally from Mexico since a ban came into effect in 2012. - [Diálogo Chino on 10-FEB](#)

- State-owned media reports the capital of Colombia has acquired almost a thousand new electric buses for its public transportation system. The purchase makes Bogota one of the cities outside of China with the largest fleet of completely electric buses. - [CGTN on 08-FEB](#)
- Guyana abruptly terminated an agreement with Taiwan to open an office in the South American country, hours after China urged Georgetown to “correct their mistake.” Taiwan’s foreign ministry said it had signed an agreement with Guyana on Jan. 11 to open a Taiwan office, effectively a de facto embassy for the island that China claims as its sovereign territory with no right to diplomatic ties. - [Reuters on 03-FEB](#)
- State-owned media reports during the waning hours of 2020, an important bilateral, inter-continental phone call took place between Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Mexico's Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrand. The two men discussed the direction of relations between their two countries. - [CGTN on 30-JAN](#)
- China’s government called on Indonesia on Wednesday to treat a group of detained Chinese sailors fairly but gave no indication what their oil tanker was doing when it was found at sea transferring fuel from an Iranian ship. The Iranian-flagged MT Horse and Panamanian-flagged MT Freya were seized Sunday and are suspected of illegally transferring fuel at sea, shutting off their identification systems and other offenses. Indonesian authorities said 36 Iranian and 25 Chinese crew members were detained. - [Associated Press on 26-JAN](#)
- It may be the oil market’s worst-kept secret: millions of barrels of Venezuelan heavy crude, embargoed by the U.S., have been surreptitiously going to China. The cat-and-mouse games that avoid detection and sanctions include ship-to-ship transfers, shell companies and silenced satellite signals. But there’s another aspect to the dodge. It involves “doping” the oil with chemical additives and changing its name in the paperwork so it can be sold as a wholly different crude without a trace of its Venezuelan roots. - [Bloomberg on 21-JAN](#)
- The US International Development Finance Corporation has struck a deal that will help Ecuador repay billions of dollars in loans to China and boost development in exchange for excluding Chinese companies from its telecom networks, reported the Financial Times. Adam Böhler, the chief executive of the US development bank, signed the deal in an event with Ecuadorian president Lenín Moreno on Thursday, calling it a “novel model” to eject China from the Latin American nation. - [China Economic Review on 15-JAN](#)
- State media reports Cuba and China signed an agreement on the mutual exemption of visas for holders of diplomatic, services, officials and public affairs passports. Deputy Foreign Minister Anayansi Rodríguez and Chinese Ambassador Chen Xi penned the deal at the headquarters of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, according to Cubaminrex. - [Prensa Latina on 13-JAN](#)

## ILLEGAL FISHING

- After crossing the Pacific, China's fishing armada is now off the Argentine coast. The Argentinian government is playing down the issue, saying that it is negotiating with China, while refusing US help. Environmental groups call for international regulation. - [Asia News on 04-FEB](#)

## NORTH KOREA

- State media reports Ma Chol Su, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the Republic of Cuba met and had a talk with Alberto Blanco Silva, Director of Asia and Oceania of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, on February 9. The Directoy said that the Republic of Cuba would strengthen and develop the friendly and cooperative relations with fraternal DPRK onto a new high level. - [KCNA Watch on 11-FEB](#)
- State media reports Ri Sung Gil, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, met and had a talk with Rubén Darío Molina, Vice-Minister, Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs, on February 2. - [KCNA Watch on 06-FEB](#)