



By: C. Douglas Golden

Chinese Building Co. Caught Tampering with Medical Supplies Overseas

In January, as news of the coronavirus was just unpleasant background noise in most of the world, an employee of Greenland Group, a massive, global property concern based in Shanghai, China, and backed by the government there began turning its gaze away from the property market and toward a different set of activities.

“Basically, all employees, the majority of whom are Chinese, were asked to source whatever medical supplies they could,” a company insider told the Sydney (Australia) Morning Herald.

“There were numerous requests from the HR manager and even our direct reporting line [which] prioritized the assisting of the company in gathering these supplies over other work activities,” the insider said.

Instead of doing work, the source told the Herald, the company had “the entire accounts department, contract managers, the human resources team and even receptionists” tracking down surgical face masks, hand sanitizer, acetaminophen, thermometers, disinfecting wipes and gloves.

The accounts department was absent for days on end procuring the supplies, the report stated.

And this was hardly a secret. Greenland Group admitted it had done as much because China was the epicenter of the crisis. The company said it “felt compelled ... to assist in efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus, which had caused a shortage of crucial medical supplies in China.”

The Australian arm of the company aided in the effort “by arranging for medical supplies to be dispatched to China, which at that time, was the epicenter of the outbreak.”

Here are the numbers, from a Greenland Group company newsletter reported by the Herald: 3 million face masks, 700,000 hazmat suits and 500,000 pairs of gloves.

The supplies came from “Australia, Canada, Turkey and other countries,” the Herald reported.

And that’s part of the reason why, according to the U.K. Daily Mail, doctors and medical professionals Down Under are buying painting masks from home improvement stores because they can’t get surgical masks.

“No one is getting information about what’s going on [with medical supplies] and although the case numbers are still low, people are starting to worry. What we can’t tolerate is not knowing what’s going on,” a surgeon at a Sydney hospital said, according to the Daily Mail.

On Monday, the Daily Mail reported that an Australian TV program found a warehouse filled with pallets of goods bound for China, items which included milk powder, baby formula and medication.

Derryn Hinch, a former senator from the Australian state of Victoria, said sending items back to China like that was “disgraceful.”

“If, in fact, I can’t buy more than two things of shower cleaner, surely to God you can stop people sending tons of masks overseas,” he said, according to the Daily Mail.

“It could cost lives in this country.”

China, of course, is now ostentatiously promoting the fact that it’s sending medical equipment and supplies abroad. Which would be great, except for the fact that it so desperately wanted other countries’ medical supplies that it literally had state-linked property companies drop a fair amount of their usual business in order to help them stockpile equipment.

And this isn’t a small concern; Fortune lists Greenland Group as one of the world’s 500 biggest companies. Four of its projects under development will be in the world’s top 10 tallest buildings. This isn’t the kind of concern that just stops on a dime — and yet it did, in order to stockpile coronavirus-centric supplies and ship them back to China.

What are we supposed to make of this? These are values diametrically opposed to our own, to siphon one country’s ability to deal with the coronavirus threat by packing up supplies and getting them out of the country. China did it through a property-management firm, of all things, proof that the Chinese are nothing but creative in circumstances like this.

Australia’s number of cases is relatively low at the moment, with only 34 total deaths and 5,687 confirmed cases. Assume, however, it had become a hotspot. Or assume it

does as the Southern hemisphere's summer turns to fall, since experts have been predicting that everywhere will see a peak eventually.

If there were shortages of PPE and other medical supplies, would China take the blame? Or would it send along a handful of ventilators and lionize it for it via its official news agency Xinhua?

There is no excuse for this, not when doctors are wearing painters' masks because they can't get surgical masks. It's one more apology that China owes the world.

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