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# THE OPEN SOURCE MEDIA SUMMARY

**September 16, 2020**

## **CHINA'S PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) CONTINUES TO ABUSE U.S. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM TO ADVANCE ITS MILITARY CAPABILITIES**

*U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation | September 2, 2020*

The FBI's Counterintelligence Division prepared this bulletin to inform academia, specifically faculty and administration at US universities, regarding the People's Republic of China's (PRC) information collection activities targeting intellectual property, sensitive information, and research at US academic institutions. Recent criminal prosecutions clearly demonstrate that the PRC is exploiting visa programs to covertly send its military officials to the United States posing as visiting scholars or students to collect information. The FBI is urging US academic institutions to become aware of the threat and remain vigilant of foreign adversaries' ulterior motive(s) while continuing to ensure an exchange of ideas in an open and transparent environment. Following are some recent case examples.

The full document is attached.

## **ALERT (AA20-258A) CHINESE MINISTRY OF STATE SECURITY- AFFILIATED CYBER THREAT ACTOR ACTIVITY**

*U.S. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency | September 14, 2020*

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has consistently observed Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS)-affiliated cyber threat actors using publicly available information sources and common, well-known tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to target U.S. Government agencies. CISA has observed these—and other threat actors with varying degrees of skill—routinely using open-source information to plan and execute cyber operations. CISA leveraged the MITRE Adversarial Tactics, Techniques, and Common Knowledge (ATT&CK®) and Pre-ATT&CK frameworks to characterize the TTPs used by Chinese MSS-affiliated actors. This product was written by CISA with contributions by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Read the full alert [here](#).



## **CORRUPTING THE COLLEGE BOARD**

*Rachelle Peterson | National Association of Scholars | August 31, 2020*

China's intrusion into American institutions is front page news nearly every day. As this report went to press, the State Department ordered the closure of China's Houston consulate, which was a hub for coordinating the theft of American intellectual property. A few days later, news broke of undercover Chinese military personnel enrolled as graduate students at American universities, where they spied on and stole American technology and research.<sup>1</sup> Several hundred researchers—many of them U.S. citizens—are also under investigation for participation in China's Thousand Talents Plan, which lures scholars into sharing sensitive research. Dozens have been arrested and face serious charges. Several have been convicted. This report is about the College Board, itself the subject of a Chinese government influence campaign. Most Americans know the College Board as the force behind the SAT and the AP exams. Few know that it has partnered closely with the Chinese government not only in the development of the AP Chinese Language and Culture exam, but in multiple ongoing programs and projects, including an annual conference.

Read the full report [here](#).

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## **CHINA'S 'HYBRID WAR': BEIJING'S MASS SURVEILLANCE OF AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD FOR SECRETS AND SCANDAL**

*Andrew Probyn and Matthew Doran | ABC News | September 13, 2020*

A database of 2.4 million people, including more than 35,000 Australians, has been leaked from the Shenzhen company Zhenhua Data which is believed to be used by China's intelligence service, the Ministry of State Security. Zhenhua has the People's Liberation Army and the Chinese Communist Party among its main clients. Information collected includes dates of birth, addresses, marital status, along with photographs, political associations, relatives and social media IDs. It collates Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and even TikTok accounts, as well as news stories, criminal records and corporate misdemeanours. While much of the information has been "scraped" from open-source material, some profiles have information which appears to have been sourced from confidential bank records, job applications and psychological profiles. The company is believed to have sourced some of its information from the so-called "dark web". One intelligence analyst said the database was "Cambridge Analytica on steroids", referring to the trove of personal information sourced from Facebook profiles in the lead up to the 2016 US election campaign.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **HAWLEY CALLS ON CFIUS TO REJECT ORACLE-TIKTOK DEAL**

*Chris Mills Rodrigo | The Hill | September 14, 2020*

Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) urged the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States on Monday to reject a proposal where Oracle would become TikTok's partner. The two companies over the weekend submitted a deal with ByteDance, TikTok's parent company, where Oracle would be the short-form video apps "trusted technology provider" to the Treasury Department. CFIUS, an interagency body that deals with national security concerns stemming from transactions involving overseas companies, will now have to review the deal before approving it. The deal with the wildly-popular social media app was forced by two executive orders blocking American companies from dealing with ByteDance and pressing for the divestiture of TikTok's U.S. operations. The justification for President Trump's executive orders was the nebulous national security threat posed by TikTok's parent company being based in China.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **SIX CHINESE CITIZENS FORCED TO LEAVE AUSTRALIA FOR ALLEGED ESPIONAGE OR FOREIGN INTERFERENCE**

*Sky News Australia | September 9, 2020*

Six Chinese citizens have either left Australia after being questioned by intelligence agencies or been denied re-entry into the nation after allegedly engaging in espionage or foreign interference. The Australian has reported the visas of two academics were cancelled by the Australian government whilst they were offshore preventing them from returning to Australia, while an exchange with ASIO saw four Chinese journalists leave the nation. Sky News contributor Caleb Bond commented, "China can protest all it wants, but Australia has done nothing wrong and it's very much China in the wrong in this position."

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **HOW THE GOVERNMENT IS KEEPING HACKERS FROM DISRUPTING CORONAVIRUS VACCINE RESEARCH**

*Shannon Vavra | Cyber Scoop | September 8, 2020*

Six months ago, as professional sports were postponed indefinitely, schools were shuttering, Tom Hanks was the poster boy for COVID-19, and President Donald Trump addressed a nervous nation, people at the highest levels of the U.S. government became laser-focused on one idea: Coronavirus vaccine research needed to be defended from hacking attempts. Soon after the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, the Pentagon's Defense Digital Service and the National Security Agency got to work on a behind-the-scenes protection mission for "Operation Warp Speed," the U.S. government program responsible for producing 300 million coronavirus vaccine doses by January 2021. Known as the Security and Assurance portion of Operation Warp Speed, the mission is no small effort. Consisting of people from DDS, NSA, FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services, it has been running behind the scenes for months, and is being detailed here for the first time.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **U.S. REVOKES MORE THAN 1,000 VISAS OF CHINESE NATIONALS, CITING MILITARY LINKS**

*Humeyra Pamuk | Reuters | September 9, 2020*

The United States has revoked more than 1,000 visas of Chinese nationals as of this week, a State Department spokeswoman said on Wednesday, as part of the Trump administration's push to block entry of students and researchers from China it believes have links to the Chinese military. In a May 29 proclamation, President Donald Trump restricted the entry of certain Chinese students and researchers to the United States, saying they were being used in Beijing's campaign to acquire sensitive U.S. technologies and intellectual property. The State Department began implementing the rules effective June 1. "As of September 8, 2020, the Department has revoked more than 1,000 visas of PRC nationals who were found to be subject to Presidential Proclamation 10043 and therefore ineligible for a visa," a department spokeswoman said in emailed comments to Reuters. The department has broad authority to revoke visas, she said, and exercises that authority when information comes to light time indicating that a visa holder may be inadmissible to the United States or otherwise ineligible for a visa. She did not share specific details of whose visas had been revoked.

Read the full article [here](#).



## US EXPANDING RESTRICTIONS ON CHINESE STUDENTS

Lin Yang | VOA News | September 8, 2020

U.S. officials are considering broader restrictions against Chinese students attending American schools, as part of a deepening standoff between the two countries. Last week, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he hopes that China's government-funded "Confucius Institutes," which have branches on American university campuses, will all be shut down by the end of the year. "I think everyone's coming to see the risk associated with them," Pompeo said in an interview with the Fox Business Network, accusing the Chinese-government funded institutes of working to recruit "spies and collaborators" at U.S. colleges. The crackdown may also target Chinese academics who have relied on state funding for their overseas studies. On August 26, the University of North Texas (UNT) terminated an exchange program for 15 visiting Chinese researchers sponsored by the China Scholarship Council (CSC), a group backed by China's Ministry of Education.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

*The Academic Security and Counter Exploitation Program is coordinated by The Texas A&M University System Research Security Office as a service to the academic community.*

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