



ACADEMIC SECURITY AND COUNTER EXPLOITATION PROGRAM

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# THE OPEN SOURCE MEDIA SUMMARY

**January 27, 2021**

## **SENATE PASSED NEW LEGISLATION TO PUNISH FOREIGN INDIVIDUALS AND CORPORATIONS FOR IP THEFT**

*Yao Mou and Raija Horstman | Crowell Moring | January 26, 2021*

On December 20, 2020, the US Senate unanimously passed a new bipartisan bill designed to punish foreign individuals and corporations involved in intellectual property theft. The Protecting American Intellectual Property Act was co-authored by Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., and Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md. The bill requires a report to Congress every six months identifying: any individual or firm that has engaged in, benefitted from, or materially assisted the significant theft of U.S. trade secrets, if that theft constitutes a major threat to the national security, foreign policy, economic health or financial stability of the United States; and, the chief executive officers and board members of the reported firms and whether those individuals have benefitted from the significant theft of U.S. trade secrets. Subsequently, the bill requires: for any firm identified in the report to Congress, the President must impose either property blocking sanctions or prohibit U.S. exports to that firm for any individual identified in the report to Congress, the President must impose property blocking sanctions and must prohibit the individual's entry into the United States.

Read the full article [here](#).

## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WEIGHS AMNESTY FOR ACADEMICS TO DISCLOSE FOREIGN FUNDING**

*Melissa Korn and Aruna Viswanatha | The Wall Street Journal | January 22, 2021*

Justice Department officials are weighing an amnesty program under which U.S. academics could disclose past foreign funding without fear of punishment for their disclosures, according to people familiar with the matter. High-level officials, including Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Demers, have discussed the program in recent months, and circulated a draft proposal for it, these people said. Consideration of the program comes as the U.S. government continues to grapple with how to support international academic collaboration while making sure professors disclose foreign sources of funding. During the Trump administration, the Justice Department tried to target what it says are potentially inappropriate efforts by China to gain access to cutting-edge U.S. scientific research being funded by U.S. taxpayers. Federal prosecutors have brought more than a dozen criminal cases since mid-2019 accusing academics of lying about receiving Chinese government funding or alleging that visiting researchers lied about their affiliation with the Chinese military, some of which have resulted in guilty pleas.

Read the full article [here](#).



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## **MITRE: RISK APPROACH MAY THWART FOREIGN THREATS, BETTER FEDERAL INFO, SUPPORT ESSENTIAL**

*Theresa Defino | JD Supra | January 25, 2021*

"I don't want to be on the front page of the paper with my best researcher being dragged off in handcuffs. It doesn't look good for our university," a senior university administrator said. "Funding has gotten harder to get in the U.S. and it became easier to get from foreign sources in some cases," said a principal investigator (PI). "So what's driving this is the challenges in the U.S. research environment." These two comments are tucked inside a new study by The MITRE Corporation, *Improper Influence in Federally Funded Fundamental Research*,<sup>[1]</sup> which captures the fears, challenges and possible solutions related to ensuring that collaborations with non-United States investigators and institutions are legal and proper. The administrator and PIs were among the 160 researchers as well as representatives of 19 universities and eight U.S. agencies whom MITRE officials interviewed last summer for the report. In recent years, institutions have grappled with thwarting possible foreign alliances PIs may have that pose threats to intellectual property and other fruits of research.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **NEWLY INSTALLED SENIOR COUNTERINTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL NAMES CHINA AS TOP LONG-TERM THREAT**

*Jenna McLaughlin | Yahoo News | January 21, 2021*

Michael Orlando, a career FBI agent who has been tracking Chinese spies and agents for much of his career, has no doubts about what the most significant strategic threat is to the U.S. in the years ahead. "The bottom line is, intelligence services and our adversaries are going to do what they do regardless of who's in office," said Orlando during an interview with Yahoo News last month. "From my view, the Chinese Communist Party will be the long-term threat for us this century and beyond," he continued. "They are going to be the economic and national security challenge of this time." On Wednesday, with the resignation of his boss, William Evanina, the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, Orlando effectively became the top counterintelligence official in the country. President Biden will need to nominate a new director to be confirmed by the Senate, but Orlando will perform those duties until he does. Both Orlando and Evanina have served under a number of presidents, and Orlando says the threat is the same, regardless of the administration.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **OPPORTUNITY VS THREAT: CANADA'S UNPREDICTABLE AND SOMETIMES IRRECONCILABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA**

*Gabriel Friedman | Financial Post | January 22, 2021*

Dominic Barton, Canada's ambassador to China, last May travelled to one of its tech hubs, Shenzhen, to express gratitude to BGI Group, a gene-sequencing company that also administers a growing genomic database. With the coronavirus pandemic raging in Canada, the Sinai Health System in Toronto was set to receive what Barton characterized as a "generous donation" from BGI's foundation: an "MGISP-960 automated viral RNA extraction and sample preparation robot," as well as other lab equipment, ostensibly for rapid COVID-19 testing. In the United States, however, according to widespread news coverage and publicly available U.S. government documents, national security officials and the Federal Bureau of Investigation had already warned that BGI might be taking advantage of the pandemic to expand its business reach, and the company had a history of misusing personal data.

Read the full article [here](#).



## NSA CYBERSECURITY YEAR IN REVIEW 2020

U.S. National Security Agency | January 19, 2021

Building on its information assurance legacy, the National Security Agency (NSA) created a Cybersecurity Directorate in October of 2019 to prevent and eradicate threats to our nation's most sensitive systems and critical infrastructure, with an initial focus on the Defense Industrial Base and its service providers. The new directorate integrated NSA's threat intelligence, vulnerability analysis, cryptographic knowledge, defensive operations, and diverse technical expertise into one outcome-oriented, public-facing organization: an organization committed to driving combined threat and cybersecurity results that scale across government and industry. While not all-inclusive, this Year in Review outlines key milestones and mission outcomes achieved during NSA Cybersecurity's first year.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## CHINA RECRUITS 'HUNDREDS' OF AUSTRALIAN ACADEMICS AND SCIENTISTS TO SUSPICIOUS PROGRAM

Natalie Brown | *news.com.au* | January 21, 2021

More than 300 academics and scientists from tertiary and government research institutions around Australia have been recruited by the Chinese Communist Party, a new submission to a parliamentary inquiry has revealed. Alex Joske, the CCP-influence expert who made the submission, said as many as 600 Australians may have been recruited, warning that the secretive programs could be associated with up to \$280 million in grant fraud. He also raised concerns it could lead to Chinese infiltration and tech fraud. Last August, The Australian revealed dozens of researchers had been offered lucrative salaries and perks as part of Beijing's Thousand Talents Plans. In return, their inventions must be patented in China and they're obliged to abide by Chinese law, worrying security experts that certain technology and inventions, funded by Australian taxpayers, were being sent to China and used to advance their military and intelligence. "It serves the dual purpose of modernising China's military and is also commercially valuable," former British diplomat, Matthew Henderson, told the paper at the time. "At the moment we are giving greater shelf life to the most appalling regime the world has ever known because the best of our abilities are being stolen from us or handed over on a silver platter."

Read the full article [here](#).

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## CHINA: THE QUANTUM COMPETITION WE CAN'T IGNORE

John Prisco | *Forbes* | January 21, 2021

When marketers talk about a company's key differentiators, they often start with the three P's: people, products and processes. Given you have the right talent, great technology and the smartest delivery methodology, chances are you have a winning combination. If we apply those same criteria to the state of quantum computing, the United States isn't winning — we're battling for second place behind China. Quantum computers use the physics of light to exponentially speed processing and create seemingly airtight cryptographic chains. With the development of high-qubit number, error-corrected quantum computers, security can take two paths: encryption and processing power. Quantum-based encryption is virtually unbreakable, even by a quantum computer. But, a bad actor deploying a quantum computer can break today's mathematical encryption — and perhaps tomorrow's post-quantum algorithms — much, much faster than traditional computers. In the race for quantum mastery, the risks to corporate intellectual property, personal data and mission-critical systems will only increase the longer the United States allows China to extend its lead.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **TOP DOJ OFFICIAL JOHN DEMERS ON THE AGENCY'S CHINA INITIATIVE**

*Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian | Yahoo Finance | January 19, 2021*

John Demers, the assistant attorney general at the Department of Justice's National Security Division who leads the department's China Initiative, spoke with Axios about his view on the initiative's progress since its launch in 2018 and what he hopes to see in the coming year as Biden assumes office. The big picture: The China Initiative made headlines with dozens of major indictments but also sparked controversy over its targeting of scientists with links to the Chinese government. Amid rising concern about China's economic espionage and intelligence activities, the Trump administration's newly declassified Indo-Pacific strategy, approved in February 2018, called for the U.S. to "expand and prioritize U.S. intelligence and law enforcement activities that counter Chinese influence operations."

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **UT-AUSTIN PARTNERS WITH CHINESE INSTITUTE LATER DEEMED A SECURITY RISK BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

*Christian Schneider | The College Fix | January 19, 2021*

In October 2017, the University of Texas at Austin announced that it had signed a new memorandum of understanding with the China University of Petroleum, a school directly affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education. According to a statement released at the time by the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology, the agreement would "encourage academic cooperation through research and study in furtherance of the advancement of learning." But in October 2020, the U.S. Department of Education released a report critical of such foreign entanglements, specifically deeming contracts with China University of Petroleum a security risk. "Academic research regarding oil and gas extraction should not be considered separate from the Chinese government's geopolitical ambitions," the Education Department report reads, adding, "China's largest oil companies are state owned and dominate China's oil market, so this could cross paths with Chinese government endeavors." While the report redacted the name of the school it discussed, UT-Austin's agreement with the China University of Petroleum is well documented. For instance, the school's "Institutional Agreements" page lists CUP as a partner.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **HOW WILL JOE BIDEN HANDLE TRUMP'S WAR ON INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATION?**

*Meera S. Nair and Andy Z. Wang | The Harvard Crimson | January 20, 2021*

On Jan. 6, Zaosong Zheng, a former researcher at Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, was ordered to leave the United States and return to China after being charged with lying to federal agents about allegedly smuggling cancer research. Zheng agreed to not return to the U.S. for 10 years. Zheng's sentencing, however, marks merely the latest development in an ongoing crackdown by the United States government and American universities on "academic espionage," or the transmission of academic research by scientists at American universities to foreign governments. Multiple Harvard affiliates, including former Chemistry Department Chair Charles M. Lieber, have been subject to criminal proceedings due to alleged misbehavior. Zheng's departure from the country came exactly a week ahead of the inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th U.S. president. With the swearing in of a new administration, experts say they expect to see — or at least hope to see — the U.S. change its tone toward international academic collaboration, particularly with regards to China.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **US JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PUSHES AHEAD WITH COUNTER CHINA PLAN**

*Tribune Content Agency | January 15, 2021*

Two recent cases illustrate that the United States government's push against alleged instances of illicit tech transfer to China continues unabated. On January 14, the U.S. attorney's office in Massachusetts announced that a mechanical engineering professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was arrested and charged with wire fraud, failing to file a foreign bank account report, and making a false statement in a tax return, in relation to his alleged relationships with Chinese entities. The day before, on January 13, a chief scientist at NASA's Ames Research Center plead guilty to one count of making false statements about his relationship with the Chinese government in the Manhattan federal court in New York. According to the Justice Department statement announcing MIT professor Gang Chen's arrest, he "has allegedly held various appointments with the PRC designed to promote the PRC's technological and scientific development by providing advice and expertise – sometimes directly to PRC government officials – and often in exchange for financial compensation."

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **CHINA TALENT PROGRAMS MAY BE ACCESSING AUSTRALIAN TECHNOLOGY, LINKED TO GRANT FRAUD**

*Anthony Galloway | The Sydney Morning Herald | January 19, 2021*

More than 300 scientists and scholars are believed to have been recruited by talent recruitment schemes controlled by the Chinese Communist Party over the past decade, further raising concern Australian academics are giving Beijing access to their technologies and inventions. One professor who was working on drone research in Australia trained a People's Liberation Army scientist who went on to become the chief technician for a Chinese military drone program. The extent of CCP talent-recruitment activity in Australian universities and other research institutions may have resulted in \$280 million in grant fraud over the past two decades, according to evidence given to a parliamentary inquiry. The new research has identified 325 participants in CCP talent-recruitment programs from Australian research institutions, with many having conflicting commitments such as maintaining jobs in China while also being employed full-time in Australia.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **NASA SCIENTIST PLEADS GUILTY, EXPOSING MORE ESPIONAGE FROM CHINA'S THOUSAND TALENTS PROGRAM**

*Christopher Burgess | Clearance Jobs | January 18, 2021*

Meet Meyya Meyyappan, one of Silicon Valley's most distinguished engineers. As an innovator at NASA Ames Research Center, he was the chief scientist for Exploration Technology (2006-present), and he previously served as Director at the Center for Nanotechnology (2001-06). On January 13, Meyyappan pleaded guilty to making false statements concerning his participation in China's Thousand Talents Program. China's desired to acquire advanced technologies is seemingly insatiable and the Thousand Talents Program is one avenue used globally to satisfy the Chinese requirements. China's Thousand Talents Program ranked number five in the 2020 list of most important cases of espionage which targeted the United States. Meyyappan is a naturalized U.S. citizen, originally from India where he obtained his B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Madras University.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **AMID DIGITAL CRACKDOWN, CHINESE POLITICS PROFESSOR RECOMMENDS STUDENTS IN CHINA AVOID HIS CLASS**

*Marie-Rose Sheinerman | The Daily Princetonian | January 15, 2021*

In an announcement to students enrolled in POL 362: Chinese Politics, Rory Truex '07, an assistant professor of politics, said he would "recommend that students who are currently residing in China should not take the course this year." "As you might expect, the course contains material that the Chinese government would find sensitive," he told students on Friday, in a message obtained by The Daily Princetonian. "This, coupled with the fact that we are remote, and that China's new National Security Law has some sweeping provisions, means that we need to be a little more cautious this year." The national security law referenced in Truex's email was enacted last June and gives Beijing "broad power" to punish political crimes, according to The New York Times. The law specifically outlaws perpetrators of subversion, separatism, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces, but because these crimes are "vaguely defined," some believe the law could be widely applied to curtail speech and writing critical of the government.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **325 AUSTRALIAN-BASED SCIENTISTS, RESEARCHERS IDENTIFIED AS RECRUITS FOR BEIJING**

*Daniel Y. Teng | The Epoch Times | January 21, 2021*

Over 325 academics and scientists in Australian universities and research institutes have been identified as alleged recruits of Beijing's controversial overseas talent-recruitment programs. The allegations raise questions over potential conflicts of interest, grant fraud, and Australian research funds inadvertently advancing the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) military technology. Alex Joske of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), wrote to the Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security claiming that despite 325 individuals being identified, as many as 600 could be connected to Beijing-backed partnerships. Major universities with recruits include Monash (35); University of Queensland (31); University of New South Wales (27); University of Sydney (19); and Australian National University (19). "Recruits are encouraged to transfer technology to China and commercialise it, including technologies with military and security applications," Joske wrote in his parliamentary submission.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **DEPARTING U.S. FCC CHAIR WARNS OF THREATS TO TELECOMMS FROM CHINA**

*David Shepardson | Regina Leader-Post | January 20, 2021*

Outgoing U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chairman Ajit Pai said potential Chinese espionage and threats to U.S. telecommunications networks and internet freedom are the biggest national security issue that regulators will face in the next four years. Ajit Pai told Reuters in an interview there is a "wide array" of activity from China that was of concern, including of surveillance, economic espionage and potential "injection of malware into networks here in the United States or around the world. There are a number of bad things that can happen when insecure equipment is used to handle sensitive information." Pai was named chairman in January 2017 by former President Donald Trump and stepped down on Wednesday. During his tenure, the FCC cracked down on Chinese network manufacturers like Huawei and ZTE. Last month, the FCC began the process of revoking China Telecom's authorization to operate in the United States. China Telecom is the largest Chinese telecommunications company. "The Chinese Communist Party has a very determined world view.

Read the full article [here](#).



## PORTMAN SECURES COMMITMENT FROM NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY OF STATE TO EFFECTIVELY USE GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION

Senator Rob Portman | January 19, 2021

Today, U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) secured commitments from the nominee to be U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing that if confirmed, he would support the efforts of the Global Engagement Center (GEC) to effectively combat disinformation and propaganda from foreign actors, like Russia and China. Senator Portman has worked to combat disinformation and cyberattacks both in the United States and abroad through his bipartisan Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act, which he authored with Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) and was signed into law in December 2016. The law improves the ability of the United States to counter foreign propaganda and disinformation by establishing the GEC, housed at the State Department to coordinate and synchronize counter-propaganda efforts throughout the U.S. government in support of friends and allies overseas. The law provided funding and authorities to the State Department that authorizes the GEC to help counter the foreign propaganda and disinformation being waged against our allies by state and non-state adversaries.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## US TARGETS CHINA'S QUEST FOR 'MILITARY-CIVIL FUSION'

Bonnie Girard | *The Diplomat* | November 30, 2020

It is a fundamental mistake to believe that Beijing is concerned with living up to agreements to use technology it buys from the United States in civilian applications only, a condition of its purchases from American companies. The fallacy is underscored by China's perspective on the role of its citizens and their relationship to the Chinese state. In 2017, China enacted an Orwellian National Intelligence Law. Article 7 mandates that ordinary citizens must "support, assist, and cooperate with state intelligence work." The same goes for organizations. A country that erases the line between the role of a person as a citizen and the role of a person as an agent of the state is not going to quibble over erasing the line between the role of a product for civilian use or the role of that same product for military use – even if a sale is predicated on commercial, civilian use only.

Read the full article [here](#).

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# THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

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