



## Open Source Media Summary

March 28, 2024

### **OTTAWA SAYS IT DOESN'T SCREEN OUT CHINA-AFFILIATED RESEARCHERS IN FEDERAL GRANTS**

*Ryan Tumilty | National Post | March 2024*

Applicants for Canada's federal research grants aren't screened for affiliation with China's Thousand Talents Program, an initiative implicated in leaks to China from Canada's infectious disease lab and which CSIS has warned poses a threat of economic espionage to research institutions. The Thousand Talents Program is one of several programs Beijing uses to recruit well-placed people from Chinese expatriate communities working in science and technology fields in other countries, in a bid to increase Chinese research and development. Documents released last month revealed the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) believed Xiangguo Qiu, a since-fired doctor at Canada's microbiology lab in Winnipeg, had been part of the program and had multiple undeclared associations with Chinese universities. But the federal government's granting councils, which hand out more than \$2 billion in research funding every year, don't specifically screen for researchers connected to China's program. The National Post asked the Canada Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council about their policies and received an identical statement from all three agencies.

Read the full article [here](#).

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### **INFECTIOUS-DISEASE SCIENTIST FIRED FROM WINNIPEG LABORATORY SURFACES IN CHINA**

*Robert Fife, Steven Chase, and Nathan Vanderklippe | The Globe and Mail | March 19, 2024*

One of two fired scientists at the centre of an RCMP investigation into a massive security breach at Canada's top infectious-disease laboratory in Winnipeg is working in China and collaborating with researchers from the People's Liberation Army. The Globe and Mail has learned that Xiangguo Qiu has been conducting research with Chinese military scientists and other virology researchers, including at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, on antibodies for coronavirus and the deadly Ebola and Nipah viruses. The Globe was unable to find any information on her biologist husband, Keding Cheng, who is believed to be with her in China. The two infectious-disease scientists were escorted out of the National Microbiology Laboratory in July, 2019, and later had their security clearances revoked. They were fired in January, 2021. They have been under an RCMP national-security investigation since May, 2019.

Read the full article [here](#).

## INSIDER THREATS ARE AI DEVELOPERS NEXT HURDLE

Sam Sabin | AXIOS | March 19, 2024

AI developers hiring quickly to keep pace with market demand are struggling with a new threat: spies and employees looking to steal company secrets.

**Why it matters:** U.S. artificial intelligence companies are likely already prime targets for nation-state adversaries' espionage campaigns.

- Experts predict that AI developers could become even bigger targets than chip manufacturers and biotechnology companies.

**Driving the news:** This month, the Justice Department indicted an ex-Google software engineer for stealing AI technology secrets and sharing them with two Chinese companies.

- Linwei Ding is believed to have started stealing these secrets in 2021, shortly after being offered a chief technology officer role at a Chinese AI startup, per the indictment.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## IT'S TIME TO RESTORE U.S. STUDY ABROAD TO CHINA

Zhiqun Zhu | Inside Higher Ed | March 8, 2024

The U.S. Department of State recently announced the 2023–24 list of Fulbright top-producing institutions for the Fulbright U.S. Student and Fulbright U.S. Scholar Programs. Each year, roughly 2,000 U.S. students and more than 800 U.S. scholars study, teach or research around the world with awards from Fulbright, the State Department's flagship program for cultural diplomacy and academic exchanges. The program, which also brings international students and scholars to the U.S., operates in more than 160 countries worldwide. China is not one of those countries. In July 2020, then President Donald Trump signed an executive order ending Fulbright exchanges both to and from China and Hong Kong in the midst of a presidential campaign and rising U.S.-China tensions. Since 2020, no U.S. Fulbright students and scholars have been able to study or research in China, and no Chinese students and scholars have received Fulbright awards to come to the U.S.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## NSF ANNOUNCEMENT ON JASON REPORT: SAFEGUARDING THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

U.S. National Science Foundation | March 21, 2024

Today, the U.S. National Science Foundation released the latest report by JASON, an independent science advisory group, Safeguarding the Research Enterprise. Building on the Fundamental Research Security report released in 2019, NSF commissioned this new study to satisfy legislative requirements in Section 10339 of the "CHIPS and Science Act of 2022" and the Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations bill. JASON was asked to comment on specific steps NSF might take to identify sensitive areas of research and describe processes to address security in those areas. Safeguarding the Research Enterprise has eight findings and provides six recommendations for NSF to consider. The findings underscore the value of international collaboration while recognizing the spectrum of risks and the need for differentiation between sensitive and nonsensitive research. "NSF is committed to helping researchers navigate the new and evolving risks to research security. Transparency and openness are essential to the science and engineering enterprise, both for the nation and for the global research community. At the same time, there are real security concerns that must be addressed," said NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan.

Read the full article [here](#).

## **PENTAGON ADVISORS URGE CAUTION IN TIGHTENING SCIENCE SECURITY**

*Richard L. Hudson | Science Business | March 22, 2024*

Despite rising worries about sensitive US technologies leaking to China, a special government advisory group urged caution before imposing any broad new controls over fundamental science, lest they inhibit important discoveries. The National Science Foundation “should proceed with caution before adding access or dissemination controls to grants or contracts,” the group, called JASON, reported on Thursday. It rejected the idea of designating specific scientific sub-disciplines as risky. That’s the kind of broad-brush security approach adopted by the Canadian government in January. The JASON group, formed in 1960 as the Cold War intensified, brings together several top American scientists in a confidential advisory body to the Pentagon and security services. Since at least the Reagan administration, the US government position has been that fundamental research should be restricted only in special cases of national security classification – and the JASON group, noting that now “is not the first time that a national debate has been raised on the issue of research security,” said that those 1980s-era “principles remain valid” today.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **'THE WEIRDEST TREND IN CYBERSECURITY': NATION-STATES RETURNING TO USBs**

*Nate Nelson | DarkReading | March 7, 2024*

Nation-state cyber threat groups are once again turning to USBs to compromise highly guarded government organizations and critical infrastructure facilities. Having fallen out of fashion for some time, and certainly not helped by COVID lockdowns, USBs are once again proving an effective way for high-level threat actors to physically bypass security at particularly sensitive organizations. In a keynote presentation this week at CPX 2024 in Las Vegas, Maya Horowitz, vice president of research at Check Point, noted that USBs represented the primary infection vector for at least three different major threat groups in 2023: China's Camaro Dragon (aka Mustang Panda, Bronze President, Earth Preta, Luminous Moth, Red Delta, Stately Taurus); Russia's Gamaredon (aka Primitive Bear, UNC530, ACTINIUM, Shuckworm, UAC-0010, Aqua Blizzard), and the threat actors behind Raspberry Robin.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **THE SOCIETAL BASIS FOR NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**

*Timothy R. Heath, Clint Reach and Michael J. Mazarr | RAND | March 12, 2024*

This report is part of a larger RAND study on the societal foundations of national competitiveness. Building off that study's identification of the qualities that contribute to national dynamism and success in international rivalries from a Western perspective, the authors surveyed Chinese and Russian thinking about the qualities that tend to produce competitive advantage. The authors aimed to find general themes and patterns of thinking, not actual plans. Both China and Russia hold starkly different views from most U.S. and Western officials and analysts about the societal sources of competitive advantage. Unsurprisingly, the countries' concepts emphasize the claimed advantages of their distinct models, grounded in the unity and coordinated policy allowed by nationalistic autocratic regimes. Chinese and Russian conceptions of societal advantage carry at least an implicit message that an effective combination of three societal characteristics (national ambition and will, unified national identity, and an active state), when layered on top of the cultural values of their respective societies, can provide a winning formula in a long-term rivalry regardless of other factors associated with dynamism and competitive advantage.

Read the full article [here](#).

## **DUTCH COLLABORATION WITH PHD STUDENTS SPONSORED BY THE CHINA SCHOLARSHIP COUNCIL**

*Ingrid d'Hooghe and Xiaoxue Martin | Clingendael Report | February 2024*

This report presents the findings of research into the scope and nature of Dutch collaboration with the China Scholarship Council (CSC), a non-profit organisation affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. This collaboration has come under scrutiny in the Netherlands and beyond due to various knowledge security concerns: concerns that CSC PhD students may facilitate undesirable knowledge transfer or other forms of foreign interference activities, and concerns about possible dependencies of Dutch knowledge institutes on CSC PhD students, which may make them vulnerable to Chinese political pressure and to geopolitical developments involving China. The issue of low living allowances among CSC PhD students was not a reason to conduct this research, but this did turn out to be a major concern for many of our interlocutors.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **SURVEY ON A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE U.S.**

*International Education Program | March 7, 2024*

The United States is among the most popular destinations for international education and yet is the only one lacking a centralized national strategy. Instead, a network of federal agencies, state governments, higher education institutions (HEIs), and private organizations work asymmetrically to promote and support international education activities. Other destination countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Germany, and France, have more coordinated and comprehensive national strategies for international education, which typically include goals and targets for international student enrollment, the quality and diversity of education offerings, partnerships and collaborations with other countries, and intercultural competencies among students and educators. Some also have dedicated agencies or ministries to oversee and implement international education policies, such as the British Council, Universities Australia, and EduCanada.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **WHAT PUTIN'S NEXT TERM MEANS FOR SCIENCE**

*Olga Dobrovidova | Nature | March 20, 2024*

Russian President Vladimir Putin has secured a fifth term in office, claiming a landslide victory in the country's presidential election on 18 March. Election officials say he won a record 87% of votes. This outcome came as a surprise to no one, and many international leaders have condemned the vote as not being free or fair. Researchers interviewed by Nature say that another six years of Putin's leadership does not bode well for Russian science, which has been shunned globally in response to the country's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, and is on precarious ground at home. Those still in Russia must choose their words carefully: as one scientist, who wishes to remain anonymous, put it, "business as usual" now includes possible prison time for offhand comments. Publicly, Putin's government is a big supporter of research.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **THE DIGITAL WORLD IS CHANGING RAPIDLY. YOUR CYBERSECURITY NEEDS TO KEEP UP.**

*Andrew Burt | Harvard Business Review | May 16, 2023*

What is the point of cybersecurity?

The question might seem basic, but it touches on one of the most important issues facing companies around the world. Indeed, this question is so critical because — despite repeated attempts to shore up digital systems over the last few decades — cybersecurity risks remain rampant. In 2022 alone, a total of 4,100 publicly disclosed data breaches occurred, comprising some 22 billion records that were exposed. All this despite the fact that organizations around the world spent a record-breaking \$150 billion on cybersecurity in 2021. Software itself is changing, too. The rise of artificial intelligence in general, and generative AI in particular, is fundamentally altering the way companies use software. The increasing use of AI is, in turn, making software’s attack surfaces more complicated and software itself more vulnerable.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **WHY TIKTOK IS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY**

*Aynne Kokas | Journal of Democracy | October 2022*

Since launching in 2016, the video-sharing app TikTok has become one of the world’s most popular social-media platforms. Owned by the Chinese tech firm ByteDance, TikTok surpassed one-billion active global users in 2021. But as those users post and watch short videos, behind the scenes TikTok is meticulously collecting data on them, tracking their preferences and online activities. The rapid global expansion of Chinese tech firms such as ByteDance has created a regulatory conundrum for countries worldwide. From Australia and Japan to India and Pakistan to the United States, governments have been grappling with the expanding scope of China’s digital regulations, which have set the stage for Beijing’s global collection of data.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

*The Research and Innovation Security and Competitiveness Institute*



# USEFUL RESOURCES

## U.S. RESEARCH PROTECTION & FOREIGN INFLUENCE TRACKER

*Data Abyss*

The "U.S. Research Protection & Foreign Influence Tracker" is an advanced tool specifically designed to scrutinize the nature and extent of collaborations between U.S. institutions and counterparts in China and Russia, with a keen focus on projects funded by U.S. defense entities. This tool plays a crucial role in identifying and monitoring institutions that participate in activities flagged as concerning under Section 1286(c)(8)(A) of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (Public Law 115-232). To provide a nuanced understanding of these collaborations, the tracker incorporates filters for specific U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) funding offices. For instance, it allows users to filter data based on funding received from the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR), the Army Research Office (ARO), and the Office of Naval Research (ONR). These filters help in isolating and examining the interactions and financial transactions that U.S. institutions have with Chinese and Russian entities, under the aegis of these prominent DoD funding bodies, thereby enabling a more targeted and effective oversight of foreign influence in critical research areas.

View the full resource [here](#).

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## SECURE OUR WORLD

*Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency | February 2024*

### Four Easy Ways to Stay Safe Online

There are simple things we can do today that will help keep us much safer online. Digital crimes are happening every day, but by each of us doing our part—educating ourselves and paying attention—we can stay ahead of the game!

View the full resource [here](#).

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## THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

*The Research and Innovation Security and Competitiveness Institute*