

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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October 2, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Christopher Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Secretary Austin & Director Wray:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is conducting oversight of how and to what extent foreign nationals are accessing U.S. military bases and facilities. According to a recent report, Chinese nationals, sometimes posing as tourists, have repeatedly accessed, or attempted to access, U.S. military bases and other sensitive government facilities as often as one hundred times in recent years.<sup>1</sup> These efforts to access U.S. military bases and facilities raise concerns about what these Chinese nationals are seeking to access and for what purpose. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has long used espionage as a tool to gain access to U.S. national security secrets. But the PRC's efforts to spy on the United States has become more brazen in recent years. To understand the extent to which Chinese nationals access U.S. military bases and facilities and what is being done to address this ongoing threat, we request a staff briefing.

The PRC's National Intelligence Law requires that Chinese nationals support, assist, and cooperate with Chinese intelligence officials, even while abroad. This obligation placed upon Chinese nationals raises concerns about whether the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) compels its citizens to gather intelligence while in the United States.

Other recent reports of Chinese espionage in the United States—including the conviction of a Chinese national for trespassing at Mar-A-Lago,<sup>2</sup> the arrest of two U.S. Navy sailors accused of spying for China,<sup>3</sup> the closure of a secret Chinese intelligence “police station” in New York

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Lubold, Warren P. Strobel, and Aruna Viswanatha, *Chinese Gate-Crashers at U.S. Bases Spark Espionage Concerns*, WALL ST. J. (September 4, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Vanessa Romo, *Chinese Woman Convicted of Trespassing at Mar-A-Lago Sentenced to 8 Months in Jail*, NPR (November 25, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Luis Martinez and Alex Stone, *2 US Navy Sailors Arrested for Allegedly Spying for China*, ABC NEWS (August 3, 2023).

City.<sup>4</sup> and the downing of the Chinese Spy Balloon over South Carolina in February<sup>5</sup>—demonstrate the lengths that the PRC is willing to go to spy on the United States.

In addition to Chinese nationals trespassing on sensitive U.S. installations, it was also reported in July of this year that a “mystery company” had purchased up to \$800 million in property surrounding three sides of Travis Air Force Base in California.<sup>6</sup> In 2021, a Chinese company also purchased land around Grand Forks Air Force Base<sup>7</sup> prompting DoD to require U.S. government approval for foreign nationals to purchase property within 100 miles of certain military installations.<sup>8</sup>

These reports of Chinese espionage activities on U.S. soil underscore the Committee’s deepening concerns. The varied nature of these incidents, from clandestine intelligence facilities to espionage balloons, suggests a multifaceted approach to intelligence gathering by the PRC. It is imperative that our government is fully apprised of the breadth and depth of these activities, which pose significant threats to our national security, and our military personnel.

To assist us in investigating this matter and to help better inform policies to prevent future clandestine aggression by the PRC, we request a briefing with Committee staff as soon as possible, but no later than October 16, 2023. This briefing should include information on the nature, frequency, and implications of these unauthorized access attempts, as well as information on the collaborative measures the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are undertaking to counter this potential threat.

To schedule the briefing or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee in the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation to this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Glenn Grothman  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security,  
the Border, and Foreign Affairs

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Dienst, Ken Dilanian, and Rich Schapiro, *2 Chinese Nationals Charged with Operating a Secret Police Station in NYC* (April 17, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Chloe Kim, *Chinese Spy Balloon Did Not Collect Information, Says Pentagon*, BBC NEWS (June 30, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Kristina Peterson, Jack Gillum, and Kate O’Keeffe, *Investors Bought Nearly \$1 Billion in Land Near a California Air Force Base. Officials Want to Know Who Exactly They Are.*, WALL ST. J. (July 7, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Ximena Bustillo and Connie Hanzhang Jin, *China Owns 380,000 Acres of Land in the U.S. Here’s Where*, NPR (June 26, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Margret Stafford, Tara Copp, and Fatima Hussein, *US to Control Land Sales to Foreigners Near 8 Military Bases*, THE ASSOC. PRESS (May 5, 2023).

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs