

United States Senate

January 12, 2022

Dear Bart,

It has come to my attention that the Chinese Communist Party may attempt to use state and local officials in Arkansas to influence my work in the Senate. I want to alert you to this risk and assure you that these efforts will fail: I will never back down from the Chinese communists.

In its quest to replace the United States as the world's dominant superpower, the Chinese Communist Party has waged an aggressive campaign of crime, espionage, and treachery. Chinese communists have stolen American jobs, plundered our factories, and pilfered advanced technology and intellectual property from our companies and universities—including right here in Arkansas. China takes American citizens hostage and its labs produce the fentanyl that is killing so many of our loved ones. Of course, we must never forget that China unleashed the Wuhan coronavirus on the world, a plague which almost certainly originated in a Chinese state-sponsored lab.

During my time representing Arkansas in Congress, I've worked to confront China's depredations against our people, and really against the whole civilized world. In recent years, the U.S. government has finally awakened to the threat of China and begun to fight back. During the previous administration, Congress updated our laws to prevent malign Chinese investment in the United States and to block the export of critical U.S. technology to China. Our government also imposed tariffs on heavily subsidized Chinese goods and banned Chinese telecommunications companies controlled by the Communist Party from running American networks.

The communists in Beijing naturally want to roll back these strong actions and return to the past, when America let down its guard and eased China's path to power. Thus, China often seeks to influence American elected officials, convincing them to put China's interests above our own.

These Chinese espionage and influence operations are pervasive across the United States. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) opens a new China-related counterintelligence case every 10 hours. Last year, the FBI reported over 2,000 open investigations into Chinese intelligence operations in the United States. The Trump administration even shuttered the Chinese consulate in Houston, Texas, because it served as a Chinese intelligence-gathering hub. After the consulate closed, the Department of Justice notes a "large number of undeclared" Chinese military operatives fled the United States. You will recall, of course, that China's Houston consulate was responsible for covering Arkansas for the Communist Party.

China's subversion efforts are not limited to our nation's capital: I have good reason to believe that the Chinese Communist Party may seek to enlist state and local officials to influence my actions in Congress. **Therefore, I ask that you remain vigilant against Chinese influence operations.** You should assume, for instance, that any request by a Chinese official for you to contact me or my office is part of a Chinese espionage campaign. Please notify my office

immediately of such requests and we can discuss appropriate next steps, to include reporting the Chinese to counterintelligence officials at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Please note also that China's agents often do not hold official government titles and try to obscure their connection to the Chinese Communist Party or the People's Liberation Army. Chinese nationals in our country are known to exploit this seeming distance from their government and party to gain the trust of unwitting Americans.

Finally, let me add that Chinese spies target state and local officials not only to influence their members of Congress, but also to build relationships with them should they rise to higher office. For instance, recent reports indicate that a Chinese spy sought influence with state and local officials in California, including by participating in their political campaigns. The same Chinese intelligence agent also engaged in sexual relationships with local mayors in Ohio to gain influence over them. Chinese Communist spies cast a wide influence net among unsuspecting state and local officials hoping to coopt or entrap them on their rise up the political ladder. I urge you to remain on guard.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter of national security. I'm confident that together we won't allow the Chinese Communist Party to influence our policymaking in Arkansas. Please don't hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton
United States Senator

cc: Governor Asa Hutchinson
Lieutenant Governor Tim Griffin
Attorney General Leslie Rutledge
Secretary of State John Thurston
Treasurer Dennis Milligan
Auditor Andrea Lea
Land Commissioner Tommy Land
Arkansas State Senators
Arkansas State Representatives
Arkansas County Judges