

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

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REMEMBERING A HISTORIC APPEAL FOR FREEDOM OF BELIEF

Falun Gong practitioners from 12 countries peacefully appeal on Tiananmen Square in 2001 for an end to the persecution and torture of their Chinese counterparts.



EVA FU

Carrying a large backpack, and clutching a travel guide in one hand, Canadian Joel Chipkar looked the part of a typical tourist. The brown-haired, 33-year-old real estate broker, wearing a black jacket and khaki pants, walked briskly to Tiananmen Square, the heart of China's capital that just over a decade earlier had been reddened by the blood of thousands

of students slain or wounded by the communist regime's tanks and guns. The weather on that day—Nov. 20, 2001—was as fine as it got in a city notorious for its dense, grayish smog. The sun was bright, and the air was crisp. Pedestrians strolled leisurely in twos and threes over the vast stretches of gray pavement, though Chipkar didn't notice them much. He was making a beeline for the

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The 36 Who Dared: Fighting for Freedom in the Heart of Red China

20 years ago, 36 Western Falun Gong adherents saw others suffering from brutal persecution in China. So they took action.

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north end of the square. He was on a mission.

It took no time for Chipkar to find what he was looking for: 20 feet west of the Chinese flag pole, a crowd of two or three dozen people with light hair like his had quietly gathered about, some sitting, others standing and smoothing their collars. The scene was attracting quite a few curious glances. It was still uncommon to see so many Western faces in that country.

Chipkar stopped himself while at some distance from the group. He recognized a few faces, but thought it wise not to greet anyone. Drawing any attention to himself could be detrimental to the plan.

There was suppressed excitement hanging in the air. In a few moments, the group of Westerners would congregate, standing or sitting in four rows as if posing for a group shot in front of the iconic Tiananmen Tower. But this was a ruse; they would later sit in a meditation position, while some would unfurl an eight-foot-long golden banner bearing the Chinese and English words for “truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance”—the three core principles of the persecuted faith group Falun Gong.

The police would swarm in, and arrests would follow.

And Chipkar’s role was to watch—and document it all.

The Planning

That was two years after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had declared Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, an enemy for no apparent reason other than the spiritual practice’s vast popularity; estimates at the time

“
We knew we were risking our lives to go over there, but we felt like it was very important for the world.”

Zenon Dolnyckyj,
Canadian Falun Gong practitioner

Westerners are surrounded by Chinese police officers and police vehicles in Tiananmen Square after unfurling a banner and sitting in a meditation position, on Nov. 20, 2001. The group was later detained by police, and some were beaten, before being deported.

placed the number of practitioners between 70 million and 100 million. During the 1990s, rows and rows of Falun Gong practitioners could be seen doing the practice’s slow-moving exercises every morning in parks and squares across the country. But this came to a screeching halt in July 1999, when the CCP unleashed a nationwide campaign to eradicate the practice.

Adherents had since become the victims of harassment, physical torment, detention, and slave labor. Many were driven out of work or school, and had their books relating to the practice confiscated and burned.

The persecution had also just reached new heights in 2001. Airwaves and newspapers had capitalized on a self-immolation incident at Tiananmen Square earlier that year—shown later to be staged under Beijing’s orders—designed to cast the adherents as suicidal.

The intensifying misinformation and hate campaign sent a steady stream of adherents to Tiananmen Square, a political center and popular tourist spot, to peacefully appeal for an end to the suppression.

For Falun Gong practitioners anxiously watching outside China’s borders, the continued plight of their fellow adherents in China told them something more must be done.

It took at least a year for the idea of an international appeal to come together. Peter Recknagel, a 30-year-old student of Chinese and economics from Germany, was among the first to make travel arrangements. When he sensed interest from those in other parts of the world, the plan broadened.

Eventually, 36 practitioners from

12 countries across Europe, North America, and Oceania would fly to China. Many of them had never met each other before. They kept the instructions to a bare minimum: travel separately; meet up near the flagpole by 2 p.m.; keep a low profile; convey their message of appeal; and stay for however long they could.

The organizers took precautions to keep their plans under wraps. To evade possible eavesdropping by the regime, only a few were involved with the organizing, and they spoke in Swedish for the most part.

Adam Leining, a 30-year-old advertising executive from the United States, brought the banner in a suit bag. The night before it all happened, Recknagel and a few others drew down the curtain of the hotel room and turned on loud disco music, then slipped into the room one by one for a little rehearsal. They unfurled the banner to see how big it was and assigned three of their tallest group members to hold it.

When everyone had met up at the square, two people from Europe were arranged to hold a bouquet of flowers to present a celebratory feel. That was to buy them time as they got ready.

“There was a signal ... then everybody just had to jump into the meditation position,” Recknagel, now 50 and residing in New York state, told *The Epoch Times*.

“We had to be very, very careful not to blow it up before it happened.”

The Witness

Chipkar planned his part as carefully as he could.

He bought a tiny camcorder, a pager-looking device, which he threaded into the strap of his backpack. A hole was cut on the strap so the lens could poke through. Then he spent a good four days looking into the mirror while carrying the backpack to master how to angle the camera. The tape would run for about two hours, and with everything set up, he would be able to walk around with his hands free.

“I thought of everything that could possibly happen or go wrong, and I had to plan for that all, because you don’t get a second chance,” Chipkar, now 53 and living in Toronto, told *The Epoch Times*.

The night before the gathering, Chipkar didn’t sleep very well, thinking over every possible mishap that could jeopardize his mission. The camcorder could malfunction or the police might arrest him before he reached the site, and then all his work would be in vain.

The Banner Holder

Chipkar’s friend Zenon Dolnyckyj was already among the group when he got there. Dolnyckyj, who was 23 at the time, had picked up some basic Mandarin from some Chinese Falun Gong practitioners in Toronto.

The two had met at the Great Wall a day earlier to hang up a vertical yellow banner that read “Falun Dafa Is Good.” Dolnyckyj had stayed up at the hotel to paint those Chinese characters onto the banner—a “beautiful, symbolic message,” in Dolnyckyj’s words.

“Joel and I were very committed in our hearts,” he told *The Epoch Times*. “We knew we were risking our lives to go over there, but we felt like it was very important for the world. So it was very emotional to finally get to the Great Wall and hang that banner there.”

Both had bought return tickets to Canada scheduled for four hours after the Tiananmen gathering. “See you at the airport,” Chipkar



had told Dolnyckyj at the hotel on the morning before the appeal.

But they never did. Having spent much of his day reading, practicing meditation, walking around nearby streets, and glancing down at his watch, Dolnyckyj walked into Tiananmen Square with enough energy that he “felt like a giant.”

Recknagel was sitting in a meditation position when the large banner was unfurled, while Dolnyckyj stood behind the banner between the characters “truthfulness” and “compassion,” helping to hold it up.

“I felt really proud because they were holding so strong, and they were pushing so strong to hold the banner,” he told *The Epoch Times*’s sister media outlet NTD in 2017.

Within 20 seconds, a car horn pierced the air. Soon, at least six police vans circled them, and uniformed and plainclothes police, seeming to materialize from out of nowhere, began hurling the adherents into the vans while showing onlookers away.

As the police descended, Dolnyckyj pulled out from his pant leg another yellow makeshift banner that he had made from a pillowcase. He had practiced this move in the hotel. While holding this banner, he shouted at the top of his lungs, “Falun Dafa is good!”

When the police finally seized him, one of them punched him squarely between the eyes, causing a bone fracture. Blood trickled down his nose. His eyes welled up with tears.

More punches then rained on him, and he was forced into a white police van, where he found a Swedish man beaten unconscious, and a blond, blue-eyed French woman whom the police tried to strangle, to prevent her from shouting “Falun Dafa is good.”

Chipkar, standing at some distance from the pandemonium, watched his friends being hauled away within minutes.

He took a rickshaw back to his hotel and immediately rushed into the bathroom in the hotel lobby, locking the door behind him and starting to rewind the footage. Once he confirmed that it was all there, Chipkar went to the nearest FedEx office and shipped the recordings home. “I felt really relieved,” Chipkar said.

“The way it went in the square when the appeal happened,” he said, referring to how the group was able to complete their appeal before the police rushed in, “it was magic—things happened exactly the way they were supposed to.”

The Interrogation

The rest of the group was held at the Tiananmen Square Police Station, adjacent to the square, in a windowless cell that had bloodstains on the wall. More violence followed during the interrogations. An Israeli was struck in the face and kicked in the groin.

In a hotel near the airport where they were later transported, one woman was groped by police when she refused to hand over her phone. A U.S. medical student was hit on the head after he refused to sign the police report and ripped it up.

Recknagel, who also speaks Chinese, warned the police to stop attacking the medical student.

“Do that again, and all the world will know about it,” he recalled telling the officer in Mandarin.

The police officer, in a rage, dragged him to the wall, saying something to the effect of, “Do you know how it feels to get killed?” Recknagel told *The Epoch Times*.

The police were nonetheless acting with restraint, compared to their handling of local adherents. They filmed the group while offering them food and water, which the adherents suspected was for propaganda purposes. State-run media reports later said the group was treated humanely.

After about 24 to 48 hours, they were put on a flight and told they couldn’t return to China for five years.

Real Heroes Are ‘Not Us’

Reflecting two decades later, Chipkar saw nothing heroic in his act.

“It was a moment in time where we did what we thought we had to do,” he said. “We were all trying our best, every one of us.”

Since the start of the persecution, millions of practitioners have been thrown into detention centers, prisons, labor camps, and other facilities, while hundreds and thousands have suffered torture, according to the Falun Dafa Information Center. An untold number of detained adherents have been killed for their organs.

Minghui, a U.S.-based website that chronicles the persecution in China, has verified thousands of deaths. But that’s likely only the tip of the iceberg, experts say, owing to the regime’s massive efforts to conceal its brutal campaign.

“The real heroes who deserve the attention are the Falun Gong practitioners in China who on a daily basis go through life and death—every time they step out the door to raise aware-

Falun Gong practitioners from 12 countries peacefully appeal in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in 2001 for an end to the persecution and torture of their Chinese counterparts.

“
The real heroes who deserve the attention are the Falun Gong practitioners in China who on a daily basis go through life and death.”

Joel Chipkar,
Canadian Falun Gong practitioner

Zenon Dolnyckyj,
wearing a T-shirt with a Canadian flag, is taken down by Chinese police officers in Tiananmen Square after participating in a sit-in demonstration in support of Falun Gong, on Nov. 20, 2001.

ness of the atrocities happening,” Chipkar said. “The people who are in China, those are the heroes, not us.”

Recknagel, who spent the first 18 years of his life in East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall, described his journey to Tiananmen as a “big adventure.”

“Nobody really knew what would come out of that,” he said. There was no telling how much it helped the situation in China, but at least, it was a glimpse into “how real and how cruel the persecution in China is.”

“It gives you a kind of kick ... to do whatever you can to help to stop it.”

The moment of the banner unfurling has been depicted by two artists, fellow adherents, in an oil painting. In the depiction, a translucent golden light surrounds the group of meditators.

“You look at Zhen, Shan, Ren,” Recknagel said, referring to the three Chinese characters on the banner. “And at that time, we were standing up for that.”

The painting is now on display in a shopping mall exhibition in upstate New York, which Recknagel sometimes visits.

“It’s just nice to have that picture as a memory,” he said.

But for him as well as many others, that memory from two decades ago is inextricably linked to sorrow.

“So many people in China, they stood up for that, and nobody has a picture,” Recknagel said. “Many of them are killed there.”



AP PHOTO/CHEN-MIN CHUNG

Police detain a Falun Gong protester in Tiananmen Square as a crowd watches, in Beijing on Oct. 1, 2000.



Joel Chipkar at the airport in Toronto upon returning safely from Beijing, in November 2001.



European Falun Gong practitioners talk to a policeman from inside the underground jail in a police station near Tiananmen Square in Beijing, on Nov. 20, 2001.



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COURTESY OF JOEL CHIPKAR

COURTESY OF ADAM LEINING

COURTESY OF JOEL CHIPKAR

DRUG CRISIS

DEA Battling 'Unprecedented Levels' of Fentanyl, Meth at Southern Border: Official

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES



Montgomery County sheriff's deputies and emergency personnel respond to a suspected drug overdose in a gas station parking lot in Dayton, Ohio, on Nov. 1, 2019.

J.M. PHELPS

As overdose deaths in the United States soar to new highs, authorities are seizing "unprecedented levels" of methamphetamine and fentanyl at the country's southern border, according to a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) official.

Richard Sanchez, assistant special agent in charge of the DEA in McAllen, Texas, told The Epoch Times that seizures in his area have increased over the past three years. Within his division, seizures of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 100 times more potent than morphine, have increased more than 200 percent since 2019.

Sanchez oversees three offices in the area. These offices comprise multiple drug enforcement groups and an intelligence group. His team is responsible for 21 counties, more than 350 miles of coastline, and many miles of the southern border.

In recent times, Sanchez's team has been battling a disturbing new trend in drug making and trafficking: counterfeit prescription pills. Cartels are making pills marketed as legitimate prescription pills, and lacing them with fentanyl and methamphetamine, a low-cost way to make the drug more addictive.

The problem has become so alarming that the DEA in September issued a public safety alert, its first in six years, about the issue. Meanwhile, in McAllen, local

state, and federal law enforcement officials have joined forces to boost awareness about the "epidemic of fake pills" circulating throughout the city and beyond, Sanchez said.

At the end of October, the DEA arrested 27 people, most of whom were Texans, in the Rio Grande Valley region for trafficking counterfeit pills that contained methamphetamine and fentanyl. These "domestic-based couriers" were being used to transport drugs to local communities, according to Sanchez.

He said the majority of seizures in McAllen are coming across the border at identified points of entry, which oversee the entry and exit of people and their possessions. He said drug traffickers' concealment methods continue to improve.

With a high volume of trucks carrying heavy cargo coming in and out of McAllen, there's ample opportunity for concealment, according to Sanchez.

"Considering the city's proximity to the border and the amount of traffic to and from Mexico, traffickers are able to take advantage of the volume of legitimate cargo that comes into the U.S. to conceal their narcotics," he said.

Originally Made in China
Sanchez noted that his day-to-day fight isn't only against Mexican cartels that are responsible for manufacturing and trafficking the drugs; the Chinese regime is also involved.

DON EMMERT/APP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Tablets believed to be laced with fentanyl, in New York on Oct. 8, 2019.

The regime is sitting back as Mexican cartels distribute a poison that's killing America's future generation at record levels.

Derek Maltz, former head, DEA Special Operations Division

"Without a doubt, precursor chemicals [for the manufacturing of drugs] are being sent to Mexico from China," he said.

Mexican transnational criminal organizations have relied on China as the primary source of fentanyl and precursor chemicals for quite some time.

Derek Maltz, a former head of the Special Operations Division (SOD) of the DEA, said that around 2013, there was a sharp rise in the number of overdose deaths from synthetic opioids, prompting the agency to investigate.

Early probes determined that fentanyl was coming into the United States via mail and internet purchases from China. Shortly after, he said, SOD began identifying connections between Chinese transnational criminals and Mexican cartels in the distribution of fentanyl, as bulk quantities of fentanyl were being exported into Mexico from China.

In 2019, the Trump administration began putting pressure on Beijing to limit the flow of Chinese-produced fentanyl to Mexico and the United States. The move resulted in a significant decrease in pure fentanyl making its way across the ocean.

However, criminals have found ways to evade these restrictions. "There was a massive shift to precursor chemicals for the manufacturing of fentanyl being sent to Mexico—which ultimately resulted in an explosion of fentanyl in America," Maltz said, adding that this remains the current trend.

Winning Strategy
"Need and greed" fuel the operations of criminal organizations, Sanchez said.

As cartels strive to maximize their profits, "more dope is put on the street" and the drugs are being marketed to more users, particularly to younger crowds, he said.

"At the end of the day, it's about the money to them; it's about the dollar."

Maltz agrees, saying, "It's a win-win because their customer base is growing, and their profits are booming."

Maintaining a steady cash flow without getting caught takes a bit of planning.

"Criminal organizations along the southwest border of Texas are very strategic in how they handle their operations," Sanchez said.

"They will utilize certain smuggling routes for migrants, which causes the law enforcement community to shift their enforcement operations to such an area to mitigate—and once these resources have moved, they'll exploit the response by law enforcement and use another route for trafficking narcotics."

Apart from the success of some drug traf-

fickers reaching the interior of the United States, Maltz said that Chinese transnational criminals are also "smart" about what they are doing.

"They are using Mexican cartels as proxies to distribute poisonous substances in America as part of the Chinese regime's plan for 'unrestricted warfare,'" he said, referring to a Chinese military strategy to use unconventional forms of warfare to defeat an enemy without resorting to kinetic conflict. "They are deliberately destabilizing America under the guise of drug addiction. 'The regime is sitting back as Mexican cartels distribute a poison that's killing America's future generation at record levels.'"

Deadly Mixtures

In southern Texas, methamphetamine is being mixed with fentanyl at alarming levels, Sanchez said, a trend being repeated across the entire country. The combination is deadlier than anything the DEA officer has ever seen.

"It only takes one milligram—the size of a grain of salt—to kill a first-time user," he said of fentanyl.

"Sixty kilograms [approximately 132 pounds] is enough fentanyl to kill the whole population of the United States," he said, adding that he considers it crucial to alert people about its potency and its deadly mixture with other drugs.

In fiscal year 2021, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seized more than 11,000 pounds of fentanyl, more than double the previous year. Methamphetamine seizures have also surged, with the CBP impounding more than 190,000 pounds during fiscal 2021, a more than two-fold increase from four years ago.

The DEA, in concert with other law enforcement agencies, as of late September, had seized more than 9.5 million counterfeit pills, more than the previous two years combined. There has also been a marked increase in the number of fake pills seized containing fentanyl, according to the agency, pointing to a 430 percent increase since 2019. Lab testing has also determined that 40 percent of pills seized contain a potentially lethal dose of at least two milligrams. "Considering that 9.5 million pills have

been seized, DEA has already saved over three million lives this year," Maltz said. Had two out of five pills made it into the hands of unsuspecting victims, these people would have died, he noted.

With drug overdose deaths in the United States climbing to a record 93,000 in 2020, the DEA has recognized fentanyl as a "primary driver" in this trend.

Counterfeit pills are often made to look identical to prescription opioids such as oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and alprazolam (Xanax); or stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall).

Maltz said many of these pills are being produced in labs in Mexico. Pill presses and dyes are purchased from the internet to create look-alikes to prescription medications.

Prescription Drug Misuse

Prescription painkillers—opioids, in particular—also create a challenge. More than 10 million Americans have misused opioids at least once over a 12-month period, according to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics. Criminal organizations associated with the trafficking of drugs understand that, Sanchez said.

"As a result, they've realized that people are not afraid to take prescription medication," the DEA agent said. "It's less intrusive than someone sticking a needle in their arm or someone smoking a crack pipe."

Taking a pill—whether by prescription or over-the-counter—is something the majority of the population has been accustomed to doing since an early age, he said.

A lack of fear and precaution can lead to death in some circumstances.

Sanchez gave a hypothetical example. "A first-year college student could find himself up late cramming for an exam when his roommate offers an Adderall given to him by a friend to help him stay focused," he said.

Not knowing if this pill is counterfeit, a perceived innocent gesture could quickly turn deadly, he said.

Business Rolls On

In October, the DEA raided a meth conver-



More than 3,100 pounds of methamphetamine, fentanyl powder, fentanyl pills, and heroin, as part of the second-largest methamphetamine bust along the southwest border, on Oct. 9, 2020.

Precursor chemicals [for the manufacturing of drugs] are being sent to Mexico from China.

Richard Sanchez, assistant special agent, DEA

sion lab in Ellenwood, Georgia, and arrested three men from Mexico who were in the country illegally.

"In recent years, there has been much talk about a border crisis, and some people say it doesn't matter when illegals come into the country," Maltz said.

According to the DEA, these men were affiliated with a drug cartel. Maltz said cartels are taking advantage of a porous border and "they're sending the key confidants and important network operators" into the United States to expand their business.

The cartels, Maltz says, are doing the same thing nearly any corporate company would if there was an area of the country where the company's products would sell.

"Wouldn't you put some of your good people in such a city and start pushing your products?" he said. "If you run a business, you have to have people you can trust to run the business; it's the same thing with the cartels."

J.M. Phelps is a writer and researcher of both Islamist and Chinese threats.

OPINION

China Faces Economic Double Whammy

FAN YU

Inflation is about to hit China at a very inopportune time.

Inflation and specters of a U.S. Federal Reserve interest rate increase could present a double whammy on China's economy as it struggles to come out of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Official National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showed Chinese factory-gate prices, or the cost at which wholesalers purchase from factories, increased 13.5 percent in October compared to a year ago. That's the fastest rise in China's producer price index (PPI) since 1996. The index tracks purely the price of goods at "factory gates" and doesn't include transportation or logistics costs, which also are rising.

The alarming figure was the result of a rise in other input prices, including that of coal, oil, steel, and electricity. Factory-gate inflation may have been exacerbated by an unexpected energy crunch over the past few months. In October, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ordered its mining companies to increase coal production and forced price cuts to lower energy costs.

That shouldn't be a surprise to U.S. consumers already suffering from inflation. October consumer price index (CPI) in the United States rose 6.2 percent from 2020, the fastest year-over-year surge in 31 years.

In China, consumer prices haven't risen to that degree, but it's only a matter of time. Higher prices at China's factory gates affect the whole world—everyone consumes Chinese goods—including China's domestic consumers.

Chinese CPI was 1.5 percent higher in October. That's the official figure, and we can be sure the CCP is closely managing these numbers. Runaway prices, especially on necessities such as food, are a sensitive topic for social stability. The official figures report that the nationwide cost of

fresh vegetables jumped 16.6 percent in October, a huge red flag.

I raised the issue of stagflation in China almost two years ago, but today, the risk of stagflation is much higher.

Stagflation is an economic state in which a country's economy suffers from stagnant economic growth and rising inflation at the same time. It's especially tricky as the central bank can't use its usual tool of raising interest rates to combat inflation without harming economic activity. The United States experienced this during the 1970s when an economic recession was met with an oil supply crisis.

China isn't likely to report negative economic growth, at least not according to official NBS figures. But rising PPI means that much higher consumer prices are just around the corner.

But the CCP's tools are limited in the near term. Due to ongoing power shortages, it can't stimulate the economy efficiently, as there isn't enough electricity generated to support higher activity. But without increasing power supply, China can't increase economic growth. Already, some areas are seeing factories being shut to lower strain on the power grid.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Federal Reserve's expectation of raising interest rates poses another threat to China's economy.

The U.S. central bank has lowered monthly asset purchases (quantitative tightening) starting this month. In scaling back the Fed's pandemic-driven economic stimulus, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell has laid the groundwork for the Fed to raise interest rates in mid-2022. But if U.S. inflation continues to worsen, Powell may be forced to act sooner.

Few experts in the United States have chimed in on this impact, as the focus has been the domestic economy, but Citadel LLC founder and CEO Ken Griffin recently rang the warning bell.

"China and the United States are very tightly integrated," he said at the 2021 Caixin Summit in November.

WANG ZHAO/APP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A woman selects pork at a supermarket in Beijing on February 10, 2021.

China isn't likely to report negative economic growth, at least not according to official NBS figures. But rising producer price index means that much higher consumer prices are just around the corner.

"Any steps that take place in the United States to slow inflationary pressures will put pressure on global growth, hurting the economies of both countries."

So far, U.S. consumer prices have outpaced Chinese prices, at least officially. A Federal Reserve move to tighten monetary policy in the U.S. will likely have a negative impact on China given that its economy is still struggling with COVID-19-related lockdowns and travel restrictions.

The expectation of monetary tightening in the U.S. will likely weaken China's currency and force outflows from the world's No. 2 economy. For an economy still struggling to find its footing, it's an unwelcome development.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

Fan Yu is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China's economy since 2015.

JOHANNES EISELE / APP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A DEA special agent logo, seen in the Office of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in New York on May 29, 2019.

ESPIONAGE WAR

Expect Beijing's Retaliation After Historic US Conviction of Chinese Spy, Experts Warn

J.M. PHELPS

The recent conviction in the United States of a Chinese intelligence agent may have Beijing backpedaling on its espionage operations for the moment, according to experts, who said an unsuspecting American in China may become their means for retribution.

On Nov. 5, a federal jury convicted Xu Yanjun over his role in a scheme to recruit spies and steal sensitive aviation technology for the Chinese regime. Xu, a deputy division director at a provincial branch of Beijing's top intelligence agency, the Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS), was found guilty on all counts, including conspiracy to commit economic espionage and to steal trade secrets.

Xu was the first Chinese intelligence agent to be extradited to the United States to stand trial.

Since 2013, prosecutors said, Xu had been actively involved in recruiting employees from leading U.S. and foreign aviation companies. In March 2017, he began soliciting information from a GE Aviation engineer.

By the end of the year, the engineer had begun working with the FBI. They concocted a plan to lure Xu to Belgium with the promise of the engineer providing Xu with sensitive files relating to GE Aviation's exclusive composite aircraft engine fan. Xu took the bait and was arrested in Belgium in April 2018, and later extradited to the United States.

He now faces up to 60 years in prison; a sentencing date hasn't been set.

"For those who doubt the real goals of the [People's Republic of China], this should be a wakeup call; they are stealing American

The Chinese are going to retaliate at some point of their choosing; it's now a matter of what they'll do and how they'll do it.

David Sauer, a retired senior CIA officer who served as chief of station and deputy chief of station in multiple overseas command positions in East Asia and South Asia

The Tiananmen Square in Beijing on July 4, 2013. Expert says that Xu's extradition could signal that crimes of espionage will no longer be allowed to be committed with impunity.

technology to benefit their economy and military," Alan E. Kohler Jr., the assistant director of the FBI's counterintelligence division, said in a Nov. 5 statement.

James Olson, former chief of counterintelligence at the CIA and author of "To Catch a Spy: The Art of Counterintelligence," described the Chinese regime's efforts to steal U.S. technology and trade secrets as "massive and pervasive."

"Most Americans will never understand the full extent of what's going on," he told The Epoch Times.

Olson described Xu's conviction as "huge" and "historic."

David Sauer, a retired senior CIA officer who served as chief of station and deputy chief of station in multiple overseas command positions in East Asia and South Asia, agreed.

"Prosecuting Xu was a definite shot across the bow," he said. "The FBI and the DOJ [Department of Justice] did a great operation by luring Xu into Belgium where they knew he could be extradited and sent back to the States to be tried."

Xu's extradition to the United States will have "a dramatic impact" on how the Chinese regime approaches the recruitment of spies and the theft of trade secrets in the future, according to Olson. It will cause the Chinese regime's MSS to be more careful, as this landmark event could signal that crimes of espionage will no longer be allowed to be committed with impunity, he said.

Retaliation

To the Chinese regime, Xu's extradition was "a very aggressive and provocative thing" for the United States to do, Olson said.

His conviction was "a terrible blow" to the MSS and "retribution is inevitable," he said. "The Chinese regime will want Xu back, and they will go to extreme measures to make that happen."

Sauer agreed with the assessment. "The Chinese are going to retaliate at some point of their choosing; it's now a matter of what they'll do and how they'll do it," he said. There's potential that any such countermeasure "could be a big deal," but he keeps the option open that Beijing would "do something a little less spectacular to avoid calling more attention to it."

Olson predicts "an American businessman or American journalist in China will be framed." The Chinese regime will "fabricate a case against this person and rush him through a trial" to convict him, he said.

Likewise, Sauer said that Beijing "could drum up the charges and try to extradite CIA, FBI, or anyone who has worked

COURTESY OF BUTLER COUNTY JAIL



Xu Yanjun is a deputy division director at a provincial branch of Beijing's top intelligence agency, the Chinese Ministry of State Security.

against China back to Beijing."

According to Olson, in this scenario, it will be alleged that this American engaged in espionage and evidence will be planted to make it appear as such. After this case is made, he said, "they will have trade bait."

This person will then be offered in return for Xu, he explained, warning that "they're probably looking at potential targets right now."

Sauer said that he personally "wouldn't be traveling to areas where the Chinese regime has a lot of influence and sway."

'Greedy'

Sauer is confident that the Chinese have already evaluated possible options to recover Xu, and will probably never conduct operations again in areas where the United States has strong diplomatic ties, such as Belgium.

"They will concentrate their operations in areas where they have more control of the countries—in Southeast Asia, for example—where they have so much more influence to be able to get a guy like Xu out if he ever got in trouble."

In cases when spies are caught under diplomatic cover, "it's not a calamity," Olson said, adding that, in those instances, the perpetrator would simply be declared persona non grata and expelled from the country.

But Xu's case was different since he didn't travel to Belgium under the guise of being a diplomatic worker.

"What Xu did [by traveling to Belgium to meet a source] was very, very aggressive," Olson said. This is not a risk the MSS would normally take, as Olson considers it extremely rare for a member of the Chinese intelligence to meet outside China.

"The fact that [MSS] agreed to send Xu to Belgium to meet a supposed recruit is an indication of how greedy they are, and how much they really wanted the jet engine technology," he said.

According to Olson, the MSS doesn't like to operate inside the United States, or in any other country without diplomatic immunity for that matter. Instead, the MSS prefers to bring new recruits to China.

"Here, they can debrief them and extract intelligence in the safety of their own turf," he said.

"Xu's conviction is going to change their game plan," Olson said, adding that he would be very surprised if MSS agreed to meet any other assets outside China in the near future.

Did He Talk?

Olson has seen speculation that valuable

intelligence was acquired from Xu, but he doesn't believe it. He suspects that Xu is a "very disciplined, loyal Chinese citizen and intelligence officer." If he did "talk," then a plea bargain could have been reached—but that didn't happen, Olson said.

With no plea bargain, he said, "it appears the DOJ really had no bargaining chips." Whether the defense wanted him to make a deal by talking is something the U.S. public will likely never know, according to Olson.

In Olson's experience, "it's highly unlikely someone like this MSS officer would have ever considered giving up any information," he said.

Doubling Down on Double Agents

Operations such as the one that led to the conviction of Xu are riddled with complexity and tough to go about.

"It's not that [intelligence agencies] have done nothing; it's that they've been relatively ineffective stopping the theft of technology and research and development information," Sauer said.

But, according to Olson, the entire U.S. intelligence community is "energized" and "encouraged" by the Xu investigation and conviction—and Sauer agrees.

Olson said the activities of the MSS and the People's Liberation Army, the regime's military, against the United States must continue to be thwarted, and he offered two solutions for making that happen.

First, he said, "the U.S. must penetrate Chinese intelligence so we have inside sources who tell us exactly what they're doing, how they're doing it, and who's being recruited from inside the United States to help them do it."

And second, he said, "the U.S. needs to conduct a lot more double-agent operations"—and "the GE aviation case is a textbook example" of such an operation.

In that case, "the FBI took control of the GE engineer—directed the operation with him as a double agent back against Chinese intelligence—and it was very, very successful," Olson said.

"Other double agent operations can begin when there's a good candidate to dangle in front of the Chinese [regime]."

This person would have to have access to the Chinese regime, be approachable, and made to look like a good recruit.

"To get a bite from China," Olson said, "we need to make sure that we float some really appealing bait downstream past them [with this agent] because they'll grab it—and once they do, we've got a double-agent operation."

The goal of the U.S. counterintelligence community should be to let the Chinese regime know it is "alive, well, and really aggressive and really devious," he said.

If the United States were to ramp up its double-agent operations, this could cause the Chinese regime to give pause to recruiting Americans because the target could actually be controlled by the FBI or CIA, according to Olson.

"That's going to make them a little gunshy about targeting an American in the future," he said.

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The CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. A former CIA chief of counterintelligence predicts that the Chinese regime will frame an American in China as retaliation to Xu's extradition.



General Electric Celma, GE's aviation engine overhaul facility in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 8, 2016. Xu was lured to the FBI's plan with the promise of sensitive files relating to GE Aviation's exclusive composite aircraft engine fan.

OPINION

Beijing Irked by US Bill That Counters China Threat

EMEL AKAN



Beijing's influence operations inside the United States have taken on a new dimension, as revealed by reports that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been pressuring American companies to lobby against a sweeping China bill that seeks to enhance U.S. competitiveness.

The report must have alarmed U.S. congressional leaders, who now pledge to "immediately" resume talks and get the bill over the finish line "as soon as possible."

The China bill that bothers Beijing is called the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA), which is a 2,376-page legislative package. The Senate approved USICA in June with a bipartisan vote of 68-32. A narrower version of the bill, called the Ensuring American Global Leadership and Engagement (EAGLE) Act, has stalled in the House since July due to disagreements and other legislative priorities.

The Chinese embassy in Washington threatened U.S. companies that they would

It is vital this legislation be bipartisan—and meaningfully address the various aspects of the CCP's malign actions.

Michael McCaul (R-Texas)

lose market share in China if the legislation became law, Reuters reported. Through letters and meetings, Chinese officials have been imploring "a wide range" of business actors to lobby against the measure.

Both Senate and House bills aim to counter Beijing's economic ambitions and global influence. They seek to address issues surrounding Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Beijing's genocide against Uyghurs in Xinjiang. USICA calls for boycotting the 2022 Beijing Olympics and reporting on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To enhance U.S. competitiveness, the Senate bill also dedicates \$52 billion in funding to domestic semiconductor production and authorizes nearly \$190 billion in spending to bolster U.S. critical technologies.

In a letter sent in early November, the Chinese embassy asked company executives to "play a positive role in urging members of Congress to abandon the zero-sum mindset and ideological prejudice, stop touting negative China-related bills, delete negative provisions."

China's foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian didn't deny these influence operations but said that certain U.S. leg-

islation reflects "Cold War thinking" that harmed the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Washington, however, has no intentions of backing down, according to Sen. Todd Young (R-Ind.), co-sponsor of the Senate bill, who responded to China's threats.

"Xi Jinping does not want this bill to become law," Young said in a statement. The Chinese leader is "scared" because USICA will make the United States "once again surge ahead."

China threatens "will only help to ensure the bill becomes law," he said.

News that China is lobbying against the bill could unite and energize both parties and chambers of Congress to pass a bipartisan bill without delay.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, longtime China hawks, reached a deal on Nov. 17 to reconcile the two different bills. The deal came after Senate Republicans and some House Democrats opposed Schumer's plan to include the legislation in the annual defense policy bill.

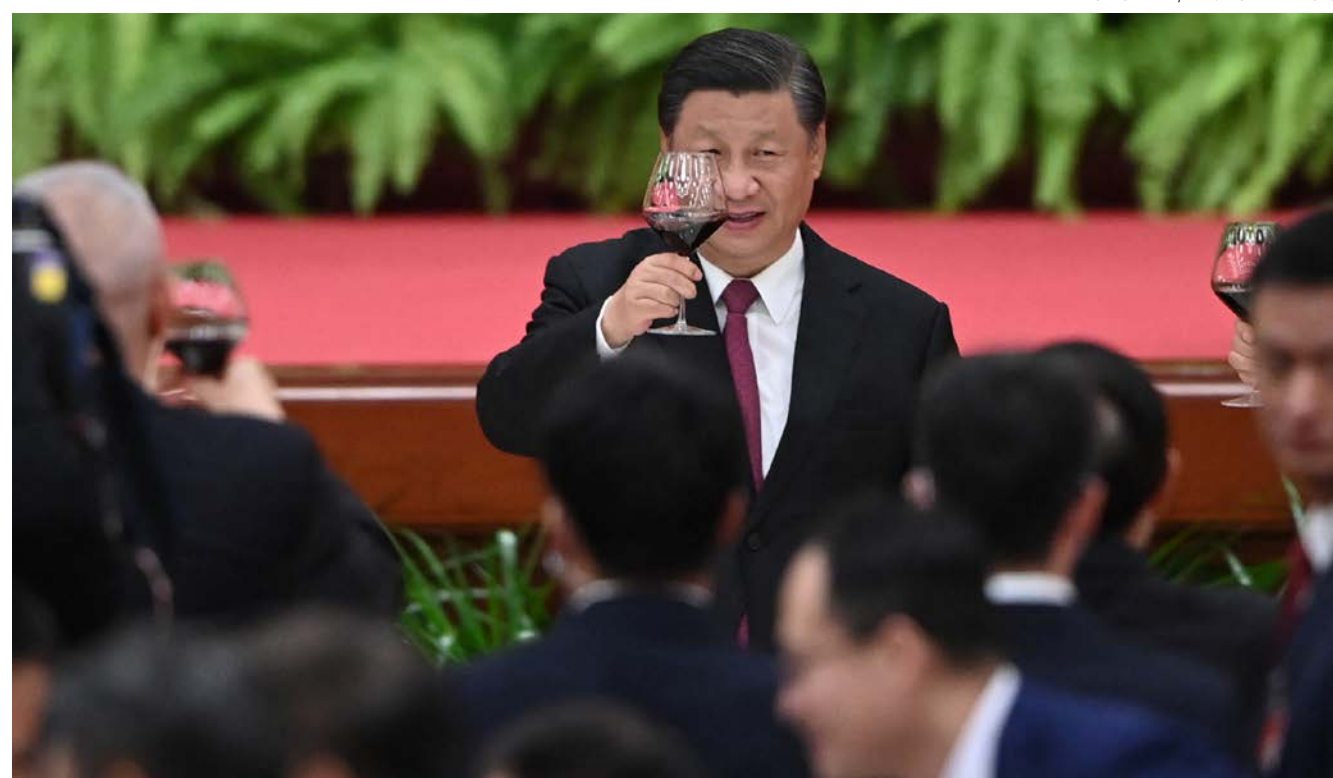
"While there are many areas of agreement on these legislative proposals

between the two chambers, there are still a number of important unresolved issues," Schumer and Pelosi said in a joint statement.

Both chambers "will immediately begin a bipartisan process of reconciling the two chambers' legislative proposals so that we can deliver a final piece of legislation to the president's desk as soon as possible," they said.

The House version of the bill, sponsored by Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, drew criticism earlier for narrowing some of the provisions in the Senate bill pertaining to human rights and Taiwan. The House bill also asked for billions to fight climate change, which wasn't included in the Senate version. These changes upset Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans, who opposed the bill in July.

"I am glad talks have resumed on passing legislation to confront the generational threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party," lead Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee Michael McCaul (R-Texas) told me. "But it is vital this legislation be bipartisan—and meaningfully address the various aspects of the CCP's malign actions, rather than providing billions more for the Green Climate Fund on top of the tens of billions in climate dollars appropriated this week alone."



Chinese leader Xi Jinping raises his glass after a speech by Premier Li Keqiang at a reception at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sept. 30, 2021.

It's unclear what the ultimate China bill will look like, but it "needs to be more than messaging and can't be turned into another political football—it's too important," McCaul said.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

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