

WEEK 25, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

Chinese farmers harvest wheat using combine harvesters in Handan in China's northeastern Hebei Province on June 5, 2018.

## STEALING THE 'SECRETS TO LIFE'

BEIJING'S HUNGER  
FOR US AGRICULTURE  
TECH SECRETS

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## FOOD SECURITY

# China's Theft of US Agriculture Tech Secrets Is 'Enormous' National Security Threat: Analyst

EVA FU

Thin as it is, a kernel of seed is no different than a mini biological computer. In it is all the genetic code, intellectual property containing billions of dollars of potential worth that, falling into the hands of an adversary, could give them control over the food production of a country and beyond.

One unmistakable adversary here is China, according to Ross Kennedy, a U.S.-based logistics and supply chain analyst at Fortis Analysis.

In that country, home to 1.4 billion people, "possessing the means to increase their own domestic food security is job number one," he told NTD, an affiliate of The Epoch Times.

"Lying, stealing, bartering, whatever it takes to get that technology, China has proven willing to do."

Kennedy calls it a domain for "gray zone asymmetric warfare." By stealing U.S. agricultural technologies and developing a version of their own, China would be able to fill the country's most basic needs while undercutting America, economically and diplomatically, in its pursuit for global leadership in agricultural production, he said.

"Most people don't realize that you could steal some kernels of corn, or a few soybeans, and perpetuate a multibillion-dollar industrial espionage campaign," Kennedy said.

"If you're able to 'crack the code' of a genetically modified organism, then you would be able to steal hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars of intellectual property," he said.

"In recent years, if you could do that, you're lifting the secrets to life of that corn, that soybean, and giving yourself an enormous step ahead in terms of time and cost advantage on feeding your own population."

## Seeds as a Weapon

China is the world's largest agricultural importer with imports totaling \$133.1 billion in 2019, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Plagued by shrinking arable land, natural disasters, and with swelling demand for food to feed one-sixth of the world's population, the country has for years shown considerable interest in U.S. agricultural assets, among which, the "most valuable and easily transferable property are seeds," a May research report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) states.

Seed innovation has generated billions of dollars for U.S. agricultural biotechnology firms such as Monsanto. In 2021, the United States exported around \$174 million worth of seeds to China, accounting for 15 percent of its total exports, according to the report.

The importance of advancing seed technology is not lost on China. Chinese state media have described seeds as "chips" of

agriculture, and Chinese leader Xi Jinping has long elevated grain security as a "core basis of national security."

In an inspection tour of a seed lab in China's southernmost province Hainan in April, Xi called on the country to "hold Chinese seeds tightly with our own hands" to "keep the Chinese rice bowls steady and achieve food security."

But some Chinese scientists have taken a shortcut by outright stealing the U.S. agricultural trade secrets.

Days before Xi's trip to Hainan, Chinese national Xiang Haitao, a former imaging scientist at Monsanto in Missouri, was sentenced by a U.S. federal court to 29 months in prison after pleading guilty to stealing trade secrets from his former employer. Xiang had attempted to steal an algorithm that helps farmers optimize agricultural productivity to benefit a Chinese state-run research institute, prosecutors said.

In another case, Mo Hailong, a director for international business at a Beijing-based agribusiness with ties to the Chinese regime, attempted to steal corn seeds from testing fields at Monsanto and another U.S. seed producer Dupont Pioneer from 2011 to 2012. Mo was sentenced to three years in federal prison in 2016, after he pleaded guilty to conspiring to steal trade secrets.

In 2018, two Chinese rice researchers visited various U.S. research and production facilities. U.S. prosecutors who charged them with a conspiracy to steal rice production technology said they found stolen rice seeds in their luggage at Honolulu airport as they attempted to fly back to China. They are currently at large in China. Two other Chinese rice researchers who helped organize their trip were convicted in a connected case in 2018, and sentenced to one and 10 years in prison each.

"It seems silly, but if you can get three, four, five, six, 10 different varieties of seed, now you've got the ability to not only reverse engineer that seed's tolerance to various pesticides or insects," Kennedy said.

Through reverse engineering, China could also unlock a seed's ability to produce high yields and adaptability to various climates, such as hotter and wetter environments.

"There's places in China where they would love to be able to grow things like corn or soybeans, but they don't really have access to the good genetic technology to make seeds that can thrive in more challenging conditions," Kennedy said.

"So one seed is a problem," he said. But if China gets its hands on multiple seeds "suddenly now you've got a much larger issue."

The communist regime could also weaponize seeds to effectively wipe out an adversary's ability to produce crops at scale, according to the analyst. It could do this by turning on or off the genetic triggers that cause crops to fail, create toxins in plants to poison animals, or create weakness to

Volunteers helping farmers harvest rice in Huzhuang, Jiangsu Province, China, on Nov. 1, 2021.

Lying, stealing, bartering, whatever it takes to get that technology, China has proven willing to do.

Ross Kennedy, logistics and supply chain analyst, Fortis Analysis



certain types of bacteria or funguses to "dramatically increase the disease pressure on the land," he said.

## 'Massive Diplomatic Lever'

With only a handful of domestic players such as Dow Chemical Company and Dupont controlling much of the U.S. food production, China has its obvious targets, said Kennedy.

"You really only need to penetrate or create problems with one," he said. "Now you're talking about 1.4 billion mouths to feed market in a place like China that used to have to buy American and European genetic technology. And now they have the means to do their own, and race ahead and provide that to the rest of the world and undermine U.S. efforts in that way as well."

Such technology theft can become a "massive diplomatic lever" for China and allow it to undermine American diplomatic and national security efforts worldwide, said Kennedy.

"In the same way they would export construction technology for 'Belt and Road [Initiative]', you could also do Belt and Road with food, and with energy," said Kennedy, referring to Beijing's trillion-dollar project to facilitate trade and infrastructure partnerships with Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

According to Kennedy, in places like Africa where there is an abundance of arable land and labor, but lacks modern seed technology, "China could come in and say, 'Hey, we can give the farm equipment, the methods, the machinery, and this very expensive intellectual property, we can provide the soil to you to lift yourself up out of food issues or food poverty, but we want access to these critical minerals, or we want to build a military base on your shoreline or whatever it may be.'"

Critics of the Belt and Road Initiative have dubbed the project a form of "debt trap diplomacy," which saddles developing nations with sustainable debt levels and thus leaves them vulnerable to ceding strategic infrastructure and resources to Beijing. Research lab AidData last September counted at least 42 countries with public debt exposure to China exceeding a tenth of its gross domestic product.



Workers transferring soybeans at a port in Nantong, Jiangsu Province, China, on April 9, 2018. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has long elevated grain security as a "core basis of national security," a report says.

But the analyst noted that genetically-modified seeds differ from construction projects in that they have a relatively short life span: they are "only good once, and only really keeps in condition in a bag for a year or two."

"This is a way that China has an annual way of maintaining control over certain things," said Kennedy. By controlling the seeds, China gets to dictate the terms that the countries dependent upon the resource must follow.

"It's a variant of debt trap diplomacy, but it's also one that hits immediately and hits very, very close to home in a way that maybe repossessing your bridge or your railroad does not," he added.

## Securing Land for China

Chinese purchases of American farmland, another facet of Beijing's involvement in the U.S. agricultural sector, have also been raising economic and national security alarms.

In 2013, Chinese meat processor Shuanghui International Holdings (now WH Group) took over the world's leading pork producer,

Virginia-based Smithfield Foods, marking the largest Chinese acquisition of an American consumer brand to date.

The deal, according to the USCC report, gave the Hong Kong-based firm more than 146,000 acres of land spreading across six states, supplying China with record amounts of pork in 2020 as African Swine Fever dwindled herds and pandemic lockdowns disrupted production in China.

Beijing's goal is to be able to convert as much American farmland as possible to exclusively provide for China.

"Now you have secured on that acre, and scale that however many hundreds of 1000s of acres, you've secured your own supply chain for your country as the owner of that land, even if it's on foreign soil," he said.

Officially, Chinese investment in U.S. farmland has ballooned more than 25 times from 13,720 acres to 352,140 acres between the decade of 2010 and 2020, according to a 2020 USDA report.

While this still represents roughly 1 percent of all foreign-held acres in the United



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States, the USCC report said there's no mechanism in place at the federal level to track land ownership and usage, and Chinese investors could circumvent the rules with little repercussions.

"This is an enormous problem. It's not one that's going away," Kennedy said.

Such lands could become a potential vector for the regime to stage various forms of espionage against the United States, said Kennedy. Chinese animal nutrition supplier Fufeng Group last November announced that it was in negotiations to purchase 370 acres of land in Grand Forks, North Dakota, to build its first U.S. corn milling facility. The proposed plant's location, about 12 miles from the Grand Forks Air Force Base, has stirred fears of the site being used to spy on U.S. military activities in the area.

"Once you have land, you have options," he said. Getting its hand on vast swaths of land, he added, "has been an enormous priority for China for a long time."

Some lawmakers have already been sounding the alarm. Late last month, Rep.

Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) introduced legislation aiming to ban foreign nationals with ties to Beijing from acquiring agricultural land in the United States.

"If we begin to cede the responsibility for our food supply chain to an adversarial foreign nation, we could be forced into exporting food that is grown within our own borders and meant for our own use," Newhouse said in a press release.

The threats of Chinese agricultural espionage calls for more national awareness and a switch in mindset, according to Kennedy.

When it comes to collaboration involving sensitive technology, the first thing to ask, according to the analyst, should be: "Is this a last resort to partner with China on this?"

Kennedy said that instead of considering the benefits of a collaboration only from an economic point of view, business and academic leaders also need to factor in national security and ask: "do we have any other options at our disposal to achieve the goal of whatever the program or the initiative may be? If the answer is yes, that needs to be pursued."



A technician holds up advanced seed chipping machines inside the Monsanto agribusiness headquarters in St. Louis, Mo. this file photo.

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TIMES

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## CCP ESPIONAGE

# TikTok an 'Invasive Tool' for Beijing: Lawmakers Warn of Threat After Report Shows US Data Accessed in China

EVA FU

The hugely popular short-video app TikTok is but "another invasive tool" for Beijing's espionage campaign on America, U.S. lawmakers said after news of leaked internal recordings allegedly showing the app's private U.S. user data being repeatedly accessed in China.

Between at least September 2021 and January, engineers in China had access to the app's U.S. data, according to leaked recordings of 80 internal meetings cited by BuzzFeed News. In addition, TikTok employees at times had to turn to their colleagues in China to determine how U.S. data was flowing, which the U.S. staff weren't authorized to independently access, the report said.

TikTok is owned by Beijing-based tech giant ByteDance and has drawn concern in the United States and elsewhere over whether its data can be accessed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), given that its laws compel companies to cooperate with security agencies when asked.

"Everything is seen in China," a member of TikTok's Trust and Safety department said in a September 2021 meeting, according to the report. The same month, a director addressed a Beijing-based engineer as a "Master Admin" with "access to everything."

"No surprise there, TikTok is just another invasive tool for communist China to infiltrate Americans' personal and proprietary information," Rep. Ken Buck (R-Colo.) told The Epoch Times. "This app presents a very real threat to our national security, and the United States should take strong action to stop the CCP's espionage campaign."

The popular China-owned platform has for years sought to minimize its links with Beijing—concerns that triggered efforts from the Trump administration to ban TikTok from operating in the United States. In a number of public statements, the company has maintained that it stores U.S. user data locally and wouldn't share them with Chinese authorities if asked.

The Chinese national intelligence law requires all organizations and citizens to "support, assist, and cooperate with national intelligence efforts in accordance with law" and "protect national intelligence work secrets they are aware of." Because of that, Chinese firms have no option but to hand over whatever data the authorities demand and to deny doing so publicly, experts have said.

In August 2021, a state-backed firm linked to the country's top internet watchdog also took a 1 percent stake in one of ByteDance's subsidiaries, heightening worries of potential influence Beijing could exercise over the platform.

"Any U.S. user data that can be accessed by a 'private' company in China can undoubtedly also be accessed by the Chinese Communist Party," Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.) told The Epoch Times.

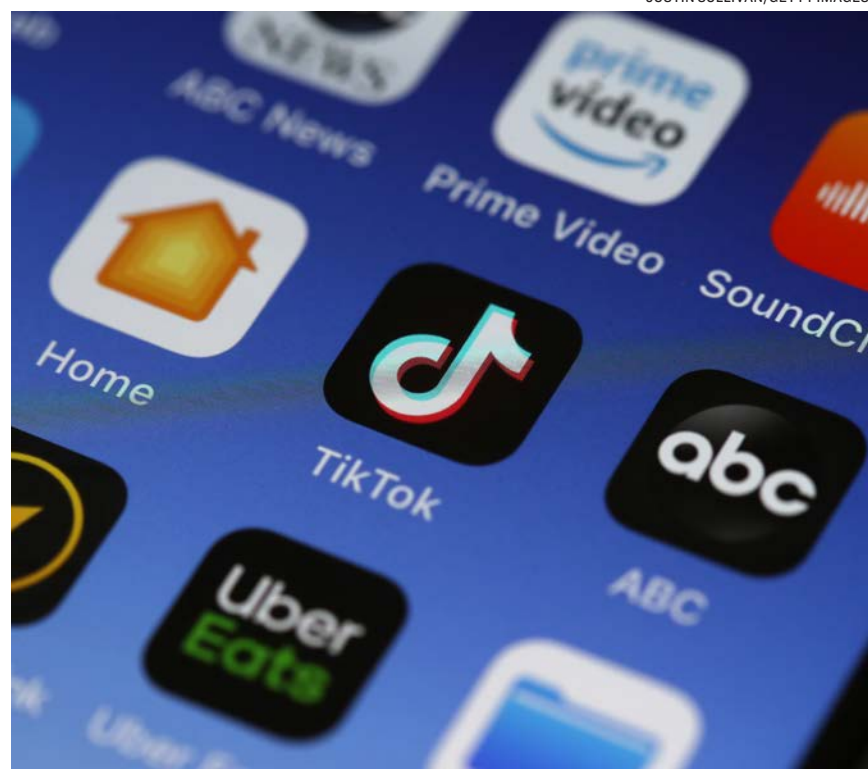
In a congressional hearing in October 2021, Michael Beckerman, vice president and head of public policy in the Americas for TikTok, denied that ByteDance employees have access to TikTok user data. He told lawmakers that "a world-renowned U.S.-based security team" handles access to U.S. user data, and it stores backups in Singapore.

The leaked recordings, Zeldin said, suggest that Beckerman "possibly lied to Congress, which is a felony."

"Even the possibility that the private data of millions of Americans, many of them only teenagers, was accessed by the Chinese government and could have been used for any number of the CCP's nefarious activities should set off alarm bells in our government and private sector, and for anyone who uses this app," he said.

"The U.S. government needs to urgently determine what data was collected, what the Chinese government had access to, and how the data has been used."

Shortly before the June 17 Buzzfeed article, TikTok announced that it was migrating all U.S. user traffic to Oracle servers in the United States. It added that it would continue to use its U.S. and Singapore data centers for backup storage, but it expects to delete U.S. users' data from those sites over time.



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

No surprise there, TikTok is just another invasive tool for communist China to infiltrate Americans' personal and proprietary information.

Rep. Ken Buck

## 'Every Piece of Technology Coming From China Is Weaponized'

Former Chinese internet censor Liu Li-peng previously told The Epoch Times that TikTok had sought to hire people like him to monitor U.S. users. In 2018, Liu interviewed with ByteDance for a TikTok content manager position, which would expect him to inspect "globalized videos" on the platform.

"They are directly censoring Americans' speech," he said in an interview in 2020.

President Donald Trump issued an executive order in August 2020 to ban TikTok and Chinese super app WeChat, saying the apps' capture of vast swaths of Americans' data "threatens to allow the Chinese Communist Party access to Americans' personal and proprietary information—potentially allowing China to track the locations of Federal employees and contractors, build dossiers of personal information for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage."

Since then, Trump's order has been stalled by several lawsuits and court orders.

In July 2021, President Joe Biden revoked the executive order, instead directing the Commerce Department to evaluate the platform to determine whether it poses a national security risk.

Casey Fleming, a cybersecurity analyst and CEO of strategic advisory firm BlackOps Partners, said that Beijing's global ambition should ring alarm bells in regard to technology from China.

One thing he always tells people who consult him on such matters, Fleming said, is that "you've got to understand that every piece of technology coming from China is weaponized," he told EpochTV's "China Insider" program. "It's to weaken the United States and strengthen China."

Personal data is "very, very valuable" because it paints a picture of who one's connected to, their business transactions, smartphone activities, and what they will do in the future, said Fleming. The way TikTok is programmed to trap the audience on the app is also a form of psychological control, he said.

"The thing that most people don't really understand is the Chinese Communist Party's values and goals are completely opposite of the U.S. and the free world," Fleming said.

"They want to completely control it. So there are no independent companies in China, the CCP completely commands and controls in there."

Anybody engaging in business or other pursuits in China "is subject to CCP law in China." TikTok didn't return a request for comment by press time.

David Zhang contributed to this report.

## OPINION

# China's Return to Maoism

As the economy falters, the CCP knows it must control everything in order to retain power

JAMES GORRIE



China's economy is in a serious and prolonged downward spiral. What better time for China to return to its Maoist roots?

After all, China was the paragon of economic growth, technological innovation, and stability under former leader Mao Zedong, right?

Nonetheless, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) "new" economic and political policies are turning the country's economy away from its blend of state and private capitalism and into the dark, Maoist model of the past.

Even more staggering is that the CCP is doing so intentionally. Major policy changes are being institutionalized by CCP leadership, which will further damage China's already declining economy.

## Resurrecting Mao's National Self-Reliance Policy

The purported reason behind reverting to Mao-era policies is to make China self-reliant. The CCP wants to decouple its economy from the West to minimize its dependence on Western partnerships and insulate China against future U.S. sanctions.

It's an attractive notion, but it doesn't work in practice. The necessary factors for self-reliance—such as efficient markets and transparent courts—require freedom of information, private property, technological innovation, robust consumer demand, and confidence in the future. None of these things are present enough in China.

On the other hand, the economy is cratering under the current system created by the CCP. So, indeed, why not revert to Maoism?

In reality, preemptively gaining control of as much of the economy as possible may be the only way for the Party to survive the coming onslaught of economic woes.

A few developments make it clear how comprehensively the CCP is failing China.

## Manufacturing Implosion Continues

First, a dose of reality regarding "reported" growth rates is in order. China's growth projection for 2022 is 5.5 percent. The CCP's official growth assessment for the first quarter of this year was a bit lower at 4.8 percent. Some private economists say that China's growth for 2022 will be roughly 2 or 3 percent.

If even those lower estimates were accurate, that would represent the greatest fall in economic growth that China has seen since the year following the Tiananmen Square mass murder of students by the CCP in 1989.

But even the lowest estimates aren't reasonable.

On the Caixin index, which indicates manufacturing activity, China is currently at 48, but was at 46 in April. Any level below 50 on the index means negative growth or a contraction in manufacturing activity. As the manufacturing and export leader of the world, that negative level spells more difficulty for China's economy.

## Property Development Sector Collapsing

There's more bad news in China's property development sector. The industry that makes up about 29 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) continues to melt down. With fewer buyers, heavy discounts are in play. In April, home prices fell in two-thirds of China's largest 70 cities.



Cranes in front of the Central Business District skyline in Beijing on Oct. 18, 2021.

Preemptively gaining control of as much of the economy as possible may be the only way for the Party to survive the coming onslaught of economic woes.

The debt-driven collapse of the industry is resulting in rampant insolvency among even the largest development firms and banks. In fact, trillions in bad debt saturate both private and public economic sectors.

Given that the CCP created the distortions in the property development sector through graft, corruption, and circular lending, the idea that the Party is equipped to solve these problems is absurd.

Again, from the Party's perspective, it's not about economic efficiency, but maintaining political control.

## Attacking Big Tech

Of course, the CCP's drive to control the private sector is also behind its oppression of powerful big tech firms such as Alibaba, Tencent, and many others. The CCP blames tech firms' excessive abuse of monopoly power, but the real issue is power itself.

The big tech firms wield tremendous financial and social influence in China, as well as in many other countries. Their technology, including social media, drives the culture, not the Party. These large societal influencers weren't only competing with the CCP, but they were posing a threat to its legitimacy.

Naturally, the CCP responds to threats by destroying them. That's what's really behind its take on the tech moguls. Massive layoffs have followed the takeovers.

## Mixing Economic Models

A big part of the CCP's transition to Maoism—and undoubtedly related to the tech takeovers—is its plan to blend private firms with state-owned enterprises (SOE) extensively. That's another formula for economic decline. It didn't work for Mao, and it won't work now.

Private companies are typically run much more efficiently than SOEs because they usually have to make a profit to survive. On the other hand, SOEs are run by political appointees, not businesspeople. In most cases, SOEs were successful private firms that the CCP took over for the personal gain of Party members, who then drained the wealth from the companies and refinanced them with loans from the central bank, the People's Bank of China (PBOC).

The "blending" of both, as it were, is

just a euphemism for more takeovers of private businesses by the Party.

## Chinese People's Fear of the Future

Not surprisingly, pessimism best defines people's outlook for the future in 2022. The CCP's "zero-COVID" policy kills economic activity wherever it's applied. The seemingly never-ending lockdowns of entire cities have resulted in dramatic falls in output, consumer income, and spending, as well as considerable jumps in consumers' savings rates. Of course, unemployment is rising, too.

According to the PBOC, private savings from January to May rose by 7.86 trillion yuan (\$1.7 trillion), which is more than 50 percent higher than the same period last year. At the same time, household consumption fell, meaning that people are buying even less in 2022 than they were during the intense lockdowns of 2020.

That's an additional \$1.7 trillion that wasn't spent in the economy in the first quarter, with a GDP of about \$14.7 trillion or less. Moreover, in 2020, savings were invested in the stock market or property. In 2022, however, consumers are paying off debt, prepaying mortgages, and other defensive actions.

Finally, the extended lockdowns across China have resulted in declining orders in manufacturing and other major industries, leading to widespread layoffs.

## The CCP's Survival Trumps Economic Viability

The language coming out of Beijing has the unmistakable ring of desperation as the CCP seeks to stabilize employment and the economy. It's worth noting that amid economic and social chaos, Mao sought and found stability and remained in power until the end.

The resurrection of Maoism is simply the adoption of proven methods for expanding power and control over the country as it descends into economic and social instability.

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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An employee walks outside the headquarters of ByteDance in Beijing on Aug. 5, 2020.



NOEL CELIS/APF VIA GETTY IMAGES

THE EPOCH TIMES

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## NATIONAL SECURITY

# Nuclear Weapons Imbalance Creates ‘Dangerous Moment’: Former CIA Officer

CHRIS SUMMERS

A former CIA officer and expert on nuclear weapons has criticised successive American and British leaders, including President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson, for believing the mantra “nuclear wars can never be won and should never be fought” and allowing Russia and China to build up a massive strategic advantage over the West.

Peter Vincent Pry, director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, told The Epoch Times, “This is one of the most dangerous moments we’ve ever faced in the nuclear missile age.”

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and some of the belligerent remarks made by President Vladimir Putin, have resurrected the specter of a nuclear war that could wipe out humanity.

Earlier this month a white paper was published that recommended the British government make public information films—such as the “Protect and Survive” series, made in the 1970s—to prepare the population for the possibility of nuclear conflict.

In response to the white paper, UK Defense Select Committee chair Tobias Ellwood MP said, “Perhaps, with the war in Ukraine and Russian troops attacking nuclear power stations and Putin threatening nuclear attack, it is timely to review our resilience to nuclear accidents and attacks.”

Pry said the Soviet Union collapsed because it could not keep up with U.S. military spending, but he said that in the 1990s and even after the rise to power of Putin in 2000, too many U.S. and British political leaders assumed the threat of nuclear war was a thing of the past and reduced military spending even while Russia rearmed and China built up a massive nuclear arsenal.

## ‘Gullible’ West Swallows Official Russian and Chinese Figures

Officially China spends \$293 billion a year on its military and Russia only \$66 billion, compared to the \$800 billion the Pentagon spends, but Pry said the reality was that China had more than matched U.S. spending and Russia had massively under-played how much it had spent and “gullible” Western politicians had believed it.

He said Russia and China now outnumbered the West by 10 to one on tactical nuclear weapons and he added, “All their nuclear missiles are brand new, whereas ours are 30 years old.”

But Tim Ripley, a defense analyst and au-



Intercontinental ballistic missiles are launched by the Vladimir Monomakh nuclear submarine of the Russian navy from the Sea of Okhotsk in Russia, on Dec. 12, 2020.

thor of “Little Green Men: The Inside Story of Russia’s New Military Power,” told The Epoch Times: “During the Cold War, and especially during the Cuban missile crisis, the clock was ticking towards Armageddon. Are we at the same level of danger now? Probably not.”

Ripley said: “There has been lots of rhetoric but we have yet to actually see the deployment of nuclear weapons. For all the rhetoric coming out of Russia their nuclear ships and submarines are spending an awful long time in port.”

But he said the Ukraine conflict did pose a great risk of a nuclear accident.

Ripley said: “Certainly there are Russian nuclear weapons at air bases and ports close to Ukraine and Ukraine has attacked several of those with missiles, so there is potential for an accident. Not necessarily a Hiroshima, but certainly one causing nuclear pollution.”

So are political leaders ready for nuclear conflict and do they understand the complex nuances of military strategy?

**UK’s Policy of ‘Strategic Ambiguity’**  
Britain has long maintained a policy of “strategic ambiguity” as far as its nuclear weapons.

The alternative would be a “no first strike” policy, which means Britain would only launch nuclear weapons if it came under nuclear attack itself.

Dominic Cummings, the former government adviser who has now become one of

Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s critics, wrote recently on the subject.

He said, “COVID showed how leaders can stumble into disaster because they have meetings based on big assumptions they’ve never really studied and questioned.”

Cummings also said he started questioning government officials in 2020 about the nuclear strategy in regards to Russia but said, “It can’t easily be publicly discussed.”

Pry said he agreed with Cummings that Britain seemed unprepared and Johnson should rein in his warlike rhetoric over the Ukraine.

Ripley said that in 1991, Britain, along with the United States, threatened to “nuke” Iraq if Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against allied troops during the Kuwait War, and he said the Ukraine conflict had raised the possibility of certain scenarios under which Britain might launch nuclear missiles at Russia.

“If Ukraine was overrun and there were British troops in Poland or Estonia that is an example of where a threat could come into play. If the Russians nuke a British battalion in Estonia and we nuke their troops in Ukraine, what happens next? Would they nuke one of our aircraft carriers off Norway? If either side nukes the other’s territory then that is the end of the world,” said Ripley.

But he said both Russia and NATO are aware of the “escalatory dilemmas” and nei-



Russian servicemen patrol the destroyed part of the Ilyich Iron and Steel Works amid fighting in the port city of Mariupol, Ukraine, on May 18, 2022.

ther side wanted the conflict in Ukraine to develop into a wider war, let alone a nuclear conflagration.

## ‘Russia and China Think They Can Win Nuclear War’

Pry is not so sure. He said: “Russia and China think they can win [a nuclear war]. We have brainwashed ourselves that you can’t win a nuclear war ... but they don’t believe that, not when you dig into their military doctrine, you look at their exercises, you look at their posture. That’s what you trust, not what they say.”

Pry said Russia believes that with its latest hypersonic nuclear missiles it could knock out the U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile silos and ultimately defeat the West in a nuclear war.

He pointed out the hundreds of deep underground shelters Russia has for its military and political elite and said they conducted a nuclear attack drill in 2016 which involved sheltering 40 million people.

Cummings also raised the idea of building underground bunkers: “Given the inevitability of future pandemics and the cumulative probability of WMD [weapons of mass destruction] attacks growing over time (without dramatic political changes), should we invest in new civil defence structures? For example, should we encourage the building of shelters that could double for pandemics and nuclear attack, with off-grid energy and recycled air?”

Ripley said Sweden, Finland, and Switzerland built bunkers during the Cold War as part of their normal housing programs, but he said it would be “phenomenally expensive” for Britain to embark on such a project.

## Political Resistance to Updating Nuclear Weapons

While Russia and China have been investing in a new generation of nuclear weapons, politicians in NATO countries have been struggling to persuade voters of the need to update their weapons.

In 1980, shortly after the BBC revealed the existence of the “Protect and Survive” films, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government announced plans to produce a new independent nuclear deterrent, Trident, which would replace Polaris, the submarine-launched system which had been operating since 1968.

Trident came into operation in 1994 but Ripley said: “Thatcher started building it but the Cold War was over by the time it was ready. Now the Royal Navy is replacing its Vanguard submarines with a new class of Dreadnought subs but they will still use Trident missiles.”

The new submarines, which are being built in Barrow-in-Furness in the north of England, are reported to be costing £31 billion (\$38 billion) and many Labour Party MPs, including former leader Jeremy Corbyn, were opposed to them being built.

Pry said the submarines may be new but the Trident missiles they would use are “antiques,” but there was no political appetite for updating them.

He said people in Britain and the United States had forgotten the lessons of the Cold War.

Pry said: “The USSR spent itself into oblivion eventually with the burden of defense armaments and that’s my hope for us to win the new Cold War. If we can just stay out of war with these great powers for long enough, and if we can deter them for long enough, I think they will collapse because their systems are based on lies. They have a false understanding of how economies work and they have a false understanding of human nature.”

A UK Ministry of Defense spokesperson said in an emailed statement to The Epoch Times, “We have absolute confidence in our nuclear deterrence and our ability, along with those of our NATO allies and partners, to deter the most extreme threats to our collective security and way of life.”

*Chris Summers is a UK-based journalist covering a wide range of national stories, with a particular interest in crime, policing and the law.*

## US-CHINA

# Authorities Smash Major Oregon Drug Operation, Find Links to China

SCOTTIE BARNES

OREGON—Authorities have seized eight tons of marijuana, 17,704 plants, four unlawfully obtained weapons, and a large cache of U.S. currency in an illegal growing operation linked to Chinese cartels.

The June 14 bust “had all the hallmarks of a cartel operation,” Sgt. Kent VanderKamp, detective, of the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) team told The Epoch Times. “Guns, intimidation. International money laundering.”

“Law enforcement also discovered technology linked to the Chinese government.

“The operation had processing equipment that came from the Chinese government,” VanderKamp said, including a vape pen cartridge filling station with a Chinese government tax stamp.

“That means at some point the equipment had to go through the government for exports,” he explained.

The weapons seized were also significant. “The A.R. 15 models were equipped with red dots and military grade equipment that we don’t normally see in privately owned weapons,” he said.

The bust was the result of a two-year investigation.

Marijuana grown at 20 locations in central Oregon was allegedly sent to Portland to be distributed nationwide, according to a CODE press release.

Proceeds from the marijuana sales were laundered through Chinese restaurants

and other businesses operating in Oregon before being sent back to China disguised as international business transactions, Sgt. VanderKamp said.

“We followed money from Madras, Oregon, to Hong Kong,” he added.

The operation allegedly used Chinese laborers who had been trafficked into the country through the southern border.

One of the organization leaders is a Chinese national who reportedly did much of the work overseas related to trafficking the workers.

“The operation used unskilled laborers who came into the country through Texas and California expecting to work in U.S. restaurants,” said VanderKamp.

“Workers held Mexican visas and stayed in Mexico for up to nine months waiting for conditions to be favorable to cross,” he continued. “When the chaos began on the southern border, they came over.”

Essentially narco slaves, the workers were paying off debt in China and covering the cost of their illegal immigration.

When they arrived, they were told they would be given jobs on farms making thousands of dollars per month.

“They were trained on the job and told it was legal,” he explained.

The laborers were found living at the grow sites and often were moved by the cartel.

Ten laborers were detained, identified, interviewed, and later released by detectives. They will not be charged as they are classified as witnesses.

“We have provided them with resources

**We have a lot of cartel activity in Oregon, with Chinese and Russians running illegal indoor marijuana growing operations and Mexicans, Hondurans, and others specializing in outdoor grows.**

Sgt. Kent VanderKamp, detective, Central Oregon Drug Enforcement

and put them in touch with the Chinese consulate.”

More suspects have been identified and detectives expect more arrests.

Unfortunately, such activities are not unusual in Oregon.

“We have a lot of cartel activity in Oregon, with Chinese and Russians running illegal indoor marijuana growing operations and Mexicans, Hondurans, and others specializing in outdoor grows,” VanderKamp said.

This case began with community complaints and tips about several of the organization’s grow locations in the area, he said.

The operations diverted or stole significant amounts of water from nearby homes, farms, and directly from pumps connected to underground water sources.

“Neighbors reported loss of water, as well as people coming and going, and lights running all the time,” he said.

As a result, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office detectives began investigating and discovered the complex criminal network.

The detectives requested the assistance of the Central Oregon Drug Team and the Deschutes County Illicit Marijuana Enforcement (DCIME) team to further their investigation.

Over the next two years, CODE and DCIME detectives along with U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, CODE, determined the organizational structure and identified the leader-



Drugs found during a raid on warehouses in White City, Ore., on Nov. 18, 2021.

ship of the criminal enterprise.

Special agents and intelligence analysts conducted hundreds of hours of physical and electronic surveillance on more than 24 members of the organization, 20 properties, bank accounts, and Chinese-food restaurants around the Pacific northwest and Asia.

The amount of cash seized in the operation has yet to be disclosed as the IRS is still processing funds.

“Law enforcement does not know if the Chinese government was aware of the cartel operation,” said VanderKamp.

“They were probably trying to keep it off the radar of both governments in order to subvert the funds,” he concluded.

*As founding editor of Geointelligence and Geospatial Solutions and editor in chief of GPS World, Scottie Barnes has examined the implications of public policy and emerging technologies on areas ranging from homeland security and national defense to forestry and urban planning. She now provides breaking news and investigative reporting from the Pacific Northwest for readers of The Epoch Times.*

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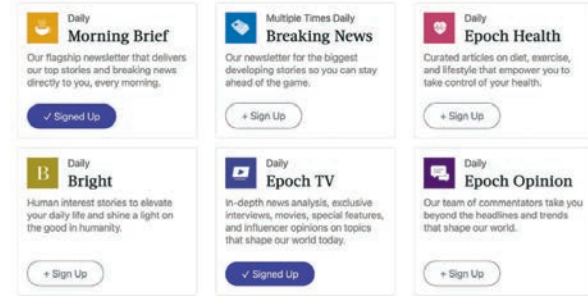
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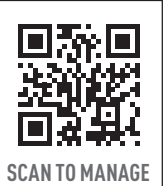


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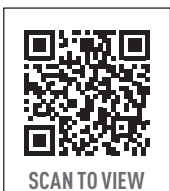


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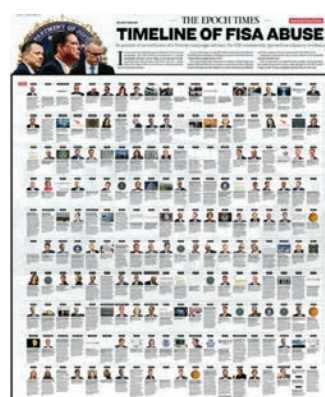


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