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THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

## CCP LOBBYING

CHINESE OFFICIAL ATTEMPTED TO  
INFLUENCE US LAWMAKERS ON  
FENTANYL ISSUE, CONGRESSMAN SAYS

See Page 3

HECTOR RETAMAL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



The P4 laboratory on the campus of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, on May 27, 2020.

## ANALYSIS

# Wuhan Institute of Virology Vice Director Revealed to Be CCP Official in Charge of Biosafety

HANS MAHNCKE

The vice director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), Yuan Zhiming, is a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) official who was formally in charge of international cooperation and biosafety at the facility, according to a newly discovered email from 2013.

The institute is suspected by many to be the origin of the coronavirus pandemic.

The email is part of a large number of documents unearthed by the transparency group U.S. Right to Know through ongoing Freedom of Information Act litigation to uncover pandemic-related information held by U.S. institutions. Although the initial batch of documents was released in June, the email pertaining to Yuan, which was obtained from the Galveston National Laboratory, was only recently discovered by former Senate investigator Paul D. Thacker.

While it isn't a secret that every Chinese institution ultimately answers to the CCP, the discovery of Yuan's true role as the CCP's praetorian and biosafety minder at the Wuhan lab is highly significant.

Yuan's academic biography doesn't mention his role as "Secretary of the Party Committee" at the WIV and the institute's website doesn't provide information on the identity of the Secretary of the Party Committee. Publicly available information confirms that as of July 2021, Yuan was still a director at the WIV. Yuan claims to have previously worked at the Pasteur Institute in France, the Royal Danish University of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, the Danish National Institute of Environmental Research, and the University of Illinois.

It isn't known whether those institutions were aware that Yuan is a CCP official.

Yuan also is associated with James Le Duc, the director of the Galveston National Laboratory in Texas. The Galveston lab was built by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and operates under the auspices of Dr. Anthony Fauci's National Institutes of Allergies and Health (NIAID).

The connections between the WIV and Le Duc go back to at least 1986, when Le Duc spent a year working at the WIV. Le Duc later trained Wuhan lab staff at his Galveston lab.

Le Duc also knew about Yuan's true role at the WIV, since the 2013 email that exposed it was in response to a request from Le Duc's staff to the institute. Le Duc wanted to set up a meeting with "the director of the biocontainment lab." Notably, the reply, which was sent by a staff member at the Wuhan lab, explained that there were two directors, the nominal director and the "Secretary of the



Chinese virologist Shi Zhengli inside the P4 laboratory in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, on Feb. 23, 2017.



**We need to strike a balance such that we are not in an adversarial situation.**

James Le Duc, director, Galveston National Laboratory

Party Committee."

Like almost all Chinese institutions, the WIV had an ostensible director and a CCP praetorian. Le Duc likely knew that the real power was vested with Yuan, whom he subsequently befriended.

On Feb. 9, 2020, a month before the pandemic erupted in the United States, Le Duc emailed his "friend" Yuan to ask for an "investigation into the possibility that the Covid outbreak was the result of a release from the Wuhan Institute of Virology."

That email was uncovered by a separate Freedom of Information Act request late last year. Le Duc attached a catalog of questions for Yuan, including asking when the WIV first started handling coronaviruses and where it had obtained its large collection of viruses.

Most significantly, Le Duc outright asked Yuan whether the Wuhan lab had conducted gain-of-function experiments that may have resulted in the creation of COVID-19.

Le Duc ended his email with an admonition to Yuan: "If there are weaknesses in your program, now is the time to admit them and get them corrected. ... I trust that you will take my suggestions in the spirit of one friend trying to help another during a very difficult time."

Despite Le Duc's decades-long affiliation with the WIV and his personal friendship with Yuan, he never heard back.

In April 2020, Le Duc contacted EcoHealth adviser David Franz to tell him about his outreach to Yuan, as well as the fact that Yuan had failed to respond.

EcoHealth is the organization through which Fauci had funded gain-of-function experiments on coronaviruses at the WIV. It's unknown why Le Duc reached out to Franz or what Franz's response was, if any. Franz previously was the commander of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick.

Chinese authorities have accused Fort Detrick of being the true origin of the COVID-19 virus.

At the same time, another former mili-

tary official, Philip Russell, the former commander of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command—also located at Fort Detrick—sent Le Duc a link to an EpochTV documentary that concluded that the pandemic likely started at the WIV. Le Duc replied that he thought the virus came out of the Wuhan seafood market, but acknowledged that he couldn't "argue with the comments against the Chinese Communist Party."

Le Duc stated: "It's too bad that the global pandemic is being conflated with the challenges the world faces from the Chinese Communist Party. They are both important issues, but I'm not convinced that they are linked."

As we now know—and as Le Duc knew at the time—the link between the WIV and the CCP was Le Duc's friend Yuan.

In an apparent effort to deflect Russell's attention from the evidence of a lab leak, Le Duc praised the lab's director, Shi Zhengli, claiming that she was a "very talented scientist and a charming person."

Russell didn't fall for the decoy, responding: "I have no doubt that Zheng Li Shi is a brilliant scientist and very charming. That does not rule out the possibility that one of the many bat coronaviruses isolated in the Wuhan lab infected a technician who walked out the door. No need for engineering the virus."

"The flimsiness of the epidemiology pointing to the wet market, the absence of bats in the market, the failure to identify an intermediate animal host, the extraordinary measures taken by the Chinese government, including persecution and probable killing of two brave physicians to cover up the outbreak, the steps taken to silence the laboratory personnel, the change in leadership of the lab, all point to the lab as the source of the outbreak."

At that point, Le Duc replied that it was "certainly possible that a lab accident was the source of the epidemic." Le Duc also revealed that he had reached out to Yuan about a lab leak but never heard back from him. Le Duc closed by betraying what appears to have been his real objective: "We need to strike a balance such that we are not in an adversarial situation."

In other words, it appears Le Duc was motivated by a desire not to create a conflict with the CCP. Analogously, then-NIH head Dr. Francis Collins privately told Fauci and his group of scientists to suppress evidence of a lab origin in order to preserve "international harmony."

There is little doubt that if it had been publicly known in March 2020 that the virus originated at a CCP-affiliated lab, the worldwide pressure on the CCP would have been immense.

Hans Mahncke is a co-host of "Truth Over News" on EpochTV.

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## CCP INFLUENCE

## CCP Diplomat Tried to Lobby US Lawmakers to Deflect Blame for Causing US Fentanyl Crisis

EVA FU &amp; STEVE LANCE

The Chinese regime's top diplomat has been reaching out to members of the House Intelligence Committee to deflect responsibility for the flow of illicit fentanyl into the United States, according to a Republican lawmaker.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio), a member of the Doctors Caucus and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, is among many lawmakers who have voiced concern about how Chinese traffickers are sending fentanyl precursors to Mexico for cartels to convert to the end product and send across the border.

Chinese ambassador Qin Gang has recently reached out to Wenstrup to meet with him, the congressman told "Capitol Report," a program on The Epoch Times' sister media outlet NTT.

The topic came up on Sept. 23 during the "Commitment to America" event in Pennsylvania, where House Republicans, led by Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), unveiled the legislative roadmap they plan to follow if they regain a majority in the House of Representatives. One of their promises is to implement strict oversight into China's role in the influx of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that's 100 times more potent than morphine.

Qin was defensive toward Wenstrup about the fentanyl issue, insisting that Beijing was "getting blamed for the fentanyl surge in the United States of America," Wenstrup said.

"He said, 'We're just selling legal products.' And I said, 'Yeah, but those legal products combined are making fentanyl, and you're doing nothing to make sure they don't fall into the wrong hands,'" he added.

A majority of illicit fentanyl and related substances trafficked into the United States is originally sourced from China, contributing to the country's soaring death toll from opioid overdoses.

While the Chinese regime in 2018 pledged to crack down on fentanyl production, experts said that since then little had been done on the ground to block the flow of fentanyl precursors to the United States. In August, China cut bilateral counternarcotics cooperation with the United States in retaliation over House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (R-Calif.) visit to Taiwan.

In a Sept. 14 letter, 18 state attorneys general called on the Biden administration to declare illicit fentanyl a weapon of mass destruction to allow stronger measures for curbing the amount of fentanyl pouring across the southern border, a move that Wenstrup supports.

"If you look at the surge and the number of deaths from fentanyl, and the danger that it poses in such a small amount, to me, it's a weapon of mass destruction," he said. "It's already killing so many Americans, and it has the potential to kill many more if we don't do something about it."

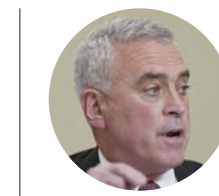
Wenstrup said he's open to working with Beijing and the Mexican government as well as the military on the issue.

But some other lawmakers such as Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas) have doubts about Beijing's sincerity.

"It's propaganda," McCaul, the ranking



Fentanyl pills seized by Customs and Border Protection officers at the Nogales port of entry in Arizona on Sept. 3, 2022.



Those legal products combined are making fentanyl, and you're doing nothing to make sure they don't fall into the wrong hands.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup



Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas) in an interview with The Epoch Times in Ponte Vedra, Fla., on March 24, 2022.

Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and chairman of the House GOP's "China Task Force," told "Capitol Report" at the same event on Sept. 23.

"They don't talk to me for obvious reasons. But it's all propaganda. It's all based on deceit and lies," he said.

"If they were serious, they would stop stealing our technology or intellectual property."

The Chinese Embassy in Washington didn't respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment about the lobbying effort.

The Trump administration in July 2020 ordered the Chinese consulate in Houston to be shut, citing the diplomatic post as a "hub of spying and intellectual property theft."

"The Houston consulate shut down for a reason," McCaul said.

He noted that in his home state, Chinese researchers have been suspected of stealing intellectual property from a major medical center, and a NASA scientist had secretly worked for a Chinese-backed talent recruitment program, putting highly sensitive data at risk.

Besides inflation, constituents have been sharing their worries about the "wide open" border of his state, said McCaul, who previously chaired the House Committee on Homeland Security.

McCaul credited the Trump-era "Remain in Mexico" policy, which forced illegal immigrants to wait in Mexico while their cases were pending, for helping to secure the border. In August, the Biden administration scrapped the measure after the Supreme Court cleared its ability to do so.

"Now, fentanyl is the biggest human trafficking event in my lifetime," McCaul said.

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## ORGAN HARVESTING

# International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation Bans Research Papers From China

ALEX WU

Medical ethics advocates have applauded a move by a nonprofit transplantation association to ban research papers from China about organ transplantation, over concerns about Beijing's forced organ harvesting from nonconsenting donors.

The ban, the first of its kind in recent years declared by a medical organization, comes from the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT), the world's largest organization dedicated to researching end-stage heart and lung disease.

"Given the body of evidence that the government of the People's Republic of China stands alone in continuing to systematically support the procurement of organs or tissue from executed prisoners, submissions related to transplantation and involving either organs or tissue from human donors in the People's Republic of China will not

be accepted by ISHLT," the organization said in a statement, which was made public in late June.

"This policy, including whether other countries systematically engage in the use of organs or tissue from non-consenting human donors and should be subject to this restriction, will be reviewed on an annual basis pending independently obtained proof that these practices have ceased."

Professor Jacob Lavee, a member of the ISHLT ethics committee and an Israeli medical expert, told The Epoch Times on Sept. 18: "The new policy is, in effect, a full academic boycott on any transplant-related clinical research from China."

"The products of such research from China may not be submitted for publication in the Society's prestigious Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation and may not be presented in the Society's annual meetings."

Lavee said the policy reflects the society's "desire to distance itself and its members from this atrocious transplant conduct."



Falun Gong practitioners take part in a parade to raise awareness about organ harvesting in China, in New York on May 13, 2022.

Uyghur woman Mihrigul Tursun gives evidence to the Independent Tribunal Into Forced Organ Harvesting From Prisoners of Conscience in China, held in London, on April 7, 2019.

## Bloody Harvest

In recent years, annual reports on human rights by international organizations and the U.S. State Department have identified that the Chinese regime has systematically conducted forced live organ harvesting on detained Falun Gong practitioners, ethnic minorities, and other prisoners of conscience.

Falun Gong, a traditional spiritual practice based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, has been persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since 1999, and many adherents have disappeared over the years. Correspondingly, the year 2000 saw explosive growth in China's organ transplant industry, which continues to this day.

Beginning in 2006, Canadian human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian cabinet minister and human rights defender David Kilgour collected more than 40 pieces of evidence about the Chinese regime's crime of forced live organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners who had been illegally detained. They published their findings in the 2009 book "Bloody Harvest: The Killing of Falun Gong for Their Organs," based on their 2006-2007 investigative report.

In response to accusations and mounting pressure from the international community, the Chinese regime claimed in 2015 that it

had reformed its organ transplant system and adopted the practice of voluntary organ donation. The announcement prompted international societies such as The Transplantation Society to lift bans they had in place on the publication of Chinese transplant research.

The ISHLT is the first to implement a new ban since the CCP's claim.

"Until now, Beijing's claims of transplant reform were endorsed by the medical leadership in The Transplantation Society, the World Health Organization, and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican City," said Ethan Gutmann, a research fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Gutmann authored the 2014 book "The Slaughter: Mass Killings, Organ Harvesting, and China's Secret Solution to Its Dissident Problem."

"This institutional stance was not just a brake on U.S. political action against Chinese organ harvesting. For the CCP, it was a license to kill. ... Yet, the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation has just fired a shot and it will surely be heard around the world."

Matas told The Epoch Times, "Yet another significance of the [ISHLT's] statement is that it is a rejection of the Chinese Communist Party's ... propaganda about its transplant system, about source-



LARRY DYE/THE EPOCH TIMES



MINHUT SAVU/THE EPOCH TIMES

Falun Dafa practitioners carry banners to raise awareness about organ harvesting in China, during a march through the center of Warsaw, Poland, on Sept. 9, 2022.



MINHUT SAVU/EPOCH TIMES

Jacob Lavee at a medical conference in Poiana Brasov, Romania, on Oct. 20, 2017.

ing of organs, that all organs come from donations, and about numbers of transplants—that transplant numbers are a tiny fraction of their actual numbers."

## Judgment

In its 2020 judgment, the Independent Tribunal Into Forced Organ Harvesting From Prisoners of Conscience in China wrote: "The Tribunal's members unanimously and beyond reasonable doubt, concluded that in China forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience has been practiced for a substantial period of time involving a very substantial number of victims. While the PRC has changed its rhetoric about the sources of organs for transplantation, the Tribunal found that its claims are unbelievable and that official statistics have been falsified."

In April, the American Journal

of Transplantation published the results of a joint research project by Lavee, who previously served as president of the Israel Transplantation Society, and Matthew Robertson, a doctoral student at the Australian National University and a researcher on China at the Victims of Communism Foundation. The study indicates that in the past few decades, a number of organ "donors" in China's military and local hospitals were still alive when their hearts were removed; in other words, the surgery itself was the cause of death.

The ISHLT's policy provides the leverage to end transplant abuse in China, Matas said.

"There are many national and international transplant associations and journals," he said. "They all need to adopt similar policies."

Li Chen contributed to this report.



NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

President Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden walk to a vehicle after disembarking Air Force One upon arrival at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Aug. 16, 2022.

## US-CHINA

# Biden Family Worked to Sell American Gas to China, GOP Lawmaker Says Citing Whistleblower

EVA FU &amp; FRANK FANG

The Biden family was selling U.S. natural gas to China long before Joe Biden became president, who was aware of how his son Hunter Biden was making the sale possible, according to Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.), ranking member of the House Oversight Committee, citing documents and information provided by a whistleblower.

Hunter Biden had a Chinese Communist Party member as his assistant while dealing with the Chinese side for the shipping of American natural gas to China in 2017, and the Biden family was promising business associates that they would reap rewards once Biden became president, said Comer in a letter to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen dated Sept. 20.

"The President has not only misled the American public about his past foreign business transactions, but he also failed to disclose that he played a critical role in arranging a business deal to sell American natural resources to the Chinese while planning to run for President," Comer wrote.

Joe Biden, Comer said, was a business partner in the arrangement and had office space to work on the deal, and a firm he managed received millions from his Chinese partners ahead of the anticipated venture.

While part of what Comer stated had previously been reported in the news, the letter, citing whistleblower testimonies, as well as emails, a corporate PowerPoint presentation, screenshot of encrypted messages, and bank documents that committee Republicans obtained, provides a more complete picture suggesting Biden's knowledge and involvement in the plan from at least 2017.

From 2017 to 2021, the Bidens promised business associates that Joe Biden would run for president in 2020 and those who worked with them from 2017 onward would "reap the rewards in a future Biden administration," according to Comer's recount of a whistleblower testimony to Oversight Committee Republicans.

"As America now struggles in an energy crisis, it is critical to understand why the Biden family was selling American energy reserves to the Chinese, if that is affecting President Biden's decision making today, and why President Biden has never disclosed his relationship with the Chinese to the American public," Comer wrote to Yellen.

"If President Biden has worked to enrich not only himself but his family by promising, in exchange for millions of dollars, access or policy influence in a future Biden Administration, Congress and the American people are entitled to that information."

## 'Good for Both the United States and China'

Emails attached in the letter show that Hunter Biden was actively facilitating the natural gas deal with top executives from the now-defunct CEFC China Energy, at the time one of the largest energy firms in China.

In a November 2017 email to CEFC executive Dong Gongwen, Hunter told his partner he had sent information regarding liquefied natural gas opportunities in Louisiana.

"We began to investigate the opportunities in United States well before the public announcement by the Chinese government of its interest in Natural Gas imports from around the world," Hunter wrote. He

offered the prospect of contracts for large quantities of liquefied natural gas "at very competitive rates" in the short term, as well as the possibility of acquisition or partnership in a promising natural gas project in Louisiana that would advance CEFC's long term goals.

"The proposal I have shared with you has the added benefit of being good for both the United States and China simultaneously," he added.

According to the letter, Hunter's Chinese assistant, Bao Jiaqi, who previously worked as the research assistant at China's macro-economic management agency National Development and Reform Commission, sent him a detailed presentation containing political and topography maps, along with Chinese annotations, carving up America based on natural gas reserves. The 30-page presentation made particular emphasis on Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

The emails that accompanied the slides revealed a plan to advance a natural gas sale to China through Hudson West III L.L.C., a company set up by Hunter and CEFC officials, according to the letter.

## Joe Biden's Alleged Role

By one whistleblower's account, Joe Biden was an "obfuscated partner" in the transactions with the Chinese, and his son would hold 10 percent of the joint venture to hide his involvement, according to Comer's letter. The same information was previously confirmed by former business associate Tony Bobulinski to The Epoch Times.

"Don't mention Joe being involved, it's only when [you] are face to face, I know [you] know that but they are paranoid," an associate of Hunter told another partner on May 20, 2017, in a WhatsApp conversation, a screenshot of which was attached in the letter.

"Ok they should be paranoid about things," the other replied.

In what Comer speculated to be a "mistake" on Hunter's part, Hunter wrote in a September 2017 email requesting to "have keys made available for new office mates," who he identified to be the senior Biden, Jill Biden, and the president's brother, Jim. Hunter gave his father and uncle's personal cellphone numbers in case the recipient needed to call for confirmation.

Cecilia Browning, the general manager of the office building, responded the same day to Hunter's request. "We are very excited and honored to welcome your new colleagues!" she wrote, according to a copy of the email from Hunter's alleged laptop.

The White House has maintained that Hunter and the president "were not office mates." The senior Biden has said that he's never discussed Hunter's business with his son. The Epoch Times has reached out to the White House and Hunter's lawyer for additional comment regarding Comer's letter.

During a recent interview on "60 Minutes," the president was asked if Hunter's dealings have caused conflicts for him or the United States. The senior Biden answered in the negative.

"There's not a single thing that I've observed at all that would affect me or the United States relative to my son Hunter," he said.

Democrats, on the same day Comer sent out the letter, voted down a resolution the Republican lawmaker proposed to have the president hand over documents relating to the Biden family's foreign business dealings.



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## ZERO-COVID

# 89-Year-Old Chinese Writer Condemns the CCP for Zero-COVID Policies in Open Letter to Prime Minister

SOPHIA LAM

The mass mandatory PCR testing and random locking down of cities have stirred up much outcry among Chinese people.

Protests erupted in the past months across the country, including in Beijing, Tianjin, Guiyang, Chongqing, and Wuhan. During this time, Chinese people have openly expressed their discontent online, opposing the regime's harsh zero-COVID policies.

"The party [the Chinese Communist Party] should govern the party affairs, and the government should govern governmental affairs. But now that the party governs everything, what does the government do? During the pandemic, [the party] locks down cities and closes streets and roads. Daily PCR tests, yellow codes and red codes, taking people away and isolating them—everything is so chaotic and messy. There is widespread discontent among ordinary people, who have nowhere to complain."

These words are part of an open letter to the Chinese regime's Prime Minister Li Keqiang, published online on Sept. 22 by Tie Liu, an 89-year-old Chinese writer and former journalist, condemning the CCP's draconian zero-COVID policies and demanding an explanation of any legal basis for such policies.

Tie Liu, meaning "iron torrent" in Chinese, is the pen name of Huang Zerong, a former journalist of Chengdu Daily. The outspoken octogenarian is a native of Chengdu city in China's southwestern Sichuan Province and has been an active critic of the CCP.

## Condemns the CCP for Zero-COVID Policies

Tie Liu was angry with the zero-COVID policies.

"During the lockdown of cities and the closure of roads and streets, some people committed suicide by jumping off the building; some people had mental problems; some people were acutely ill but died because they could not enter the hospital without nucleic acid testing," reads Tie Liu's open letter.

Tie Liu compared the Kuomintang, also known as the Chinese Nationalist Party, which was the ruling party in China before 1949, with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in his letter.

He recalled that there was an outbreak of



A health worker wearing a personal protection suit stands next to buses at a cordoned-off section at the international arrivals area, where arriving travelers are to be taken into quarantine, at the international airport in Wuhan, China, on Jan. 14, 2021.

cholera in Chengdu in 1943 when Kuomintang was in power. He said the cholera was very infectious and severe, with symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting, and that two residents living on the same street with him died within two weeks.

"But the Kuomintang never locked down the city or the street, nor did it mess the ordinary people around. Now there is no death [caused by COVID-19 in Chengdu], but [the CCP doesn't allow] the ordinary people to live a peaceful life," Tie Liu's letter reads.

He also wrote about the Guizhou quarantine bus crash that killed 27 people on Sept. 18.

He condemned the secretary of the Guiyang municipal party committee for ignoring people's lives.

"The maker of the tragedy, the municipal party secretary, only bowed! Can people be convinced? In my opinion, he should be arrested and sent to jail, and the national flag should be flown at half-staff in mourning [of the victims of the bus accident]," wrote Tie Liu.

Tie Liu asked Li Keqiang if the PCR mandates come from the State Council and, if yes, what was the legal basis for such a regulation.

"Our country has a constitution and various laws. Anyway, I have not found a clause that prohibits entering the hospital without nucleic acid testing. Therefore, I'm writing to the State Council for your explicit explanation," the critic wrote.

## Rejected by Hospital for Refusing to Take PCR Tests

Tie Liu had personally suffered as a result

of mandatory PCR testing requirements.

"Without PCR tests, you're not allowed to enter a hospital, or a supermarket, or a village, or a town. What rule is this? There's no legal basis!" Tie Liu said in an interview with the Chinese language edition of The Epoch Times on Sept. 25.

He went to see the doctor at the Special Outpatient Department of Chengdu Western Hospital for some medication on Sept. 22, he said, but the hospital didn't admit him as he didn't have any PCR test certificate.

"I am almost 90 and in poor health. I am a patient of terminal lung cancer," Tie Liu said.

As he lives in a small town about 40 miles away from Chengdu for rest and recuperation, spending most of his time inside the house and seldom going out for large gatherings, he doesn't want to take either PCR tests or COVID jabs.

So he asked the hospital authorities if they had government regulations that require mandatory PCR tests to enter a hospital.

The hospital authorities couldn't show him such regulations, but they wouldn't allow him in, either, he said.

"They even pushed me out," Tie Liu added, "They even threatened to turn my green health code red if I refused to take the PCR test that day."

In China, people with a red health code are strictly confined to their homes or quarantine centers.

That prompted Tie Liu's decision to write an open letter to the prime minister.

"At my age, I do not have anything to fear. I just want to make it clear that if it is stipulated by the State Council. If not, why don't hospitals allow people to enter?"

Tie Liu said many people expressed support after he published his open letter online. The letter was later removed and is now not available online in China.

Gao Yu, a Chinese freelance journalist and dissident, posted the letter on Sept. 24 in a Tweet. She was repeatedly persecuted for her covering the peaceful students' protest on Tiananmen Square in 1989, and later for her independent reports on the Chinese economy and politics, according to IFEX, an international network of over 100 non-governmental organizations that "advocates for the free expression and access to information rights of all."

"Many people reposted my open letter and praised me for speaking up for the ordinary people," Tie Liu told the publication.



An empty road in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China, as the provincial capital city is under COVID-19 lockdown on Sept. 2, 2022.

Chengdu maintained its stringent lockdown measures despite a magnitude 6.8 earthquake on Sept. 5, the epicenter of which was only 125 miles from the city.

## An Outspoken Critic of the CCP

Tie Liu encouraged Chinese people to be brave and speak up.

"There are too few Chinese people who tell the truth and speak honestly," he sighed. "Everyone is afraid. But the more afraid you are, the more [the authorities] bully people. The more afraid you are, the more they will bring you down. They [the communist regime] just act recklessly and mess around. The country has no rule of law at all."

Tie Liu has been an outspoken critic of the CCP. His experience was reported in 2015 by China Affair Research Institute, a non-profit organization based in Alhambra, California.

In the 1950s, Tie Liu was a journalist with Chengdu Daily. In 1957, he was labeled an "anti-revolutionary" for his criticism of the CCP in the newspaper and was sent to labor camps. He spent 23 years there until he was released in 1980.

In 2010, he set up the Tie Liu Press Fund with a contribution of 1 million yuan (\$140,000) to provide assistance to jour-

nalists and writers who were persecuted over freedom of the press.

In October 2010, a group of Chinese journalists, including Tie Liu, sent a joint letter to the communist regime's rubberstamp legislature calling for freedom of the press and the removal of media censorship.

In 2014, he was arrested and charged with "causing a disturbance" and "illegal business activity" for publishing the memoirs of people persecuted under former CCP leader

Staff wait to check people's entry permit, screen body temperature, and scan their health codes at the entrance of a residential compound in Jilin city, China on May 25, 2020.



STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Mao Zedong and posting online criticism of Liu Yunshan, a CCP propaganda chief.

## 'Role Model for Young People': Rights Activist

Gao Fei, a human rights activist in Huanggang city of China's Hubei Province, spoke highly of Tie Liu's brave action in an interview with the Chinese language edition of The Epoch Times on Sept. 25.

"Tie Liu came forward to speak the truth, which is really admirable," said Gao Fei. "He is a role model for us young people, worthy of praise."

Gao said that it is very common for many patients in China to die because they didn't have PCR tests and thus didn't receive timely medical treatment during the pandemic. "More and more people are complaining about zero-COVID policies," Gao said, "People are disgusted with the unreasonable and inhumane epidemic prevention and control measures."

"The overall social hostility is very severe, and various conflicts are on the verge of erupting, turning the whole society into a tinderbox," added Gao.

Lin Cenxin and Yi Ru contributed to the article.

## OPINION

# China's Xi Intensifies Anti-Corruption Purge Ahead of the Crucial 20th Party Congress

Chinese regulators are cracking down on the real estate and banking sectors

ANTONIO GRACEFFO



Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign targeting the real estate and banking sectors could be compensation for his failure to make good on campaign promises.

Nearly 5 million people—including Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, entrepreneurs, and ordinary citizens—have been caught in Xi's anti-corruption probes. Xi rose to power through his anti-corruption campaign, which began in 2012.

Along the way, he promised the people economic prosperity, but the past two years have dampened that dream. He pledged a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road"), which would connect the entire world. So far, it remains an incomplete string

of over-budget, underperforming, and unfinished projects partially encircling the globe. Xi vowed to restore the "great China"—a hint at annexing Taiwan. But 10 years into his two terms as leader, Taiwan is still no closer to being part of mainland China. Xi also promised to stamp out COVID-19, which is now backfiring on him. Not only has the virus proven to be immune from his edicts, but the ongoing lockdowns are also wrecking the economy.

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In the run-up to next month's National Congress, where Xi is expected to be handed a third term as leader, he is intensifying his anti-corruption campaign, making good on the one promise he has complete control over.

Beijing is launching investigations into real estate executives, which it claims is part of a general anti-corruption cam-

aign. The investigations may add to a loss of investor confidence in the sector, reflected in falling stock prices. The shares of 33 large developers have lost 3.7 percent of value over the past six weeks.

Two of the targeted executives in this investigation are Shi Zhen, chairman of C&D Urban Services, and Tang Yong, chairman of China Resources Land. The subsidiaries of both companies have been hit particularly hard, losing as much as 30 percent of their value.

Defaults and missed payments are becoming more common across the real estate industry. Powerlong Real Estate Holdings issued a profit warning on Aug. 24, stating that its profits may have dropped by as much as 37 percent for the first half of the year. Trading in shares of Logan Group, which reported a 20 percent reduction in profits last year, was suspended for three months due to the group's failure to release timely

audit information. After the resumption of trading, its share price dropped by 58 percent. In August, after the company missed interest payments on some of its \$6.6 billion of outstanding bonds, it hired an adviser to restructure its debts.

At the same time, the banking sector is also being investigated. Investigators alleged that state-owned banks, including the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, had lax governance and risked corruption in loans and other key areas. So far, at least 40 officials and regulators at state banks have been targeted, including former executives such as Zhang Long, former head of the investment and wealth management department of China Construction Bank Corp.

Home prices have been in steady decline for the past 12 consecutive months, and the yuan has crossed the threshold of 7 to the U.S. dollar. The investigations and loss of confidence, along with a generally slowing economy, threaten to cause an implosion of the entire real estate sector, which accounts for 29 percent of GDP and 26 percent of outstanding debt.

The basic model for property development in China is that developers begin collecting installment payments from homebuyers before the projects are completed. In some cases, buyers make payments before the projects have even begun. This money, combined with

loans, is then used to start the next project. Contracts for the new homes are then sold to purchasers who start making installment payments. These payments are added to loans, and the next construction project is launched.

As the economy has been trending downward, it has been harder for developers to find new buyers. And Xi's crackdown on lending has also made it difficult for real estate companies to borrow additional money to fund their continued operations. As a result, real estate companies are not only slipping into default, but homes, which buyers have already begun paying for, are not being completed. Striking back, homeowners in 100 cities have threatened to halt mortgage payments. As of Sept. 16, the owners of 342 development projects have joined the boycott. In a vicious cycle, the cessation of mortgage payments will naturally increase the likelihood of default by the developers.

The dual regulatory crackdowns in real estate and banking make sense because corruption may have permitted bankers and regulators to continue extending credit to developers. On the other hand, it may be that Xi is looking for a scapegoat. If the sector collapses, it will take much of the economy with it. As a result of the crackdowns, Xi will have a long list of people to blame. In the lead-up to the CCP's congress, it may also be that he feels the need to



Chinese leader Xi Jinping during the Second Plenary Session of the Fifth Session of the 13th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 8, 2022.

legitimize his continued rule.

Finding himself incapable of fulfilling his promises of giving the people great prosperity, forcing annexation of Taiwan, and eradicating COVID, perhaps Xi is doubling down on anti-corruption to prove that he is still an effective leader.

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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