



The P4 laboratory on the campus of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, on May 13, 2020.

ANALYSIS

NIH Leadership Was Deeply Anxious About Wuhan Lab Funding, New Emails Reveal

Top health officials also discussed how to 'put down this very destructive conspiracy'

HANS MAHNCKE

New National Institutes of Health (FOIA) reveal the stark contrast and I would like the chance to between the public and private speak with you about this." views of top NIH officials on the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new batch of FOIA emails, which was obtained by indepenthe highest echelons of the NIH, including both its former director, Francis Collins, and current NIH Director Lawrence Tabak, who was previously Collins's deputy.

The emails also show that when President Donald Trump cut funding to EcoHealth Alliance the group through which the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases under Director Anthony Fauci funneled federal grant money to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV)—a litany of organizations and individuals petitioned the NIH to keep the money flowing to EcoHealth. Those efforts ignored revelations on EcoHealth's work with the controversial lab and instead focused on animosity toward Trump.

The emails also reveal that after Trump canceled EcoHealth's Wuhan grant, Collins and Tabak discussed ways to reinstate the

NIH Director Admits EcoHealth Problems

Perhaps the most significant revelation to emerge from the new FOIA emails is that the situation surrounding EcoHealth and its connection to Wuhan was causing NIH leaders a far bigger headache than their public pronouncements indicated.

In August 2020, Collins sent an email to Harold Varmus, one of his predecessors as director of the NIH, admitting that "this Eco-Health grant and its connection to Wuhan has presented one of the most difficult and wrenching situations of my 11 years as NIH Director. Most of that is not appropriate for e-mail."

In the same email, Collins went on to say that there was "a lot more

Collins also wrote, "Meanwhile, and not because I completely buy its premises, I wonder if you have seen this article," attaching a link dent journalist James Tobias, to one of the first scientific artishows a pattern of deception at cles to systematically lay out the case for a lab origin of COVID-19. Collins's interest in scientific evidence for a lab leak stands in stark contrast to his public pronouncements both at the time as well as

> This email had been previously released under FOIA but its contents were almost entirely redacted.

On Feb. 1, 2020, Collins participated in a private teleconference organized by Fauci that had the ostensible purpose of shutting down any discussion of a lab leak. In a Feb. 2, 2020, email to tele-

conference participants, Collins warned that not shutting down the lab leak hypothesis would (NIH) emails released under the to this story than we have been do great harm to "international" Freedom of Information Act able to talk about. Tony [Fauci] harmony." In a blog post dated contentions of a lab origin as "outrageous claims." On Apr. 16, 2020, after Fox News ran a segment on the potential lab origin of COVID-19, Collins emailed Fauci and Tabak to offer his help to "put down this very destructive

> On May 7, 2020, Collins testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. Although the topics of EcoHealth and the origin of COVID-19 did not come up at the hearing, the new FOIA emails reveal that Collins had been briefed on possible answers in case they did. His briefing notes contained a reference to possible questions on EcoHealth's failure to comply with federal rules. This is notable because Trump had canceled EcoHealth's grant just

The new emails reveal that NIH leadership quickly came together to brainstorm ways in

which EcoHealth's

grant could be

restored.

Crucially, but unbeknownst to the public at the time, EcoHealth had failed to provide the NIH with two critical progress reports for its work at the WIV. Those reports covered the 2018 to 2019 timeframe in which COVID-19 might have been created at the lab. EcoHealth only provided these reports in 2020, more than two years after the 2018 report should have been filed, and only after FOIA requests for the reports were filed. In September 2021, the NIH finally released the reports pursuant to FOIA claims. The 2018 report revealed that the WIV had genetically engineered SARS viruses with novel spike proteins, which significantly increased viral load in humanized mice as compared to unaltered viruses. The COVID-19 virus also features

twelve days prior to Collins's Sen-

EcoHealth later blamed technical difficulties for its failure to submit the 2018 and 2019 reports. EcoHealth's narrative is brought into question by the fact that the belatedly filed 2018 report contains a number of citations from 2019 and 2020, which did not exist at the time that EcoHealth allegedly tried to submit the report.

a novel spike protein.

With respect to EcoHealth's activity reports, Collins's Senate briefing notes stated that "NIH requires grantees to submit a variety of reports which are due at specific times during the life cycle of a grant award. All reports must be accurate, complete, and submitted on time." What the notes did not mention was that EcoHealth had failed to submit the two most critical reports that overlapped with the likely timeline of COVID-19's creation.

Campaign to Keep Money Flowing to EcoHealth

The new FOIA emails also provide insights into the massive campaign undertaken by outside parties to reinstate EcoHealth's

Immediately after Trump can-



Then-NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins listens during a Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee hearing looking into the budget estimates for National Institute of Health and state of medical research on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 26, 2021.

24, 2020, due to the close connections between EcoHealth and the WIV, a large number of parties, including individuals and organizations, started petitioning the NIH to reinstate the grant.

The petitions, which are included in the new FOIA release, originated with a wide variety of groups, including the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the HIV Medicine Association, the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, Climate Health Now, ICAP at Columbia University, the AIDS Foundation, and the Latino Commission on AIDS. Hundreds of individuals, many from universities, also petitioned the NIH to reinstate EcoHealth's grant. The thrust of most of the petitions is that Trump capriciously revoked EcoHealth's grant because he believed in the "conspiracy theory" that COVID-19 had come out of a

Seventy-seven Nobel laureates also stepped up to complain bitterly about the grant cancellation, claiming in a letter to Collins that "now is precisely the time when we need to support this kind of research if we aim to control the pandemic and prevent subsequent ones." Their letter went colleagues have been conducting research on coronaviruses and on the transmission of these viruses from animal hosts to human beings." Apparently, the 77 Nobel laureates were oblivious to the copious academic literature which was widely available at the time—describing EcoHealth's extensive involvement in gain-of-

function experiments at the WIV. Seven members of Congress, Reps. Joseph D. Morelle (D-N.Y.), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.), Jan Scha-(D-Mass.), Diana DeGette (D-(D-N.Y.) also petitioned Collins to reinstate EcoHealth's grant, December 2019." which they claimed was canin a "conspiracy theory." They further claimed, "The necessity for this work is clear, now more than ever. EcoHealth Alliance has been receiving federal funding since 2014 to study the risk of ply with the request. bat coronavirus emergence—the specific global health emergency we now face." Apparently, these members of Congress were unaware of the possibility that it was EcoHealth's work that caused the

global health emergency. In another letter that called on Collins to reinstate the grant, be placated and EcoHealth could Reps. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas), Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), Bill Foster (D-Ill.), and Diana Defrom accusations that it was still Gette (D-Colo.) suggested that the cancellation was an "egregious example of the Administration politicizing scientific decision making in order to further a politically convenient narrative."

the lab leak theory, also rallied

celed EcoHealth's grant on Apr. for EcoHealth, sending Collins an article of his that criticized the withdrawal of the grant. Thorp also expressed his support for Collins "in the difficult situation you are in." In his article, Thorp falsely claimed, "The genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 rules out

SARAH SILBIGER/POOL/GETTY IMAGES

a lab-engineered virus." Irrespective of how the mass petitioning happened, the new emails reveal that NIH leadership quickly came together to brainstorm ways in which EcoHealth's grant could be restored.

In an email dated June 14, 2020, Collins asked Tabak "have you talked to Mike about what would be the perfect set of requirements to lift the suspension on Eco-Health?" Mike is Michael Lauer, the deputy director for extramural research at NIH. According to the NIH's website, Lauer was in charge of "ensuring scientific integrity, public accountability, and effective stewardship of the NIH extramural research portfolio,' which would have included the funds sent to WIV via EcoHealth.

One of the emails included in the new FOIA release is a document from Lauer titled "EcoHealth Alliance narrative." The contents of the document, which was sent to Tabak, are completely redacted. Another document from Lauer is titled "EcoHealth Alliance narraon to explain that "[EcoHealth tive" "Option 1c," suggesting that President | Dr. Daszak and his Lauer was drafting different versions of EcoHealth narratives. The highly regarded, NIH supported "Option 1c" document is also fully redacted. We can only guess why other infectious agents, focusing top NIH officials were engaged in discussing and formulating different narratives.

> Ultimately, NIH leadership decided to reinstate EcoHealth's grant that Trump had canceled. Lauer informed EcoHealth of the reinstatement in a letter dated July 8, 2020, without providing an explanation.

Notably, while the grant was nominally reinstated, all research activities related to the grant remained suspended pending a kowsky (D-Ill.), Seth Moulton review of WIV records with the aim of "addressing the question Colo.) and Nydia M. Velázquez of whether WIV staff had SARS-CoV-2 in their possession prior to

This was a condition that NIH celed because Trump believed knew EcoHealth would not and could not fulfill, even if it wanted to, as it required cooperation from Chinese authorities. Indeed, EcoHealth replied in early August 2020 to say that it would not com-

> Collins, Lauer, and Tabak appear to have drawn up this seemingly paradoxical arrangement in order to wash their hands as far as the canceled grant and Eco-Health's activities at WIV were concerned. Groups that petitioned in favor of EcoHealth could claim vindication, while the NIH was at the same time insulated funding experiments at the Wu-

It was a win-win as the NIH already had a new funding plan in place that would bypass Trump's cancellation of the original grant. Holden Thorp, editor in chief On Aug. 27, 2020, Fauci anof the Science family of journals, nounced that he was giving Ecowhich published numerous piec- Health a fresh grant totaling \$7.5 es promoting the natural origin million, more than double the theory, while rejecting articles on previous grant that Trump had

OPINION

China Is Becoming a Black Box Under New CCP Rules

PETER DAHLIN



A slew of new policies, coupled with vastly changed behavior, is cutting the world off from vital information about what is happen-

ing in China, our ability to understand the reality inside the black box that China is becoming, and our ability to engage with it.

Recent news of raids on the offices of not one or two, but three foreign companies, all involved in performing corporate due diligence, has shaken the business world. Such companies essentially inspect that Chinese firms are doing what they say they are doing, are owned by the people they claim they are owned by, and that their financials aren't made up of fairy tales. It's a vital and, frankly, very basic type of business integral to companies worldwide.

Over the past few years, and rapidly accelerating alongside China's supposed opening up after ending the "zero-COV-ID" policy, key materials, databases, and even some government websites have become inaccessible to users outside mainland China.

For those working with, for example, criminal justice issues, this shutdown of vital resources started a few years ago. But this reality is now hitting the wider business and even academic communities. Yet, within the world of corporate due diligence, the signs were on the wall

In fact, some six or seven years ago, I met up with an old friend who works in this particular field at one of the world's premier corporate due diligence companies. He matter-of-factly made clear there was a growing hesitancy to visit the mainland, even for Hong Kong-based groups, but also, more interestingly, that such visits were becoming useless. Earlier, trips to visit and meet with local and provincial government officials and state-owned enterprise leaders were regular and often frank and useful, despite a need to be skeptical of what was

Now, he said, such meetings had become futile, as every official and busiempty statement Xi Jinping had issued on the subject and refused, no matter what, to discuss realities. Fear, he thought, was the reason why almost no one could carry out a basic conversation anymore—fear of becoming a target for any perceived, however small, violation of Xi's ever tighter control over what could and could not be said.

Cutting off information to China for foreign audiences is, in a way, a reversal of the prior policy related to the "great firewall." This famous system for blocking access to information is, of course, intended to ensure that people inside China can't access information outside the country unless such information conforms to Beijing's policies. Now, on the other hand, numerous steps are being taken to achieve the reverse, to ensure that those outside China can't access information inside of it.

For those working in the human rights field, this is already posing a major problem. In fact, many of the biggest revelations on human rights abuses in China

have come from being able to access and analyze information from the central government and use it as evidence for wide-ranging human rights violations and changes in government behavior.

For example, take China's feared system for enforced disappearances of critics, the RSDL (residential surveillance at a designated location) system. It's only by using the Supreme Court-run database that is (supposed to) host all criminal verdicts that Safeguard Defenders has been able to provide macro-level data as evidence for the system's growth and the massive scale it is now employed on. Similar types of macro-level data on the prosecution of freedom of speech-related crimes, or more recently, on its expanding use of exit bans, have relied on the same database.

Likewise, each year, government organs' work reports presented to China's rubber-stamp legislature, the National People's Congress, are getting sparser and sparser in the information they contain. Likewise, ministries and Party organs are releasing fewer data in their reports and statements.

Not long ago, Safeguard Defenders could reveal the expansion of China's Fox Hunt program to hunt down targets abroad and bring them back to China, often illegally. It's unlikely that it will be possible to track the scale of these operations via official statistics for much longer—a clear threat not just to human rights or business communities but also to foreign governments.

Cutting off information to China for foreign audiences is, in a way, a reversal of the prior policy related to the 'great firewall.'

Now, China is releasing only partial data. Information that makes it hard to perform the comparative analysis is nothing new and has always been very flawed at best, not to mention that the data often can't withstand closer scrutiny. But with recent developments, it will soon go from very hard to impossible to ascertain even the most basic data.

The problem now is moving far beyond merely the human rights community, but it will severely undermine foreign businesses' ability to engage with the Chinese regime, and force, whether one wants to or not, an ever-faster decoupling from the Chinese economy. It seems the Chinese Communist Party is intent not merely on decoupling China from the world but making it a black box, cutting off economic, political, and even academic exchanges.

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

Peter Dahlin is the founder of the NGO Safeguard Defenders and the co-founder of the Beijing-based Chinese NGO China Action (2007–2016). He is the author of "Trial By Media," and contributor to "The People's Republic of the Disappeared." He lived in Beijing from 2007, until detained and placed in a secret jail in 2016, subsequently deported and banned. Prior to living in China, he worked for the Swedish government with gender equality issues, and now lives in Madrid.





A computer displays message from the Chinese Great Firewall on the proper use of the Internet at an Internet cafe in Beijing, in this file photo. New web publishing rules will bar foreign companies from publishing most forms of online content.



Workers are seen next to a cage with mice (R) inside the P4 laboratory in Wuhan, capital of China's Hubei

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION | IN-DEPTH

US Starts Dismantling the CCP's Overseas 'Mafia' Apparatus

EVA FU

NEW YORK—Yu Jing, who escaped China after being persecuted for her faith, did not expect that she would feel her freedom threatened in her newfound home.

Once an official with the state-run China Petroleum Pipeline Bureau in communist China, Yu lost her job and was subjected to three arrests and two house raids for her faith in Falun Gong, also known as Falun

The spiritual practice involves a set of moral teachings with truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance as its core principles, as well as five meditative exercises. By 1999, an estimated 70 million to 100 million people were practicing in mainland China. Viewing the practice's popularity as a threat to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) power, then-leader Jiang Zemin ordered a brutal nationwide campaign of suppression that continues today.

In 2001, Yu almost died. After an 11-day hunger strike in protest of the persecution, during which she was deprived of sleep and faced nonstop threats from baton-wielding guards, her sweat-covered body began to shake uncontrollably. Had she been brought to the hospital 10 minutes later, the doctor told the guards, she wouldn't have survived.

Yu escaped to freedom in mid-2015. Months later, she traveled to the nation's capital to join a protest near the Washington Marriott Wardman Park, where Xi Jinping was staying on his first visit to the United States as the paramount leader of

She held a large white banner reading "Bring Jiang Zemin to Justice" in thick Chinese characters. She wanted the persecution to end and for Xi's predecessor Jiang, the campaign's chief architect, to be brought to account.

As Xi's motorcade was driving past in the late afternoon, Yu suddenly found herself swarmed by a large number of men donning red T-shirts. They held up red flags in an effort to cover Yu's face and banner. They continued to surround her even after police warned them to step away.

"Never would I imagine that in a free society like the United States, these pro-Chinese Communist Party agents could be so out of control," she told The Epoch Times, recalling her shock at the time.

Many in the overseas Chinese dissident community have long known such pro Beijing protesters to be organized by local groups closely tied to the CCP.

A federal indictment last month confirmed this connection.

Two New York men were arrested for allegedly operating a secret police station in Manhattan on behalf of Beijing. Those arrests were part of several cases bringing charges against more than 40 Chinese agents over their alleged involvement in various schemes aiding the communist regime's transnational intimidation and propaganda efforts.

According to court documents, the two men who were arrested had operated a local Chinese association that organized busloads of pro-Beijing supporters to travel to Washington and serve as counterprotesters during Xi's 2015 trip.

'Mafia Tactics'

Roughly 60 million ethnic Chinese live outside of China, with about 1 in 12 of them in the United States, according to 2020 statistics compiled by Chinese state-run Huaqiao University. The school operates under the oversight of the United Front Work Department, a key state agency spearheading

Zhou Fengsuo (L), a human rights activist and former student leader during

Yonghong at a news conference and rally in front of the America ChangLe

Association in New York on Feb. 25, 2023.

the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, introduces Chinese dissident Wang



The America ChangLe Association in New York on Oct. 6, 2022. An overseas Chinese police outpost in New York, called the Fuzhou Police Overseas Service Station,

was located inside the

association building.

It sends a critically

clear message to

the CCP that you

can't bring your

thuggish tyranny

here. ... You can't

do this anymore.

Levi Browde, executive

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

director, Falun Dafa

Information Center

justice will be

served.

You will be arrested;



Chen Jinping (R) receives a plaque from an official from China's Ministry of Public Security in a ceremony after Chinese leader Xi

Spying, harassment, online threats, physical assaults, and pressuring China-based family members of targeted individuals are but a few of the tactics the CCP deploys to keep this growing population in check.

Beijing's influence campaigns to stifle dis-

sidents and co-opt Western groups to toe

It's an expansive effort that has become known as transnational repression. In both scale and sophistication, Beijing's campaign stands unparalleled in the world, multiple think tank analyses have found.

Nor is Beijing shy about its record. From April 2021 to July 2022, authorities coerced 230,000 Chinese nationals, whom they labeled as fraud suspects, into returning to China, Chinese state media have touted.

Meanwhile, pushback has been building. Laura Harth, campaign director at human rights nonprofit Safeguard Defenders, described the Department of Justice's (DOJ's) April 17 action as part of a "sea change" from U.S. authorities to deter covert overseas Chinese operations.

"For so many of us in the human rights community, who are kind of used to friends, dissidents, activists, human rights defenders getting locked up, disappeared, tortured, over baseless charges, it's nice to be on the other end, for once," she told The Epoch Times, expressing hope that the fresh attention on this issue would lend a voice to the victims. Safe Defenders was the first to shed light on the CCP's global policing network.

Sarah Cook, senior analyst at Washington-based nonprofit Freedom House, similarly described the DOJ charges as "unprecedented" in addressing Beijing's transnational repression.

She said the prosecutions are the first to address the secret police stations, the first of such scale, and the first to target perpetrators of one of the regime's largest campaigns against faith: the persecution of Falun Gong.

Even though most of the individuals charged live in China, there's still a realworld impact, Cook told The Epoch Times.

without facing arrest, and potentially, they have to be careful about traveling to other countries that have extradition treaties with the U.S.," she said.

While applauding the charges, both Harth and Cook, along with the other China watchers, lawmakers, and victims of the campaigns, contend that the cases only touched on "the tip of the iceberg."

"The arrest of Chinese Communist Party agents involved with setting up the illegal CCP police station in New York is a small but important victory for American sovereignty and dissidents fleeing oppression who have made America their home," Rep. Michael Gallagher (R-Wis.) told The Epoch

"The CCP's mafia tactics—surveillance, harassment, blackmail, assault, and the persecution of elderly parents, spouses, and children back in China—cannot be tolerated in America.

"The United States must remain a haven from persecution, not a hunting ground

Paying Protesters

The two New Yorkers that the FBI arrested on April 17 are Lu Jianwang and Chen Jinping, respectively the general adviser and the secretary general for the America ChangLe Association, a major social gathering place for people from southeastern

The facility they operated was located in the association's now-shuttered office in Manhattan's Chinatown, and it represented one of four Chinese extralegal police outposts in the United States, according to Safeguard Defenders. At least two other outposts exist in New York and Los Angeles; the location of a fourth outpost remains

Formerly the association's chairman, Lu enjoyed longstanding trust from Chinese authorities, court filings state.

During Xi's 2015 visit to the United States, court filings said, Lu and other local Chinese association leaders helped bus hundreds of people to Washington—each "For one, they cannot come to the U.S. pocketing \$60 from the Chinese Consulate in New York—to counter demonstrations from Falun Gong adherents.

The adherents sought to raise awareness about the ongoing persecution of fellow practitioners in communist China.

Apparently satisfied with the counterprotest's outcome, Chinese officials threw a ceremony in celebration, during which Lu received a plaque commending his work.

Such scenes were not unique to Washington. During Xi's three-day stopover in New York from Washington, Xu Dong, a repeatedly tried to spit Chinese American and a Falun Gong adherent, recalled several people trying to get in front of him to block his protest ban-run onto the road. The individuals, who wielded red banners.

other Falun Gong adherents moved away. But Xu, who had just become a U.S. citizen, stood his ground.

"This is our country, not a place for the CCP to act at will," he recalled thinking at the time.

of the banner with Yu Jing, remembered counting six to seven buses, with some coming from Connecticut, Virginia, North Carolina, and Philadelphia.

They arrived at different times over the course of the day, depending on which shift they were scheduled for. At lunch, people holding banners that identified their respective Chinese associations came to dis-

One man, who looked like a leader, even mocked Zhang, who, like other adherents, had brought his own food.

this for?"

Another, a student from Connecticut, told Zhang, "We got a free ride," referring to the bus trip.

The men became edgy when cameras were around them

injuries sustained while attempting to escape from a Chinese jail two decades ago, raised his phone to capture their behavior, the Beijing supporters dodged it, throwing curses. A reporter for a Western media outlet quickly found himself the focus of hostility, with some from the group pulling him by the arm and demanding that he delete his photos. Yu learned about a year later that the

counterprotesters had been paid, when she started driving for a Chinese senior care center with a close relationship with the Chinese Embassy. Several senior citizens told her they were promised \$20 to \$50 for showing up to welcome Xi. Many

Lu, a participant in the counterprotest, has admitted to having an affiliation with a former director of the 610 Office, an extralegal police force created to persecute

Falun Gong. He and the director had taken a photo together in front of his home in China, the court filing shows.

Zhang said the pro-Beijing camp's behavior left him speechless.

to betray everything," Zhang told The Epoch Times. "It's simply disgusting."

banner, the men began poking him in the waist, and in the melee, a metal flagpole jabbed a female security officer. According to Yu, the officer grabbed the

flag and angrily told the Beijing supporters they could get arrested if they didn't stay six feet away from the adherents. The remarks touched Yu to this day.

"Thank you," she remembered telling the officer. "In China, it was the Chinese police persecuting me." The police officer hugged her upon learning her story.

to death by the CCP since Yu left China.

'This Is My Area'

Those interactions in 2015 marked one of many run-ins Falun Gong adherents and other dissidents have had with suspected CCP front groups and agents over the years. In front of the Chinese Consulate in Manhattan, Falun Gong adherents who held banners to protest the persecution were frequently spat on, with one practitioner having their phone kicked out of their hands, multiple witnesses said.

In February, one man, who has for years harassed protesting adherents while displaying red banners with slogans defaming the faith, pushed a sign bearing the words "truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance" off the street curb and demanded that two women who were practicing meditative

exercises nearby leave the The man declared, "You can't practice exercises here. This is my area," according to 70-year-old Liu Guofang, one of the two adherents at the scene. The man on Liu and the other

woman, causing both to teraction alerted the police. Liu then watched the man flee across the street to the front gate of the Chinese Consulate, where he loitered. The man came back

the next day and harassed other adherents, Liu said.

Less than two weeks after the incident, a man who spoke Fujianese assaulted a Falun Gong adherent in the Flushing neighborhood of Queens, leaving him with scrapes on his neck, hand, and knee.

Liu suspects that the timing of these occurrences wasn't coincidental. "They might have gotten some directives," she said of

Levi Browde, executive director of the New York-based Falun Dafa Information Center, has documented a long list of similar CCP agent attacks on American soil during his past two decades of advocacy work.

"This is not something that's new to us," Browde told The Epoch Times' sister media

"For a bit of money, they seemed willing

As Zhang pulled the flags away from the

Two of Yu's friends have been tortured

ments. "We've been dealing with this for more than 20 years—be it death threats, physical assaults, breaking into our homes, online harassment, interfering with our livelihood, threatening family members back in China."

Besides threatening the physical safety of adherents, he said, the "thuggish" communist agents have also drummed up hatred online, spread propaganda in newspapers, or found other ways to influence the public

"They are tearing apart the way we interact with each other here in this country,"

'They Hide in the Dark'

Falun Gong practitioner

in an event calling for an end to the Chinese

Communist Party's

persecution of Falun

Gong, in Washington on

July 19, 2020.

LI SHA/THE EPOCH TIMES

In the eyes of San Francisco lawyer Arthur Liu (no relation to Liu Guofang), the United States is decades late in address-

> ing such threats. "The CCP's transnational repression activities have never stopped," he told The Epoch Times. "It's de-

cades in the making." Liu was a student leader during the prodemocracy Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. After the regime ordered tanks and guns to quell the move-

figure skating.

But the regime didn't let him off the hook. Not long after Liu arrived in the United States, the CCP sent an agent to be-

friend him and collect intelligence on him. Liu, who trusted the man, even once asked a friend to let the man stay with them temporarily. Only about two or three years later did the man reveal that he had "come on

"We'd have had no idea about it if he hadn't told me. So could there be spies out there you don't know about? The answer is probably yes," Liu said.

That was in the 1990s. He said that the Party has become more "reckless" as it finetunes its repression mechanism.

In November 2021, a man posing as an official for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee called and demanded the passport numbers of Liu and his daughter, which Liu declined to give. That man was

allegedly Matthew Ziburis, a U.S. citizen that prosecutors said Beijing had hired to conduct surveillance on the Liu family. Ziburis was arrested last March on charges that include conspiring to commit interstate harassment and criminal use of a means of identification. He was released on a \$500,000 bond pending trial. After the free skate event in Beijing last

February, Liu's daughter was approached by a stranger who followed her and asked her to come to his apartment. "The CCP never let go of any opportunity

to surveil and spy," Liu said, adding that

he has learned not to concern himself too much with it. "You can't live a normal life if you let it

consume you," he said. "They hide in the dark while we are out in the open."

'No Time to Waste'

Falun Gong protesters hold a banner calling for former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin to be brought to

justice, outside the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington on March 30, 2016.

Harth, of Safeguard Defenders, is wary about the long path ahead in protecting the vulnerable from the regime's reach.

"We all know that this is, in fact, a massive, global operation. We all know that it will take coordinated action also across democratic nations, because sometimes a victim might be in the U.S., but the perpetrator might be somewhere in Europe," she said. And "very realistically, we know ... the CCP is effectively holding family members

hostage." Late or not, an effective counterblow by ment that June, Liu escaped the United States is still crucial and "ento the United States, where he tirely possible," said Zhou Fengsuo, who raised his daughter, Alysa Liu, was once one of Beijing's top five "most a two-time U.S. champion in wanted" over his role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

> For Harth, that partly involves closing "some gaps in the current criminal codes" to allow the DOJ to prosecute more easily. And for Zhou, it would mean more scrutiny of the potential enablers: the various Chinese immigrant community groups that register as nonprofits but still receive benefits from the Chinese state. Such groups, he said, have stifled pro-democracy activists and "like a crime syndicate, exercise control over the entire ethnic Chinese society."

> Zhou, in 2020, saw the video conferencing app Zoom, which was developed in China, temporarily suspend his account at the behest of Beijing—an incident he cited as one more example of the pervasiveness of the Party's influence. The DOJ charged a China-based Zoom executive, Julien Jin, for censoring a series of meetings that Zhou and other U.S.-based activists held to mark the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square

> "There's no time to waste," Zhou told The Epoch Times. Zhou founded the advocacy group Human Rights in China, which he says is ready to help any Chinese students

who've been victims of the regime's threats. Browde, meanwhile, says he hopes the recent DOJ action is one of many more

"It sends a critically clear message to the CCP that you can't bring your thuggish tyranny here to the United States and do all these things that they've gotten away with, to a large extent, over the last 20 years," he said. "You can't do this anymore. You will be arrested; justice will

be served. And even if you are in China, there are things to be done—sanctions and things like that. So we need more of these types of investigations and more of these indictments."

Alysa Liu skates during the Women's Singles Skating Free Skate event at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing on Feb. 17, 2022.







spoke a Fujian dialect.

Not wanting to make a scene, several

Lunch Boxes and 'a Free Ride'

Zhang Huidong, who held the other end

tribute lunch boxes, Zhang recalled.

The man asked Zhang, "What do you do

When Zhang, who limps slightly due to

took the offer.

China Wants Killer Robots to Fight the Next War

Over the next 10

to 15 years, you'll

see large portions

militaries become

of advanced

Gen. Mark Milley,

chairman, Joint Chiefs

countries'

robotic.

of Staff

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

War grips the world and the most powerful nations on earth go to battle once more. This time, however, it is machines that do the killing, operating free from all human oversight and accountability.

It's a grim picture of future conflicts, but one that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is nevertheless working to make a

The CCP is investing in artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled platforms that it hopes will one day conduct lethal missions in wartime, wholly without human input or

Gregory Allen, director of the Wadhwani Center for AI and Advanced Technologies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, says the regime is moving well beyond any attempt to keep a human in the AI decision-making loop.

"China is pursuing development of AI-enabled lethal autonomous weapons," Allen wrote in a prepared testimony for an April 13 hearing of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

"The best available indications ... suggest that China's strategy is ambitious, moving beyond any sort of on-the-battlefield human supervision into increasingly autonomous AI-enabled warfare."

Though the CCP is investing heavily in a broad array of new technologies, Allen says, AI is foremost among them. The regime's capacity to build AI-driven machines of war is quickly reaching parity with that of the United States, and may even exceed

"U.S. leadership in the realm of military AI is not at all guaranteed," Allen says.

"While the United States has important advantages, China may be able to quickly take the lead in government and military adoption of AI capabilities. This is an outcome that the United States should seek to prevent."

Autonomous AI Platforms 'Inevitable' The CCP's pursuit of AI-driven weapons

and other military platforms, though not well understood by many Americans, has been ongoing for years. Allen notes that he first realized the re-

markable ambition of such goals back in

There, Zeng described Norinco's ambitions—and the CCP's expectations—for future implementation of AI weapons by saying that, "In future battlegrounds, there will be no people fighting."

"Zeng predicted that by 2025, lethal au-



Visitors walk past an AI (artificial intelligence) security robot named APV3 with a facial recognition system at the 14th China International Exhibition on Public Safety and Security at the China International Exhibition Center in Beijing on Oct. 24, 2018.

tonomous weapons would be commonplace," Allen said, adding that Zeng had described the mass adoption of autonomous AI platforms as "inevitable."

Allen also noted that CCP censors removed Zeng's comments and even his participation from the official readout of the conference shortly thereafter.

"It was not in China's interest to have that information in the open," Allen said.

Not long after that, however, the CCPaffiliated military company Ziyan began exporting its Blowfish A2 and A3 drones to the Middle East. The Blowfish, a helicopterstyle drone capable of autonomously engaging with targets, using machine guns and missiles, was just the first realization of the regime's ambition to transform war from a human domain into a robotic one.

Military Decision-Making Without

The regime's ambitions for AI go beyond killer robots. The CCP is also investing to develop AI capabilities related to military decision-making and command and con-

At the heart of the effort is the CCP's goal of "intelligentization," a transformation of warfare through the mass integration of AI, automation, and big data.

Zeng posited that "intelligence suprem-2018. At that time, he attended a conferacy will be the core of future warfare" and ence where he transcribed a speech made that "AI may completely change the current by Zeng Yi, a senior executive at China's command structure, which is dominated by humans" to one that is dominated by an "AI cluster" that operates "just like the brain of the human body."

> Building on that vision are Chinese companies like 4Paradigm, which was contracted by the CCP's military wing to develop AI decision-making models and

human-machine teaming software for use at the company and battalion levels.

Week 19, 2023 THE EPOCH TIMES

Such programs essentially aim toward one end: the restructuring of the Chinese military into an increasingly centralized cadre of officers who direct swarms of AIenabled autonomous systems to do the actual fighting.

Sam Kessler, an analyst for the North Star Support Group risk advisory firm, believes that the regime's focus on shifting the burden of warfighting from humans to AIenabled systems is indicative of a broader recognition among CCP leadership about the revolutionary nature of intelligent autonomous systems.

"The [Chinese military] places a great deal of emphasis on disruptive technologies like autonomous systems," Kessler said in an email to The Epoch Times.

"Unmanned combat systems with digitized decision-making programs can potentially speed up the process of performing tasks on the battlefield," Kessler added. "[These include] precision strikes, accurate reconnaissance, resupplying forces, and performing field modifications more precisely and effectively."

Such capabilities, Kessler said, could provide even a meager military with a profound force multiplier, and could shift the balance of power in future conflicts.

"Whoever possesses this kind of technology can help make even the weakest or average conventional military power have an edge in a field of battle, or prolonging it," Kessler said.

Future of War Is Robotic

The CCP is not alone in its ambition to lead a new revolution in military affairs. Many U.S. military leaders believe the dawn of AIenabled lethal autonomous systems is near.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley shares a similar vision to that of China's Zeng. He believes that the world's most powerful militaries will be primarily robotic in 10-15 years.

"Over the next 10 to 15 years, you'll see large portions of advanced countries' militaries become robotic," Milley said. "If you add robotics with artificial intelligence and precision munitions and the ability to see at range, you've got the mix of a real fundamental change.

"That's coming. Those changes, that technology ... we are looking at inside of 10 years."

Lt. Gen. Ross Coffman, head of the Army Futures Command, believes that the United States will enter an age characterized by artificially intelligent killing machines

Coffman described the partnership between soldiers and AI as that between a

KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

dog and its master during a March 28 summit of Department of Defense leaders and technology experts.

In a future war, however, it will be soldiers helping AI get into the fight rather than the other way around.

"I think we're going to see a flip in 2040 where humans are doing those functions that allow the machine to get into a position of relative advantage, not the machine getting humans into a position of relative advantage," Coffman said.

That aim is likely to face a bumpy path forward as the United States contends with China's embrace of lethal AI systems, according to Kessler.

"The DoD recently announced they intend to continue developing AI and autonomous lethal systems ... that will enable them to keep an edge in the changing global security environment," Kessler said. "However, keeping a human element involved in the operation of AI autonomous and semi-autonomous lethal systems also remains a priority.

"Since the [Chinese military] is not committed to this DoD strategy and belief system, it will force the U.S. to invest heavily into it. It will also require the U.S. to ensure that the balance between being ethical and conducting oversight does not get in the way of being lethal and operational at the same time."

Chinese Robots, American Research As the CCP continues its quest for intelligentized warfare, Allen believes that a critical weakness the United States must

overcome is its indirect support of China's

AI industry. Because the United States considers AI to be a discrete technology rather than a category of general-purpose technology like electricity or computers, the CCP is able to inadvertently develop its military

capabilities through otherwise mundane research and development partnerships with the U.S.

"The linkages between China's AI sector

U.S. leadership in the realm of military AI is not at all guaranteed.

Gregory Allen, Al expert

Intelligentization

is what the PLA

regards as the

future of warfare.

Elsa Kania, adjunct senior

fellow, Center for a New

American Security



An Al cancer detection microscope by Google is seen during the World Artificia Intelligence Conference 2018 in Shanghai on Sept. 18,

and the United States' AI sector are extraordinarily deep," Allen said. "There really isn't a part of the Chinese AI ecosystem that isn't in some way drawing upon the U.S. AI ecosystem."

Allen noted that half of all Chinese academic papers published on the subject of AI feature American co-authors. Some of those research endeavors even

include collaborations between major U.S. corporations and the companies responsible for pioneering China's military AI development.

In one example, Intel conducted research with 4Paradigm, even at the same time the company was contracted to develop AI decision-making models for the Chinese military. Google, meanwhile, has collaborated extensively with military-linked entities in China through its China-based AI centers.

That research and any subsequent technological development based on it in China is then able to be effectively coopted by the CCP through its strategy of Military-Civil Fusion (MCF), which mandates that all research and technologies serve national security needs in addition to civil needs.

The sheer volume of AI research and development being compiled by the regime through MCF is allowing the CCP to effectively catch up with the United States technologically, according to Elsa Kania,

an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security think tank.

"We have to recognize [MCF] as an incredibly consequential component of China's goal to catch up with or supersede the United States," Kania said. "At a certain point, the quantity and the amount of resources put into these efforts do start to produce quality."

Kania added that a key goal of MCF was to realize the regime's desire to become a "pioneer at the forefront of technologies defining a new revolution in military affairs," and to "access and exploit dual use technologies," including artificial intelligence and robotics.

"The writing has been on the wall for a while," Kania said. "Intelligentization is what the PLA regards as the future of war-

As such, Kania warned that, without adequate oversight measures, the regime's development of AI-enabled weapons would continue at the expense of American national security.

"There's a risk that any investment in China [without oversight] ... has a risk of inadvertently contributing to military modernization," Kania said. "There is a need for increased oversight and screening for outbound investments in those technologies... [to ensure that] U.S. flows of funding are not inadvertently undermining U.S.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"This is true journalism. This is what the Founding Fathers meant by 'freedom of the press."

- DARRYL AGEE



"I think your coverage is thoughtful and balanced in a way that I haven't seen elsewhere."

- JEFF BALLABON Former SVP, CBS News



"The Epoch Times has documented Spygate so well. This is rigging a criminal case for political purposes."

- LUKE ROSIAK Investigative Reporter



a longtime fan, first-time caller."

"I love reading your

outlet, I'm a big fan,

- MICHAEL KNOWLES Political Commentator

"You have been my source of hope. The truth is so scarce in media. The quality of my life is subject to the quality of truth in my life. Friends, work encounters, community interactions, all hinge on truth. The meticulous delivery of all sides of issues you cover permit me to sustain my hope in humanity. You have my deep respect and gratitude. I have told many, many patients (I am a physician) about you and will continue to do so. Truth +

- DR. MARY ELLEN BLUNTZER

trust = hope + health."

"I am sharing Epoch every chance I get. You guys bring a #1 product that people need DESPERATELY. Never have I read such a comprehensive, well researched, well sourced product in my entire life."

- STEPHEN SZYMANSKI

"I really love this online paper! Used to be a really strong Democrat leaning toward the left and since pandemic and vaccine mandates my views have gone through a radical shift and this paper has really supported me in many ways!"

- NANCY MILLER

"Supporting a newspaper and its role in the 4th Estate is a responsibility of good Citizenship ... I am a happy subscriber for a few years and an active participant in the online comments... ET was right about Mueller and RussiaGate and CCP-Virus and is right about the horrors of the CCP."

- GERALD DAVIS

"Love the Epoch Times. Wonderful to see news honestly presented...You have a good mix of uplifting, traditional, family, health & art/science. I know the truth when I finish reading the Epoch Times...I would recommend it to almost anyone."

- ANNE KELLY

"Being informed and knowing the truth is important. The Epoch Times reports the truth. There is no spin, no agenda, just the true news. How can a person make good decisions about how to vote, how to live, where to move to, or any other life decision if you do not have true factual information? We need the truth and there are not many places these days to find it."

- JUDITH REDDEN

Learn more at

EpochSubscription.com

A Chinese soldier salutes during a parade to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese communist regime at Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Oct. 1, 2019.

8 | CHINA INSIDER







Start Something Great!

A platform free from violent, erotic, criminal, and harmful content



GanJingWorld.com

