

WEEK 35, 2023

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES; SHUTTERSTOCK



ON THE FRONTLINE

THE FBI FIGHTS BACK
AGAINST CCP
INFILTRATION

See Page 2



Casey Fleming, Chairman and CEO of the intelligence consulting firm, BlackOps Partners.

OPINION

FBI ON FRONT LINE IN FIGHT AGAINST CCP'S COVERT WAR ON US

EVA FU

Forty Chinese officers, a retired NYPD sergeant, two Navy sailors-turned-spies, and two minders of a secret Chinese police station in New York. These cases, and others, feed an ever-growing list of FBI investigations as the agency zeroes in on combating Chinese espionage operations, an arena it has branded its "top counterintelligence priority."

"Our adversaries' targets are our nation's core economic assets—our information and ideas, our innovation, our research and development, our technology," an FBI spokesperson told The Epoch Times.

"No country poses a broader, more severe threat to those assets than China."

To put the scale into perspective, FBI Director Christopher Wray said in 2020 that the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) "deep and wide and persistent" ability to influence American sectors prompts the agency to open a China-related probe about every 10 hours.

Casey Fleming, CEO of the BlackOps Partners Corporation, said the CCP will do "anything to weaken our society."

China's goal, he said, is to "win a war without fighting,"

Mr. Fleming's company advises businesses on cybersecurity and corporate counterintelligence strategies.

"The level of the Chinese Communist Party's espionage and influence and subversion is beyond most people's comprehension," he told The Epoch Times.

'A Line in the Sand'

The FBI's focus on Chinese threats has marked a shift in decades of U.S. policy and is something that only picked up in about the past five years, according to Mr. Fleming.

In late 2018, the DOJ started the China Initiative as part of a new strategic priority to counter Chinese national security threats. Led by the department's national security division, the initiative brought in a dramatic upsurge in prosecutions targeting Beijing's state-sanctioned theft of trade secrets with a focus on Chinese hackers, spies, and those who allegedly stole intellectual property from their U.S. employers for China's benefit.

In February 2018, Mr. Wray, who was then half a year into his job, testified in a Senate committee hearing on Chinese espionage that Beijing represents a "whole-of-society" threat.

"When we open investigations into economic espionage, time and time again, they keep leading back to China," he told lawmakers.

Several months later, Mr. Wray classified the regime as "the broadest, most challenging, most significant threat we face as a country."

Mr. Fleming said it was around that time that the FBI seemed to draw "a line in the sand" with China.

"In the past, our government would look the other way and say, 'Well, that's just one-off,'" Mr. Fleming said. Now, however, the cases against Chinese agents operating on U.S. soil have come in much more frequently, he said.

Military Infiltration

Navy petty officer Wei Jinchao knew what he was getting into when a Chinese intelligence officer allegedly approached him three months before he became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

That same month, February 2022, Mr. Wei told another U.S. Navy sailor that he'd been "asked to spy for the PRC [People's Republic of China]," according to court documents.

From then until his arrest in early August, 22-year-old Mr. Wei passed to the Chinese regime more than 50 technical manuals, along with photos and videos with details related to U.S. Navy ships and military weapons, the indictment said. Some of the documents reveal the Navy's amphibious assault vessels' operating systems and power structures, repairs to the ships, and the ships' weak points.

At least 10 of the manuals he handed over had never been seen by the Chinese handler, court documents show. The Chinese handler made at least nine payments to Mr. Wei and even congratulated the sailor on obtaining U.S. citizenship last May.

Another California Navy sailor, Zhao Wenheng, allegedly pocketed nearly \$15,000 for selling U.S. military data over an even longer time period.

Former senior U.S. Naval intelligence officer John Jordan said the CCP "wants to hollow out the U.S." from within.

The very existence of free societies is a threat to CCP rule, he said. Therefore, confronting its influence "goes to the very survival of the American political system."

Mr. Fleming said it's "totally wrong" for foreign nationals such as Mr. Wei to be in the U.S. military.

"He should never, never have been allowed in the U.S. military—ever," he said.



"And especially at any level that he could gather intelligence and get it back to the Chinese Communist Party. That's another example of how our government and military must wake up to the fact of how serious this espionage is, and the unrestricted warfare by the CCP."

The Pentagon didn't respond to The Epoch Times' questions about its recruitment policies regarding foreign nationals being placed into sensitive military positions.

'Behind the Scenes'

The Navy sailor case was one of the latest overseen by the FBI's counterintelligence division, the principal branch in the agency tasked with tackling espionage from hostile powers such as Beijing.

In the past four months, the FBI has also brought cases against two men who allegedly attempted to bribe a purported IRS official to help the regime "topple" Falun Gong, two others suspected of operating an illegal Chinese police facility in Manhattan, a Boston man authorities accused of secretly spying on pro-democracy activists for Beijing, and 40 Chinese police officers involved in harassing U.S. residents.

A Brooklyn court in June convicted three men, including a retired NYPD sergeant, of stalking a New Jersey family and pressuring them to return to China. It was the first case to reach trial revealing the regime's coerced repatriation program known as Operation Fox Hunt.

A lot goes on behind the scenes before any case can move forward, according to Marc Ruskin, a 20-year FBI veteran who has worked on a number of counterintelligence cases.

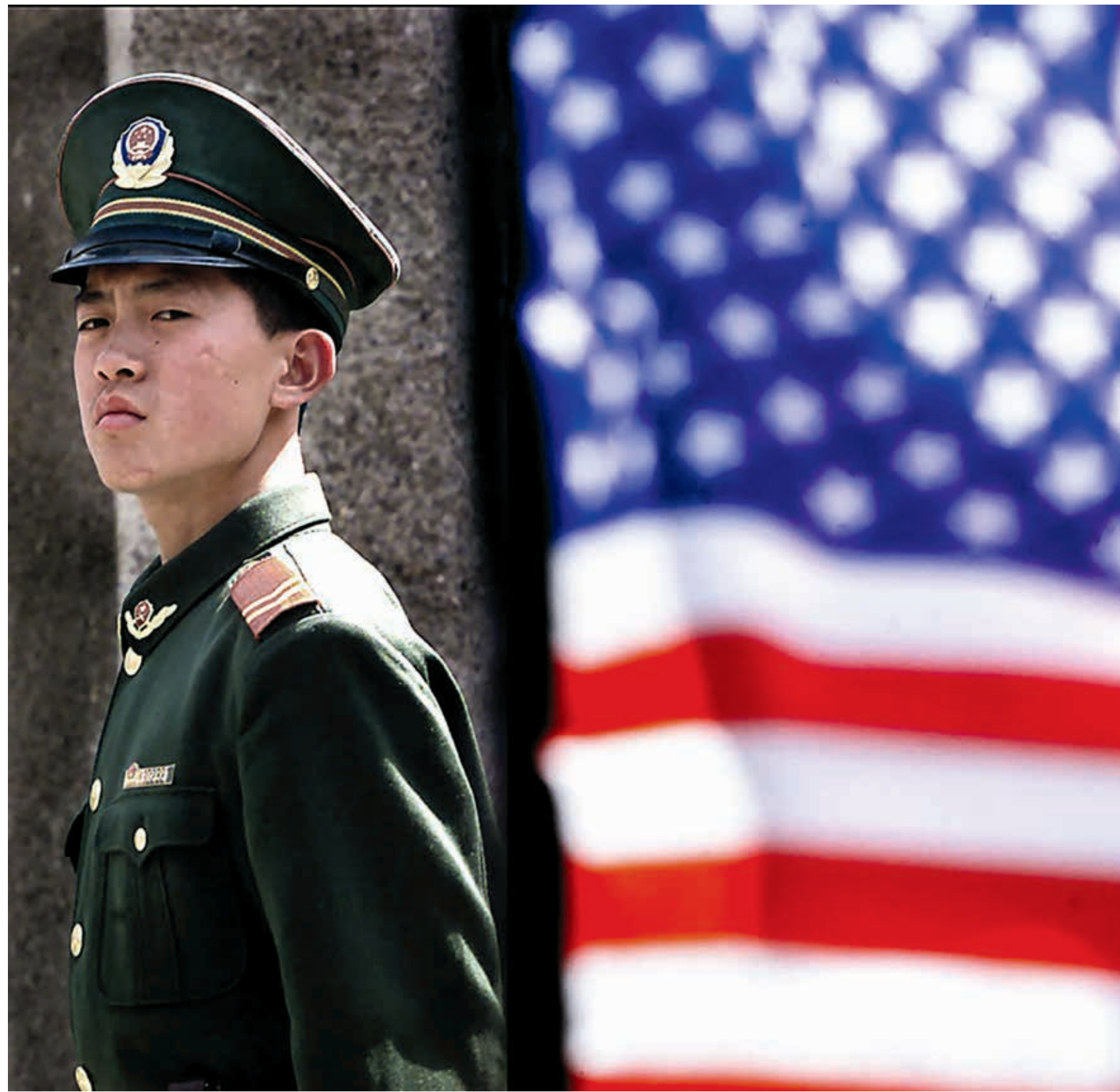
To initiate a preliminary investigation, the FBI needs to provide sufficient probable cause to assign a case agent.

Bringing on an undercover agent is often the best technique but also the most labor-intensive and costly, Mr. Ruskin told The Epoch Times.

"You need a whole team of people basically, and then you have to get different levels of authorization depending on the nature of the case," he said.

A proposal detailing different investigative and undercover scenarios

A Chinese military policeman stands guard in front of the U.S. embassy in Beijing on April 3, 2001.



and a budget breakdown must be approved before extra manpower is added. The authorization is usually renewed every six months until the operation is complete—when prosecutors believe they have enough evidence to make an arrest, Mr. Ruskin said.

A classic example, he said, is the recent IRS bribery case involving an undercover FBI agent who posed as a tax official.

Court documents reveal that an informant worked with the undercover agent posing as an IRS official to connect with and record conversations with two suspects, who paid the agent to open a probe against an entity managed by adherents of Falun Gong, a faith group that has been brutally persecuted in China since 1999.

Undercover agents try to "make as many meetings as possible" with suspects, Mr. Ruskin said.

The agent who posed as an IRS official was handed a \$1,000 down payment in the initial meeting and another \$4,000 in a second meeting.

"This way, he's got two meetings instead of one. And you can get twice as many conversations and make it very clear that there's no doubt anymore as to what the purpose of the bribe is," Mr. Ruskin said.

"That, in combination with the intercepted phone call between the two defendants, then also bringing in the evidence about the PRC public official, makes for an airtight case using undercover," he said.

Mr. Ruskin said the case will be "very embarrassing" for the Chinese regime.

"There's no question as to the nature of the attack on Falun Gong," he said. Chinese agents are trying to interfere with people exercising constitutional rights and freedom of religion on U.S. soil and at the same time trying to "corrupt American public officials, which is very shameful."

Mr. Ruskin said undercover agents make "the best witnesses."

"It's the most valuable work the FBI can do, because the witnesses are FBI agents," he said. "It's not like you're taking someone off the street and making them a witness, or using an informant."

A trained agent's reliability in court is "unquestionable," he said, and it "doesn't give any wiggle room for the PRC to try and provide an alternate explanation for what happened."

"This case is going to be a slam dunk for whoever prosecutes this."

Beijing's Playbook

The tactics of the Chinese campaign aren't limited to any one facet, nor are its targets.

Lawmakers, businesses, academic institutions, and the general public aren't immune from the regime's reach. The Party routinely threatens and harasses U.S.-based critics, exerts pressure on U.S. politicians in a bid to mold policies to its liking, and aggressively obtains trade secrets and U.S. intelligence through generous payments or hacking.

Systematic, state-sponsored Chinese trade theft costs the United States between \$225 billion and \$600 billion annually, according to estimates by the Commission on the Theft of American Intellectual Property.

China also possesses one of the world's largest armies of hackers. China's hacking program, by Mr. Wray's estimates, is "bigger than that of every other nation combined," outnumbering U.S. cyber specialists by at least 50 to 1.

The DOJ's China Initiative led to a spate of researchers' being criminally charged for hiding their links to state-sponsored Chinese recruitment programs, known as "talent plans," the most high profile among them being Charles Lieber, a former Harvard University chemistry chair.

Mr. Lieber was sentenced in April to two days in jail and two years of supervised release for six felony charges related to the tens of thousands of dollars he received from China while working on sensitive U.S. research.

He had also opened and co-directed a joint nanotechnology lab at the Wuhan University of Technology under Harvard's name.

The FBI's crackdown on visa fraud—used by Chinese military officers disguised as students in the United States—coupled with the closure of the Chinese Consulate in Houston over espionage activities caused more than 1,000 military-linked Chinese researchers to leave the country, John Charles Demers, who was then the assistant attorney general for national security, said in December 2020.

But the China Initiative drew heavy criticism for being overzealous and fanning anti-Asian discrimination, a reason the DOJ cited in axing the initiative in February 2022. Matthew Olsen, the new assistant attorney general for national security, said the CCP threat landscape

\$225 to \$600 MILLION

State-sponsored Chinese trade theft costs the United States between \$225 billion to \$600 billion annually, according to a report.

China, from a counter-intelligence perspective, in many ways represents the broadest, most challenging, most significant threat we face as a country.

Christopher Wray, director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

demanding a broader approach.

Mr. Fleming said the program's closure played into the Chinese regime's hands and the Asian hate narrative was fueled by the regime.

By overblowing the harm of the discrimination via social media and mainstream media—with the help of its subordinates or those misled by its propaganda—Beijing deflects blame and shifts the focus off of its nefarious activities.

"We're slowly waking up to really what this threat is," Mr. Fleming said. "It's a war we've never been familiar with in the past that we have to become experts in overnight."

The FBI spokesperson said China targets U.S. businesses, academic institutions, researchers, lawmakers, and the general public.

"The government and the private sector must commit to working together to better understand and counter the threat," the spokesperson said.

The FBI has put out targeted ads asking Chinese American people to come forward if they have been victimized by the regime.

'Violence Would Be Fine'

Recently, researchers uncovered more than 100 extralegal Chinese police outposts in 53 nations, including at least four in the United States.

The revelation of one such station in New York led to the arrest of two alleged Chinese agents, one of whom, prosecutors said, paid ethnic Chinese people by busloads to welcome Chinese regime leader Xi Jinping in 2015 and to counter the demonstrations of Falun Gong. The man was also enlisted in efforts to force a purported

Chinese fugitive to return to China, DOJ filings allege.

"The Chinese government seeks to manipulate U.S. political and economic policies while attempting to integrate their agenda through local communities to serve their own agenda and invoke their authorities within our borders," the FBI said in a statement.

U.S. Army officer Xiong Yan tasted the regime's suppression campaign firsthand while running for a U.S. congressional seat on Long Island, New York, in the 2022 midterms. A student leader in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Mr. Xiong had by then served in the U.S. military for 27 years and become a naturalized U.S. citizen.

"Beat him. Beat him until he cannot run for election," an alleged Chinese agent instructed a private investigator in a plot to thwart Mr. Xiong's election campaign.

The plot began in September 2021, shortly after Mr. Xiong announced his candidacy, federal prosecutors said. "Right now we don't want him to be elected," the court document quoted alleged agent Lin Qiming as saying. "Whatever price is fine. As long as you can do it."

Mr. Lin demanded the private investigator implicate Mr. Xiong in prostitution, tax evasion, and child pornography. He suggested hiring an attractive woman as a campaign volunteer for Mr. Xiong in order to "have a relationship with him."

When the investigator said it would cost \$40,000 to carry the plan out, Mr. Lin responded: "No problem. The money is not a problem."

"If you don't find anything after following him for a few weeks, can we manufacture something?" Mr. Lin asked in a recorded call.

"In the end, violence would be fine too," he said later in a voice message, adding that they could use a beating or other means to inflict physical harm, according to court filings.

"You—you think about it. Car accident, [he] will be completely wrecked [chuckles], right? Don't know, eh, whatever ways from all different angles. Or, on the day of the election, he cannot make it there himself, right?"

Mr. Xiong was unaware of the scheme unfolding around him for months and was surprised to find himself in headlines last March when he flew back into the United States after a trip overseas.

Angry as he was, he thought the efforts were laughable.

"I've done nothing wrong to dishonor myself, and therefore have no cause for fear," he told The Epoch Times.

But the revelations allowed him to make sense of things he hadn't understood. In November 2021, for example, he remembered leaving early from his single-family house parking lot on Long Island to meet a friend. It was about 3 a.m., but just as he was heading out, he noticed a car driving in. The driver seemed to be a woman in her 40s who kept her head down.

"They had been following me all this time," he said.

Days after the DOJ brought charges against the alleged schemers, Mr. Xiong held a large fundraiser for his campaign. Only one-third of the more than 500 expected guests showed up. One of the guests who failed to attend later called Mr. Xiong's campaign and explained that the Chinese Consulate had warned him and others not to donate to his campaign, attend his events, or vote for him and told them that doing so would jeopardize their ability to do business in China.

"They were scared," Mr. Xiong said. "Not of me—it's not that they didn't

like me. What they feared was how the CCP could persecute them."

'Climate of Fear'

Holding family members hostage is a typical tactic employed by the Chinese regime to exert control over the U.S.-based Chinese diaspora and silence unfavorable voices, as U.S. Uyghur activist Rushan Abbas has experienced.

Ms. Abbas has regarded her Urumqi-based sister, a retired Chinese medical doctor, as a mother figure ever since their parents died. But she stopped communicating with her sister in 2017, the year she founded the nonprofit Campaign for Uyghurs, in hopes of shielding her closest relative from Chinese authorities' retaliation.

It didn't help. In September 2018, six days after Ms. Abbas spoke about the mistreatment of Uyghurs at the Hudson Institute, her sister vanished, just like many of Ms. Abbas's in-laws in China.

It wasn't until two years later that Ms. Abbas learned of her sister's 20-year prison sentence. As she campaigned for her sister's freedom from the United States, Chinese state media attacked her, claiming she had stolen images of Uyghurs as props to fabricate tall tales.

If anything, Ms. Abbas said, the regime has underestimated the strength of her will.

"The CCP thought they could silence me. But they have failed, and it only makes me stronger, because I am fighting harder," she told The Epoch Times, as her sister's imprisonment approaches its fifth year.

A few days after Ms. Abbas's first congressional testimony about her sister's plight in 2019, her organization's website crashed, an incident she linked to Chinese state-sponsored cyberattacks.

The Party is trying to create "a climate of fear, self-censorship, and hesitation within dissident groups," Ms. Abbas said.

She's appreciative of the growing U.S. attention against CCP agents but said more is needed to help protect dissidents as they face off against "this giant power."

"If nobody can do anything to the people who are facing genocide within China's borders, or Falun Gong practitioners who are being persecuted within China's borders, or Tibetans, or Hongkongers, at least the [Western] governments can protect the people who are outside of China still facing transnational repression by the CCP," Ms. Abbas said.

'Imposing Real Costs'

Levi Browde, executive director of the New York-based Falun Dafa Information Center, said the increase in prosecutions by the DOJ is likely giving the regime's enablers pause.

"Any arrest by the FBI acts as a deterrent," he told The Epoch Times.

Everybody who goes after Falun Gong and other dissidents overseas "is doing so because they're going to get paid more money if they secure some 'wins,' and they are going to secure promotions if they secure 'wins,'" Mr. Browde said.

Seeing others get arrested by the FBI should get the rest of them thinking, "Is that money and career advancement worth winding up in a U.S. jail?"

Mr. Jordan said the United States should start putting "sanctions on the table" and "imposing real costs on the Chinese Communist Party."

"This isn't going to stop until it becomes more expensive for Beijing to continue this than to stop it," he said. "Because they will do a cost-benefit analysis—it's that simple."

Mr. Xiong observed that U.S. efforts have significantly set back pro-Beijing agents' "arrogance."

In the past, Chinese community events and demonstrations protesting the regime's abuses would draw loads of disruptors who "hung red flags all around." Now, he said, "they no longer dare to be so blatant."

Mr. Fleming said he wants to see the U.S. government pour at least 10 times as many resources into countering the CCP.

"The level of the Chinese Communist Party's espionage and influence and subversion is beyond most people's comprehension," he said.

"It's communism versus freedom and liberty. That's what's at stake."





▲ Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and visiting Marshall Islands President David Kabua inspect the honor guards during a welcome ceremony in front of the Presidential Office in Taipei on March 22, 2022.

ASIA-PACIFIC

IN-DEPTH: US TERRITORIES, ALLIES SAY CCP SUBVERSION IMPERILS SECURITY, SOVEREIGNTY

JOHN HAUGHEY

rene Sgambelluri was 10 years old on Dec. 8, 1941, when Japanese forces seized Guam while simultaneously striking Hawaii, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Sumatra to quickly conquer Southeast Asia and ignite a war that still scars scattered islands across the Pacific.

A native Chamorro, she recalls that day was the Feast of Santa Marian Kamalen, Guam's patron saint, a festive occasion for the island's large Catholic community.

But there would be nothing to celebrate that day, nor for years to come. Ms. Sgambelluri, 92, testified during an Aug. 24 House Natural Resources Committee Indo-Pacific Task Force field hearing in Tamuning, Guam.

"War ripped my family apart and took away every aspect of life I had known up until that point," she said. Her father, a U.S. Navy pharmacist, was shipped to Japan as a slave-labor prisoner of war. "I never had a chance to say goodbye and I feared I would never see him again."

While her father returned after the allies won the war nearly four years later, memories of the occupation remain "agonizing," Ms. Sgambelluri said, but she felt compelled to testify before the panel so "history cannot repeat itself."

"Japan attacked us because of our strategic and important location in the Pacific. With control of Guam, Japan could control the Pacific," she said. "China sees the importance of Pacific islands as well. However, we will not let them have control over Guam and the Pacific region."

Ms. Sgambelluri was among nine witnesses who spoke during the nine-member bipartisan task force's "Peace Through Strength: The Strategic Importance of the Pacific Islands to U.S.-led Global Security" presentation that featured stark testimony from territorial governors and government officials about growing coercion and overt threats from China.

"Like the empire of Japan did, the [China] aims to dominate the Pacific and Island people," Indo-Pacific Task Force Chair Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) said. "We're here today at a pivotal point in our na-

[Bribery] is not something that happens periodically. It happens every day and it happens at different levels.

Arnold Palacios, governor, Northern Marianas Islands

tion's history. Less than 2,000 miles away lays a threat to America and our allies. The People's Republic of China, under the tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), not only seeks to challenge American leadership, but it's aggressively working to undermine the democratic values and institutions that we cherish," using the official name of China under the control of the CCP.

'Blue Continent' Compacts

Leaders from three central and western Pacific U.S. territories, including Guam, and three freely associated states collectively representing 425,000 people living on more than 2,140 islands across 212 million miles of the "Blue Continent"—where more than \$2 trillion in U.S. trade was generated in 2022—cited aggressive menacing by Chinese aircraft and ships, illegal fishing, cyberattacks, and said CCP officials use bribery and anti-American propaganda to subvert governments and institutions.

"I know it's hard for some Americans to understand why any of this matters to their way of life. After all, Guam and the Pacific Islands are thousands of miles away," Guam Gov. Lourdes Leon Guerrero testified. "Put simply, because Guam can project power throughout the Indo-Pacific region, China is working to project equal power onto Guam and its sister islands. Yes,

Guam has always been considered the 'Tip of the American Spear' in the Pacific, but [CCP subterfuge] has brought with it specific consequences for the people of Guam."

Del. Aumua Amata Radewagen (R-American Samoa), a non-voting congressional representative, said the territories and freely associated states "form the western-most of America's homelands at the doorstep of Asia" and the "architecture of the what, since 1945, has been mostly a free and open Pacific," an "integrated superstructure of regional security and peace" that must be reinforced.

The near-three hour Congressional hearing, the first on Guam in 15 years, started about 10:10 a.m. Aug. 24 at the Hilton Hotel on Tumon Bay. It was still in its first hour when eight Republican presidential candidates took the stage for their 8 p.m. Aug. 23 debate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 7,318 miles east and seven time zones, 15 clock hours "behind" Guam, "Where America's Day Begins."

The hearing was one of several the task force plans in August across the Pacific and comes as the Biden administration negotiates renewals of 20-year "Compacts of Free Association" (COFA) with the three independent island nations and promotes its "Pacific Partnership Strategy," which calls for "renewed U.S. engagement across the full Pacific Islands region" to counter



Chinese activists march in support of Hong Kong protests in Saipan on Dec. 29, 2019.

SAM YEH/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Guam's first-term governor and former Bank of Guam president/CEO, the CCP "has shown a commitment to its goals" to "increase its popularity in the Pacific region and gain support for pro-Chinese policies at the United Nations."

Key to that overall goal, she said, is promoting the CCP's "China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision" and the "China-Pacific Island Countries Five-Year Action Plan on Common Development (2022-26)."

"Knowing that," Ms. Leon Guerrero asked, "who should write the rules of U.S. trade in the Indo-Pacific? If we choose not to, China surely will. This is why I support the bipartisan effort to increase U.S. engagement throughout the region and invest in the security of Guam and other vital U.S. territories. It is why I join other island leaders in seeking economic and infrastructure support for the Pacific's developing democracies."

Guam Under the Gun

The largest, most populous, and southern-most of the Mariana Archipelago island chain, 212-square-mile Guam has been part of the United States since the Spanish-American War at the dawn of the 20th century and is governed as a U.S. territory under the 1950 Organic Act of Guam.

Along with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and American Samoa, it is one of three Pacific U.S. territories that have evolved since World War 2 into an important military nexus, critical trade corridor, and key source for raw materials and minerals with vibrant tourism and sports-fishing industries that draw visitors primarily from Japan, South Korea, Europe, Australia, Canada, and China.

Guam's 170,000 residents, many of native Chamorro heritage, know—as they did with the Japanese 82 years ago—Guam is a bastion of American military might and, thus, a prime target.

China's "efforts at democratic erosion."

The administration submitted its proposed compacts to Congress in June after years of often difficult deliberations with the three island nations—the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau.

The Biden administration's proposed compact earmarks \$7.1 billion in economic assistance over a 20-year span for the three nations with \$3.3 billion earmarked for FSM, a \$1.2 billion increase from the 2003 US-FSM COFA, and \$2.3 billion for RMI, a \$1.3 billion increase from the 2003 US-RMI COFA.

The plan also includes \$634 million for the U.S. Postal Services to provide services to FSM and RMI.

'Political Warfare'

According to a 13-page brief written by Indo-Pacific Task Force analysts Ken Degenfelder, Justin Rhee, and Howard Hills, China has been expanding its influence across the region for more than a decade as part of its Belt and Road Initiative "to invest in more than 150 countries and international organizations, and expand CCP influence."

Standard tactics include economic aid and infrastructure development proposals "leveraged to affect political outcomes and perceptions of the U.S. while waging 'political warfare' to gain undue influence and/or destabilize island nations," they write.

The CCP has been successful, the task force analysis maintains, not only in using "offerings of economic aid and infrastructure development" to seduce government and business leaders but to become "an important market for [island economies] when it comes to natural resource exports and tourism," an industry it artificially boosted and is now using as leverage against the island nations and U.S. territories.

The way in which China is "undermining strategic and economic interests in the area is by trying to reshape narratives, even to retell history to align with their own diplomatic and economic interests," Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.) said, which is why Ms. Sgambelluri's horrific recount is "important testimony" reaffirming a "painful history" that warns "we know what happens if we let democracy slip away."

When resisted, the CCP has resorted to bribery, "political warfare," and other "malign tactics ... that aggressively threaten the political stability" of the freely associated states, the analysis states, before warning, "U.S. territories are not immune from being targeted" by China.

Indeed, agreed Ms. Leon Guerrero,

Now we're facing the threat of the once-concealed, but now overt, velvet-gloved hand of [Chinese] ambitions that hides the iron fist of the CCP, of totalitarian communist imperialism.

Aumua Amata Radewagen, Congresswoman

which Chinese media have dubbed the "Guam killer."

The Chinese are happy to let Guamanians know what's in store should there be hostilities, portraying a Chinese Air Force H-6 bomber launching missiles at Andersen Air Force Base in a 2020 video.

The U.S. National Security Agency, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and the FBI have documented repeated cyber-attacks and intrusions with a Chinese "state-sponsored cyber actor" called "Volt Typhoon" apparently conducting espionage and information-gathering operations against Guam.

In May, the intelligence agencies reported that "Volt Typhoon" used "built-in network administration tools" to evade detection and restrict default logging configurations in an event that stymied internet reception and transactions on the island.

Ms. Leon Guerrero said it appears "Volt Typhoon" has not engaged in detected similar activity since, and it remains unclear what the fallout from the May incursion could be, but she said the damage inflicted about that same time by Typhoon Mawar offers an example of what could happen if the CCP launches a full-scale cyber or electromagnetic attack against the island.

"During the typhoon, we witnessed and experienced a shutdown of communications. Our radio stations were not on, our telecommunications were not on, we had no means of communicating with each other," she recalled. "That was a feeling of paralysis for me. So, very much experienced what I think could happen if there is a big Chinese cybersecurity attack. Can you imagine if all power at our airport or at our

Continued on Page 6

PANDEMIC

In Wake of COVID Rebound in China, Falun Gong Founder Says Virus Targets CCP

KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES



EVA FU

More than three years since the first outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, which became ground zero in the worldwide pandemic, the virus is seeing a resurgence in the communist country.

As the fast-spreading Omicron variant dubbed "Eris"—named for the Greek goddess of strife and discord—takes hold in China, the country is again seeing a spike in deaths among members of the regime's top echelons, despite their special access to medical care and drugs that are denied to ordinary citizens.

Among those who have died in the latest wave are dozens of Chinese officials, senior executives, prominent academics, and scientists, some in their 20s and 30s. The spike in deaths seems reminiscent of that seen in late December, when the country was grappling with another huge upsurge in cases that saw hospitals and crematoriums pushed beyond the breaking point.

The death toll in China vastly exceeds that of any other country during the pandemic, noted Heng He, a U.S.-based analyst of Chinese political affairs.

Recent obituaries of prominent figures published by Chinese media, state-owned entities, and Chinese universities have highlighted their CCP affiliations, using titles such as "outstanding Communist Party member."

Mr. Li Hongzhi, founder of the spiritual practice Falun Gong, told The Epoch Times on Aug. 26 that the virus is directed at the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), along with those who blindly follow the Party, defend it, and give their lives to it.

In January, Mr. Li said that more than 400 million people in China had died of COVID-19 and that the Party has been covering up the true situation of the pandemic since it broke out more than three years ago.

At the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, Mr. Li described plagues as an inevitability when moral values deteriorate.

"When humans become corrupt in their hearts, they will generate karma, fall sick, and suffer calamities," Mr. Li wrote in an article titled "Rationality."

"But a pandemic like the current 'CCP Virus' (Wuhan Pneumonia) has come with a purpose and with a target. It has come to eliminate the followers of the evil Party and those who go along with the evil CCP."

Mr. Li's advice is that people "stay far away from the evil CCP

and don't align with the evil Party because what lies behind it is the red demon. Its behavior and actions are thuggish, and it stops at no evil."

In China, almost everyone has joined a Party-affiliated organization at some point in their life. Demonstration of loyalty to the Party is a necessary condition for holding a position of authority.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a discipline rooted in traditional Chinese beliefs on moral and spiritual development. Incorporating meditative exercises and a set of moral teachings centered on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, the discipline is practiced in more than 100 countries worldwide.

The practice gained an estimated 100 million adherents in China by 1999. The communist regime, fearing this popularity, launched a violent persecution of the faith that has caused the deaths of an untold number of practitioners.

A Historical Perspective

Over the past 31 1/2 years, the world has learned to live with the virus while China's ruling regime aggressively pursued its draconian "zero-COVID" campaign aimed at eliminating every potential case.

Eris, now a dominant variant driving up infection rates in the United States and elsewhere, so far appears no more dangerous than previous strains, according to health experts.

While officials in China have played down the public health risk and on Aug. 28 dropped COVID-19 testing requirements for inbound international travelers, some observers have taken the deaths of Chinese elites as a sign that the situation in the country might not be as rosy as authorities are seeking to project.

The death toll in China vastly exceeds that of any other country during the pandemic, noted Heng He, a U.S.-based analyst of Chinese political affairs.

Mr. Heng observed that throughout history, natural disasters have tended to surge around a time when China was experiencing a dynastic change.

"In traditional Chinese culture, there's a prevalent belief that disasters are a reflection of the state of morality," he told The Epoch Times.

A case in point, he said, was a bubonic plague during the last phase of the Ming Dynasty. During the 1640s, that deadly epidemic wiped out hundreds of thousands of people and contributed to the collapse of the dynasty. The plague disappeared when China entered the succeeding Qing Dynasty, its last imperial era.

What's happening today appears to mirror this, he said.

"The CCP's rule, from what I see, is approaching its end," Mr. Heng said.

ASIA-PACIFIC

IN-DEPTH: US TERRITORIES, ALLIES SAY CCP SUBVERSION IMPERILS SECURITY, SOVEREIGNTY

Continued from Page 5

port authority is paralyzed because of those attacks? We will not be able to survive.”

The experience spurred her office and the territorial Legislature to create “a cybersecurity island-wide emergency plan. We have directed our government agencies specifically to establish their cybersecurity plan working with very key stakeholders in business and public sectors.”

In addition to overt threats of eye-blink annihilation, Guam House Vice Speaker Rep. Tina Rose Muña Barnes (D-Hagåtña), the longest-serving member of the territorial legislature “and a daughter of Guam,” said she has “witnessed the rise of China’s ‘soft power diplomacy’ on the island and among her ‘brothers and sisters across the ‘Blue Continent.’”

“From airports to critical infrastructure, to government landmarks, and people-to-people exchanges, China has made it a point to make known their presence, open checkbooks, and influence, right here in our backyard,” she said, recalling as a territorial lawmaker, she’s been approached by CCP officials lobbying her to repudiate U.S. policy.

“Not too long ago, I did receive a call from the ambassador of China saying that I should advocate for a ‘One China Plan’ and I said, ‘That’s way above my pay grade.’” Ms. Barnes said. “It’s just not right,” I told him. “We are Americans and we are here peacefully. If this is a threat, then I think that you’ve really asked something way above my pay grade.”

“But in all fairness,” she added, “as you see, [CCP coercion] is coming here and you see what’s happening with what they can do without the support from ‘Uncle Sam.’”

Retired U.S. Army Brigadier Gen. Roderick Leon Guerrero testified that, while U.S. policy in confronting China makes Guam “the lynchpin,” it makes Guamanians “first-strike targets.” He said some islanders don’t believe the United States—even with its \$160 billion missile defense commitment—cares enough about them to rapidly respond in a crisis.

He recalled that in 2013, North Korean President Kim Jong Un threatened Guam with nuclear missiles. The Pentagon acknowledged there was little it could do but dispatch Aegis-equipped warships to the area.

Despite that exposed vulnerability, a THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Air Defense) system was not installed on Guam until 2017 and only now, in the proposed FY24 defense budget, are there plans to bring Patriot batteries and other anti-missile technologies to the island. Ret. Brig. Gen. Leon Guerrero said.

“The question brought forth to this committee is, will the U.S. be reactive” to Chinese encroachment now or years later? he asked, as it did in bringing THAAD to Guam four years after the 2013 missile crisis concluded, “with North Korea deciding when to end the threat.”

Or, he continued, “will the United States take proactive measures to protect its citizens here in Guam against possible future armed conflict?”

Commonwealth of Bribes
CNMI is a U.S. territory of about 50,000 American “nationals but not citizens” spanning 14 volcanic, mountainous islands, and coral reefs about 100 miles north of Guam.

The commonwealth’s most prominent islands are Saipan, Guguan, Tinian, and Rota, names that resonate in U.S. history and affirm, “Our relationship with the United States was forged in war, in the bloody battles of World War 2, and

refined in peace.” CNMI Gov. Arnold Palacios testified.

“In the Marianas, we are Americans. We are also Micronesians,” he said. “The United States is more than a nation with borders on the North American continent. It is also a Pacific nation, and on U.S. soil everywhere in the Pacific, we experience CCP aggression on multiple fronts.”

“We see it in massive investments in infrastructure and economic development. We see it in land grabs and fisheries expansions. We see it in unauthorized research vessels and divers lurking around our undersea fiber optic cables. We see it in organized crime, public corruption, and political interference.”

“There is a strategic edge in all of these CCP’s activities,” Mr. Palacios continued, “and it destabilizes island communities and cuts against America’s influence and security in the region.”

The Northern Marianas are “acutely vulnerable” because the area’s post-pandemic economy “continues to struggle” and CNMI’s “government remains in deep fiscal distress,” he said.

“There are signs seemingly everywhere of ‘friendship projects’ sponsored by the [Chinese] in the islands. The CCP moves both quickly and methodically to fill perceived voids in American assistance and to capitalize on the social and economic vulnerabilities of Pacific Island communities,” Mr. Palacios said.

More than
\$2 TRILLION
IN U.S. TRADE
was generated in the Pacific region in 2022.

He said between the 1980s through the early 2000s, more than 30 garment factories, predominantly Chinese-owned, set up on 47-square mile Saipan. “Tens of thousands of people were brought in,” he said, adding that many were brought in from China to work in the factories.

Those Chinese-owned factories began to close in 2005 when new trade rules stripped CNMI of “competitive advantages it had through tariff-free and quota-free access to U.S. markets,” Mr. Palacios said.

As this was unfolding, Chinese interests began to push tourism with CNMI officials and businessmen were gladly “capitalizing on the commonwealth’s approved destination status with China and special visa-free access to Chinese tourists,” he said.

Under proposals from Chinese investors, “We turned to gambling, legalizing casino gaming on Saipan even after the venture previously failed on Tinian. An exclusive license was, nevertheless, awarded to a Chinese casino operation,” Mr. Palacios said.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese tourists comprised approximately 40 percent of all Northern Marianas visitors with the Chinese Saipan casino raking in billions, he said.

“For a brief period, Chinese tourism and gambling revenues unsustainably propped up the commonwealth’s government and economy,” Mr. Palacios said. “But this short-lived recovery was fraught with controversy, from human trafficking to ‘birth tourism,’ labor abuse, money laundering, and public corruption.”

“Since the pandemic, China’s economy has staggered and the stream of Chinese tourists ‘has all but dried up; the Saipan casino has closed,” he said. “The commonwealth was fortunate to have received over \$1

billion in [U.S.] federal assistance during the pandemic years to shore up our economy and sustain essential public services. This aid was a lifeline.”

Reelected in a November 2022 runoff to a second term as governor, Mr. Palacios, an independent, said over his first four years the territory’s policy has been to “pivot away from over-reliance on Chinese investment, and seek to strengthen our relationships with our [U.S.] federal partners and allies in the region. I worried about the instability of the Chinese markets in light of shifting geopolitical currents. I also worried about the commonwealth’s potential exposure to national security concerns.”

He said there is resistance to the “pivot away” from China. “Not everyone was pleased with this position. We are taking the hits for it, both economically and politically,” he said. “To this day, certain influential business interests in the community continue to ask me, as well as members of the commonwealth Legislature, to open up to Chinese investment once again.”

“That same kind of pressure,” Mr. Palacios continued, “ripples across the Pacific in various ways—to sell fishing rights or accept Chinese investment in public infrastructure, for example, or enter partnerships with [Chinese] law enforcement, or lower visa requirements for Chinese tourists and workers. Whatever form this pressure takes, it is always erosive to America’s influence and security in the region.”

Del. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-Northern Marianas Islands), the islands’ non-voting Congressional representative, felt compelled to announce he was taking a stand.

“Look, some of you know me well enough to know that I inquired about the Northern Marianas’ relationship with the People’s Republic of China. I’ve been quiet about that for a while,” Mr. Sablan said, noting there “seems to be ... concern” about his silence but his presence proves he’s “actually taken a stand and said, ‘Look, I will join this task force and work on my condition that my brothers and sisters are fairly treated.’”

Asked by Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-Wis.) if CNMI officials take bribes from the CCP and other Chinese entities, Mr. Palacios replied, “On a daily basis.”

Bribery “is not something that happens periodically. It happens every day and it happens at different levels,” he said. “That happens at the federal level, at the state levels, and with our Legislature. Our executive officials are approached almost every day. So, it is something that we have to be mindful of and address as part of the routine order of business every day. We see those hooks being dangled every day. As I’ve stated, you know, a lot of our economies are driven by Chinese investments.”

The scenario is similar on the third U.S. territory, American Samoa, a seven-island chain of 45,000 residents in the South Pacific’s Polynesia.

Ms. Radewagen, whose father was



RICHARD W. BROOKS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



▲ A U.S. Air Force fire truck sprays water near plane hangars at Andersen Air Force base in Yigo, Guam, on Aug. 17, 2017.

a former American Samoa governor and Cold War diplomat under the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, said the islands have resisted communism before and will do so again.

“I understand, in a very profound way, how and why the U.N. trusteeship, our ‘Compact of Free Association’ stood for decades against Soviet imperialism as a threat to democracy and post-colonial free enterprise and rule of law,” she said.

“Now we’re facing the threat of the once-concealed, but now overt, velvet-gloved hand of [Chinese] ambitions that hides the iron fist of the CCP, of totalitarian communist imperialism. Thus, we come here ... to regroup and confront together the [Chinese] threat to the freedom of the ‘Blue Continent.’”

From airports to critical infrastructure, to government landmarks, and people-to-people exchanges, China has made it a point to make known their presence, open checkbooks, and influence, right here in our backyard.

Tina Rose Muña Barnes, Guam House vice speaker

Islands in the CCP Seam

The three western Pacific “freely associated states” the U.S. maintains COFA pacts with are strategic allies—the agreements deny area access to Pentagon-decreed adversaries—but the islands’ economies, as with those of U.S. territories, also face daunting challenges that leave them vulnerable to CCP overtures.

According to the Indo-Pacific Task Force, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) appears most CCP-influenced. The FSM spans more than 600 islands between the Marshall Islands and Palau with about 115,000 residents in a federal constitutional system.

China “is a major provider of economic assistance and investment, worth roughly \$40 million between 2009-18” and has a “comprehensive strategic partnership” with the FSM, according to the task force.

In addition, at least 25 Chinese entities have financed and constructed FSM government buildings, a sports facility, a bridge, and other infrastructure projects, such as upgrading Chuuk International Airport, according to the analysis.

A March 2023 letter by outgoing FSM President David Panuelo cited increasing Chinese influence within his country and successful use of “political warfare,” alleging FSM’s government is “bribed to be complicit, and bribed to be silent.”

While this is happening, the U.S. Air Force is expanding its “Agile Combat Employment operations” within its FSM military reservation.

FSM Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Ricky Cordero, testifying on behalf of President Wesley Simina, when asked by Mr. Tiffany if the new administration was acting on Mr. Panuelo’s claims, said the letter



JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

“provided some highlights” it has “duly noted” as a warning “to be cautious in dealing with [China].”

Palau faces similar challenges. Republic of Palau Finance Minister Kaleb Udui testified on behalf of President Surangel Whippas, who was hosting more than 20 members of Japan’s and Taiwan’s national legislatures and will meet with the task force in the coming days.

“Palau continues to be subjected to China’s substantial economic ‘carrots and sticks’ to shift Palau’s alliances,” he said.

Tourism is Palau’s largest industry, Mr. Udui said. During impasses in COFA talks, “China quickly ramped-up tourist visits from a handful to 160,000 a year. It bought hotel rooms far in advance, crowding out visitors from other nations. Then it said it would cut off the flow if we did not shift” its demands in COFA negotiations and adopt a “One China Policy.”

“We didn’t, and it carried through on its threat,” he said. “Just before COVID, China offered to send as many tourists as we could accommodate and establish a huge new industry in Palau, but again only if we shift alliances.”

The COVID-19 pandemic then “hit right after the Chinese body blow to our economy. The combination shrank the economy 30 percent in just five years, causing real pain for our people and eliminating budget surpluses,” he said, noting, “Palau then became the only U.S.-affiliated jurisdiction to not receive COVID revenue-loss grants” because the CCP ensured there was no revenue to lose.

“Tourism is coming back, but more slowly than ... projected,” Mr. Udui said. “Meanwhile, most of the private sector investment in Palau is from China. Palau is only five hours away from Beijing. Some of our

people, including some of our most important leaders, are tempted by Chinese offers. They see China as the best opportunity for the private sector growth we want.”

Chinese fishing fleets with factory trawlers that sweep the ocean off all sea life have forced Palau to close its waters to fishing, destroying its domestic fishing industry and world-renown sports fishery, he said.

This puts Texas-sized Palau—less than 20,000 people living across a 300-island swath—in a difficult place, Mr. Udui said, noting the United States is now installing its closest-to-Asia earliest-warning radars and extending a military runway in Palau, where it is also considering other air and seaport installations.

“We are committed to having the facilities that the U.S. military needs in Palau, but the runway on the island of Peleliu and the radars, one of which is on the island of Angaur, have caused concern in Palau, and there may have been a Chinese effort to derail the Angaur radar,” he said, noting when plans for the Angaur radar were announced, “There was opposition asserting there were already plans for a Chinese hotel and casino next door, a much more attractive development for the community.”

Asked by Mr. Tiffany if bribery is an issue in Palau, Mr. Udui replied, “I think I would say that there are clear influences towards our government officials in the form of trips or invitations for trips, or sponsored trips to Beijing, for instance, and to dinners and some of these, even in-country, where we later found out the connections to organized crime, or to the CCP, with the help of U.S. officials to identify these individuals.”

Rep. Harriet Hageman (R-Wyo.) said President Whippas has publicly chafed about “numerous occasions

where Chinese ships violate Palau’s exclusive economic zones, or EEZ. Some of these violations are Chinese surveying activities. In one recent incident, a Chinese vessel conducted questionable maneuvers over your undersea fiber optic cables.

“When it comes to the surveying,” she concluded with a question, “Does Palau have mineral or energy potential off its waters that China may desire?”

“We believe there are undersea minerals that would be of value economically” in Palau’s waters, and that Chinese “researchers” are “surveying our [fiber optics] cable. That is very evident from the tracking that we see and the requests they officially make to enter our waters. But the vessels we see are not made for research. They’re made for other purposes. We also see they are taking steps to name ridges in our waters, we suspect for a future claim to take possession of some of our northern waters.”

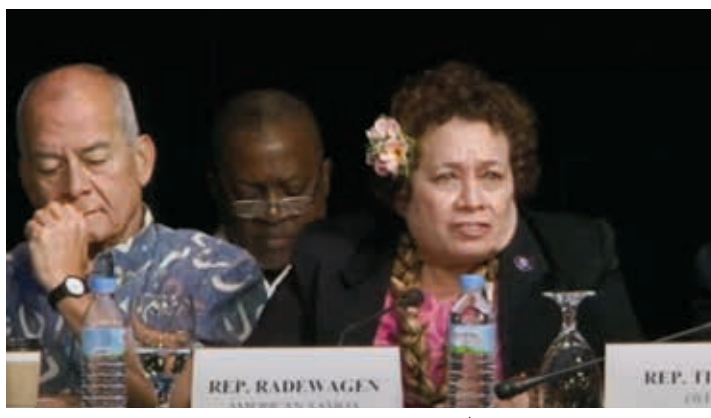
Mr. Udui said the vulnerability of those cables surfaced recently during “a week’s worth of interference” that mysteriously hampered connectivity “and we were unable to restore full service using satellite backup.”

CCP Wants the Kwajalein Atoll

Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Jack Ading testified that the sprawling freely associated state, which encompasses 1,225 islands and 42,000 residents across an area as large as Alaska, California, and Florida combined, said CCP pressure poses a direct threat to regional and U.S. homeland security.

Within the RMI, the United States has an army garrison on Kwajalein Atoll that includes the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, which supports U.S. missile and missile-defense testing, space launch, and space surveillance activities.

Speaking on behalf of President



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES GOP/SCREENSHOT VIA THE EPOCH TIMES

David Kabua, “who looks forward to meeting with you in a few days,” Mr. Ading said the CCP also artificially boosted and then tried to deflate RMI’s tourist economy while targeting its second-largest revenue generator to convince officials to end relations with the United States and disassociate from other Pacific island nations.

“Regarding Chinese efforts to get the RMI to shift its alliances, one example relates to the second-largest portion of our private sector and a major contribution to the RMI’s economy and budgets, this is RMI being one of the three largest ship registries in the world. China charges vessels flying our flag significantly more to dock at its ports than it charges the other two,” he said.

Mr. Ading said RMI is resisting CCP pressure and hoping to solidify its relationship with the United States in the proposed compact now before Congress.

Mr. Westerman said he learned much from the hearing’s testimony by territorial and freely associated state officials who appear to be calling for the United States to expand its footprint to stave off CCP adventurism.

“Congress has a responsibility to meet this challenge head-on and to protect our shared American interest,” he said. “It is for this very reason that the members of this Congressional delegation are here today—to spotlight [China’s] malignant activity in the U.S. territories and the freely associated states and examine how the U.S. will stand united against the threats, both on the continental part of our country and with our partners in the Pacific.”

“As a beacon for democracy and a strategically important counter to Beijing, the U.S. needs to increase its support of our Pacific Island territories and our treaty partners,” Mr. Lamborn agreed.

Ms. Barnes said the people of the Pacific, the “brothers and sisters of the ‘Blue Continent,’” have stood for freedom against foes for millennia and that is why they have aligned with the United States and consider themselves Americans.

“I think we have a big block of people who believe in freedom and democracy. Peace through strength is embedded and ingrained here. With the collaboration and support of ‘Uncle Sam,’ we look to sustain peace through strength as we look at these threats coming our way,” she said. “God Bless Guam. God Bless our Troops. And God Bless America. *Si Yu’us Ma’asel!*”



TRUTH *and* TRADITION

COVERING IMPORTANT NEWS OTHER MEDIA IGNORE

LEADING REPORTING ON
THE CHINESE COMMUNIST THREAT
FOR THE PAST 18 YEARS

The Epoch Times not only reports reliably on U.S. politics and the Trump administration, but also publishes authoritative China news, covering topics including:

- Impact on the United States
- Business and economy
- Communist infiltration of our government, businesses, schools, universities, popular culture, and more
- Disinformation surrounding U.S.–China trade relations
- Security and espionage
- Influence on media and Hollywood
- Overseas interference and United Front activity

The Epoch Times has also championed a new method of investigative journalism, steeped in the discipline's traditions of truth and responsibility. Combining this method with quality design, our journalists expose corruption and subversion in U.S. politics, and other important issues. Our investigative infographics have included:

- Illegal Spying on President Trump
- Hillary Clinton and the Uranium One Deal
- China's Military Expansion Into Space
- The Secret Propaganda War on Our Minds
- Spygate: The True Story of Collusion
- Clinton Foundation 'Pay to Play' Model Under Investigation

Download infographics

ReadEpoch.com/infographics

FREE newsletter signup

EpochNewsletter.com

Subscribe to the paper (print/epaper)

ReadEpoch.com

More information

TheEpochTimes.com/about-us