



10 May 2021

Hon. Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

The Committee on the Present Danger: China has, since its founding in March 2019, warned against the “unrestricted warfare” in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has long been engaged against this country and the Free World more generally. Unfortunately, during the intervening period, the magnitude of the danger posed by the CCP has only grown, as has the evidence of its success in conducting influence operations designed to obscure that reality.

Of particular concern is the extent to which U.S. individuals in the private sector and government and American non-governmental organizations, universities, corporations and news organizations have been compromised by the Chinese Communist Party’s intelligence services and its so-called “United Front Work Department.” Such compromises have been achieved via arrangements that include: contributions from or contracts with Chinese nationals, businesses or organizations; the Thousand Talents Program recruitment; Confucius Institutes on our college campuses and in K-12 curricula; newspaper advertising supplements, etc.

Before his nomination to become Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns served as president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a prominent Washington-based think tank. On Mr. Burn’s watch, the Endowment received funds from CCP-tied entities and put a United Front operative on its Board of Trustees. In our view, these relationships should have precluded an individual from holding even a basic security clearance, let alone serving in so sensitive a position as the leader of America’s preeminent intelligence organization.

We learned recently, moreover, that Mr. Burns seriously misrepresented in sworn testimony to the United States Senate the nature and timing of his dealings with such Chinese Communist Party-associated persons and organizations. *The National Pulse* reported on April 30th:

Despite President Biden’s Central Intelligence Agency Director Bill Burns [testifying](#) he cut ties to a Chinese Communist Party-linked influence group, *The National Pulse* can reveal the [controversial relationship](#) between the Carnegie Endowment – previously led by Burns – and the Chinese Communist influence group continued through 2021.

Burns became president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in March 2015 and claimed, during Senate confirmation hearings, that he merely “inherited” the think tank’s longstanding relationship with the China-United States Exchange Foundation (CUSEF).

CUSEF is part of the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Work Department, which seeks “to co-opt and neutralize sources of potential opposition to the policies and authority of its ruling Chinese Communist Party” and “influence foreign governments to take actions or adopt positions supportive of Beijing’s preferred policies,” [according](#) to the U.S. government.

Purporting to be “increasingly worried about the expansion of Chinese influence operations,” Burns, who currently leads the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was adamant [before the Senate that] he cut Carnegie’s ties with CUSEF “not long after” he began his tenure.

Burn’s statements, however, are at odds with a report published by the Carnegie Endowment on April 8th, 2021: [“China-U.S. Cyber-Nuclear C3 Stability.”](#)

“This paper was produced through a three-year dialogue led by Carnegie and the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, with inputs and review provided by American and Chinese technical and military experts,” a Carnegie press release reads, revealing the project began in 2018.

The Shanghai-based, Chinese Communist Party-run think tank working alongside the Carnegie Endowment admits “financial support” from CUSEF fueled the endeavor. As Chen Dongxiao, President of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, buries in the 61-page report:

“I also hope that SIIS and Carnegie will continue to conduct joint research around U.S.-China cybersecurity issues and make greater contributions to U.S.-China relations. As always, Shanghai Institute for International Studies is grateful for financial support from the China-United States Exchange Foundation to help SIIS taskforces conduct joint research on U.S.-China relations, including this pathbreaking work with Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.”

The paper itself focuses on tackling “cyber threats to nuclear command, control, and communications systems” – despite Chinese Communist Party entities routinely conducting cyberattacks against U.S. interests, including government [agencies](#).

Mr. President, it would appear that Mr. Burns lied under oath about what he himself described as “Chinese influence operations.” Contrary to his [testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence](#) on February 24, 2021 – on the basis of which that panel voted unanimously for his confirmation, the Carnegie Endowment continued to engage directly and/or indirectly with one of the most prominent of those entities: the China-United States Exchange Foundation. Indeed, Carnegie jointly sponsored with the Shanghai Institute for International Studies *a project funded by CUSEF* aimed at influencing U.S. cyber security policy with respect to a singularly sensitive military function: nuclear forces command and control.

Mr. Burns’ testimony is also belied by the fact that in 2016 he welcomed Zhang Yichen to the Carnegie Endowment’s Board of Trustees. Mr. Zhang is the CEO of CITIC Capital Holdings, a

subsidiary of CITIC Group, a state-owned investment enterprise. He has given over a million dollars to the Endowment in recent years. He is also tied to not one, but *two*, Chinese influence operations: the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the Center for China and Globalization.

The website of a Chinese embassy depicts the CPPCC as a "United Front organization under the leadership of the Communist Party of China" that is "actively engaged in exchanges with foreign countries for the purpose of strengthening the friendship with people in foreign countries." [The Center for China and Globalization](#) is "a Beijing-based think tank also linked to the communist apparatus."

Worse yet, [Mr. Zhang's contributions](#) enabled the Endowment to establish the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center at Tsinghua University in 2010. As Senator Marco Rubio noted in his questioning of Mr. Burns during the February 24th hearing, the highly regarded [Australian Strategic Policy Institute's China Defense Universities Tracker](#) rates "Tsinghua University [as] very high risk for its high level of defense research and alleged involvement in cyberattacks [including against the United States]."

[The Chinese themselves](#) describe Tsinghua University's role this way: "In advancing military-civil fusion, Tsinghua also continues its 'fine tradition' of serving China's national security and defense, actively creating new platforms and initiatives to support this strategy."

In short, Mr. Burns actually had no problem with his organization being associated with Chinese influence operations long after he became its president. He was, moreover, clearly comfortable with having one of its operatives in a key leadership position. And he allowed the Endowment to do business with an actual arm of the People's Liberation Army unless, as he told the Senate, its fellows at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center are unable to "conduct independent research."

Mr. Burn's record contradicts his testimony about being worried about Chinese influence operations, shows he ignored the risks of partnering with them and bespeaks both a lack of awareness about Chinese tradecraft and judgment that could be serious national security risks at the CIA.

For all these reasons, we urge you to ask immediately for the resignation of William Burns as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Sincerely,

Brian T. Kennedy, Chairman, Committee on the Present Danger, China; President, American Strategy Group

Frank J. Gaffney, Vice Chairman, Committee on the Present Danger, China; former Assistant Secretary of Defense (Acting)

Hon. William Bennett, former Secretary of Education and Drug Czar

Hon. Ed Timperlake, former Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Hon. Chadwick Gore, former Assistant Secretary of State (Acting)

Lieutenant General William "Jerry" Boykin, U.S. Army (Ret.), former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence

Lieutenant General Thomas McInerney, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), former Assistant Chief of Staff,
United States Air Force
Lieutenant General Steven Kwast, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), former Commander, Air Education and
Training Command
Hon. Kenneth deGraffenreid, former Deputy National Counterintelligence Executive
Bradley Johnson, former Chief of Station, Central Intelligence Agency
Charles “Sam” Faddis, former Clandestine Services Officer and Director of the Office of Weapons
of Mass Destruction Terrorism, Central Intelligence Agency
Colonel Robert Maness, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), former Vice Commander, 55th Airborne
Intelligence Wing
Colonel John Mills, U.S. Army (Ret.), former Director, Cybersecurity Policy, Strategy, and
International Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense
Dr. Peter Pry, former Chief of Staff, Congressional Electromagnetic Pulse Commission
Richard Manning, former Public Affairs Chief, U.S. Department of Labor
Dr. Anders Corr, Principal, *Journal of Political Risk*
Mark Helprin, author and essayist
Chet Nagle, former Executive Director, Committee on the Present Danger
Suzanne Scholte, President, Defense Forum Foundation
Maura Moynihan, former Radio Free Asia/Nepal bureau chief
Kevin Freeman, founder, National Security Consultants Institute
Sean Lin, Ph.D., Survivor, Tiananmen Square Massacre

cc: Hon. Kamala Harris, Vice President of the United States
Hon. Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor to the President
Hon. Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence
Hon. Mark Warner, Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
Hon. Marco Rubio, Vice Chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
Hon. Adam Schiff, Chairman, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
Hon. Devin Nunes, Ranking Member, House Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence