Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHINA

March 10, 2026

Interim Director Mr. Brian Stone
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Ave
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Interim Director Stone,

I urge a review of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Safeguarding the Entire Community of the U.S. Research Ecosystem (SECURE) initiative based on significant research security concerns the Select Committee on China has identified. Additionally, I encourage you to consider an alternative and repurpose the SECURE center into a national research security center that continues to meet research security requirements.

NSF's SECURE initiative is a five-year, $67 million program. The program includes awards of $50 million to the University of Washington (UW) and $17 million to Texas A&M University (TAMU). Stanford University's Hoover Institution is also participating in the initiative, along with several university co–principal investigators. The program is intended to develop tools, data infrastructure, and analytic capabilities for assessing research-security risks.[1] Faculty from UW and TAMU – the same institutions now charged with designing systems and processes to protect taxpayer-funded research – have been collaborating with People's Republic of China (PRC) defense research and industrial base entities, many of which are on various U.S. government national security entity lists, as detailed in this letter.

Institutions entrusted with U.S. taxpayer dollars to safeguard the nation's research enterprise should not simultaneously enable foreign adversaries to access and exploit sensitive research and taxpayer-funded scientific advances. When universities fail to enforce their own meaningful research security standards, they risk diverting U.S. innovation, talent, research, and federally funded discoveries to support the military and technological advancement of strategic adversaries, directly undermining U.S. national security and economic leadership.

I urge NSF to pause current SECURE award activity and conduct a comprehensive review of TAMU, UW, and other institutions participating in the initiative, including an assessment of the institutions' compliance with the following:

- National Security Presidential Memorandum 33 (NSPM-33) requirements, including disclosure, conflicts of interest/commitment, and malign foreign talent recruitment program (MFTRP) prohibitions;
- Compliance with Section 117 of the Higher Education Act, including whether the institutions have fully and accurately disclosed all foreign gifts and contracts, as required by law;
- Violations of the terms and conditions of the SECURE contract;
- U.S. export control laws, including potential violations involving dual-use or controlled technologies;
- Collaborative research with PRC military-affiliated entities documented in recent peer-reviewed publications;
- Engagement with entities on any U.S. government entity list;
- Ethical concerns and human rights implications arising from recent research outputs involving any PRC research partners, including those related to surveillance, AI, and facial recognition technologies;
- Any potential violations of the Wolf Amendment, which prohibits the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) from engaging in bilateral cooperation with the PRC government or Chinese government–affiliated organizations in NASA-funded or NASA-related research without prior certification.

University of Washington

UW has engaged in high-risk research relationships with PRC military- and defense-linked institutions that appear on U.S. government entity lists due to the threats they pose to U.S. national security. From 2023 to 2025, the Committee identified multiple cases that raise serious concerns about UW faculty collaborations with concerning PRC institutions and whether the university adequately prioritizes U.S. national security and the protection of our research and innovation ecosystem.

- A 2025 publication co-authored by a UW faculty member included personnel from PLA Unit 31680 and received support from a PLA medical university,[2] raising the alarming possibility that UW staff are effectively supporting PLA-funded operational research. According to public reporting, PLA Unit 31680 appears to support operations in the domains of artificial intelligence (AI), Combat Planning, and Tactical Electronic Jamming.[3]
- A 2025 publication co-authored by the UW Director of the Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium (PacTrans) included researchers from the Beijing Institute of Technology—one of China's "Seven Sons of National Defense" universities—on autonomous vehicle AI models with clear dual-use implications.[4] The UW professor identified in this publication has maintained an extensive record of collaboration with the PRC over many years, particularly with entities tied to China's defense research and

industrial base. This includes collaborations with nearly all PRC "Seven Sons of National Defense" universities, resulting in almost 100 publications between 2011 and 2025.[5] During this same period, the UW professor also worked on multiple U.S. Department of Transportation–funded awards, some of which remain active.[6]

- 2025 and 2024 infectious disease modeling research was co-authored by a researcher at UW and the PRC's Academy of Military Medical Sciences (AMMS) State Key Laboratory of Pathogen and Biosecurity.[7,8] AMMS was placed on the BIS Entity List in 2021 for its role in brain warfare and militarized biotechnology.[9] The UW researcher is the Director of Research Strategy, who is listed as a key contributor (of note, this researcher appears to have numerous publications with AMMS).[10]
- A 2024 publication co-authored by UW faculty from the Department of Applied Mathematics on research funded by the National Institutes of Health included researchers from the Beijing Computational Science Research Center (CSRC, 北京计算科学研究中心),[11] an entity affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics (CAEP)—the PRC's primary nuclear weapons research and development complex supervised by the Central Military Commission.[12] CSRC was placed on the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) Entity List in 2020.[13]
- A 2024 publication on data fusion and deep learning was co-authored by researchers from UW and Beihang University.[14] Beihang University is one of the PRC's "Seven Sons of National Defense" and has been listed on the BIS Entity List since 2001.[15] The Beihang co-author conducts research on AI-enhanced next-generation wireless networks, swarm intelligence, and confrontation technologies.[16]
- A 2023 publication on ceramic composite research was co-authored by UW researchers and researchers from Central South University's State Key Laboratory of Powder Metallurgy.[17] The State Key Laboratory of Powder Metallurgy (粉末冶金国家重点实验室) is principally engaged in defense research, and some non-government sources refer to it as a "national defense" laboratory.[18] This laboratory conducts research on high-temperature alloys for jet turbines used in fighter aircraft and missile systems; ultra-high-temperature carbides for hypersonic vehicles; high-entropy alloys for armor-piercing applications; ballistic impact performance of advanced materials; and materials relevant to stealth technologies.[19]
- A 2023 publication co-authored by researchers from UW and the University of California–Riverside involved collaboration with the Ocean University of China's Frontiers Science Center for Deep Ocean Multispheres and Earth System on Arctic region research.[20] The publication explicitly acknowledges both U.S. researchers received support from the Belmont Forum, under Grant No. NSF-1536175, and NASA under Grant No. NNX14AR40G.[21] According to USASPENDING.gov data, NASA grant NNX14AR40G was awarded to UW, well after the Wolf Amendment was passed into law.[22] This collaboration may violate the Wolf Amendment, an appropriations law that has been in effect since 2012 that prohibits bilateral agreements and coordinated activities

between NASA (or NASA-funded researchers) and entities affiliated with the PRC, unless a waiver has been explicitly granted by Congress and certified by the FBI.

Texas A&M University (TAMU)

The Committee identified numerous publications involving TAMU faculty that reflect sustained research relationships with China's defense research and industrial base, many of which appear on U.S. government national security and entity lists, including the PLA's National University of Defense Technology, the "Seven Sons of National Defense," and an entity subordinate to the CAEP, China's primary nuclear weapons research and development complex. These research partnerships span critical fields such as quantum chemistry, AI explainability, hyperspectral imaging, and tensegrity robotics, technologies with dual-use implications that are routinely targeted and exploited by the Chinese military and outlined in the PRC government's industrial policies.

- A 2025 publication analyzing the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) data was co-authored by researchers at TAMU and the People's Liberation Army's National University of Defense Technology (NUDT).[23] NUDT is the PLA's premier scientific research university.
- A 2025 publication on nonlinear dynamics research was co-authored by TAMU and the University of Kentucky and acknowledges support from Phase I and Phase II under NASA's Innovative Advanced Concepts Program. The research was conducted bilaterally with a Chinese researcher affiliated with the Laoshan Laboratory in Qingdao, China.[24] This may be a Wolf Amendment violation as this was collaborated bilaterally with China. While the publication does not list a specific NASA award number to further verify information, it acknowledges that the work was supported by NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) Phase I and Phase II projects.
    - One of the TAMU researchers is the Director of the Land, Air, and Space Robotics (LASR) Laboratory—an aerospace engineering and robotics research facility at TAMU. The lab conducts research to solve challenging problems in the fields of astrodynamics, spacecraft proximity operations and rendezvous, autonomy, robotic sensing, swam robotics, and tensegrity. Some recent applications of our work include space domain awareness, aquatic and on-orbit proximity operations, adaptive detumbling of uncontrolled spacecraft, and entry, descent, and landing (EDL) testbed development. The TAMU lab claims they are affiliated with NASA, the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), the NSF, the Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Naval Research (ONR), and others.[25]
- A 2024 publication on hyperspectral imaging was co-authored by TAMU professor and researchers from two PRC institutions:[26] the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT), a "Seven Sons of National Defense" university that is on various U.S government entity lists for its deep integration with the PLA; and the Wuhan Institute of Technology's

Hubei Key Laboratory of Intelligent Robotics, a university co-administered by the State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND). The co-authorship and shared research on hyperspectral imaging—a technology with surveillance, radar, missile guidance, and military remote sensing applications—underscore serious national security concerns given the direct transfer of advanced signal processing techniques across adversarial lines.

- A 2024 publication on thermal infrared imaging was co-authored by a TAMU professor and researchers from the PLA and a SASTIND co-administered school.[27] This research involved collaborations with the PLA's National University of Defense Technology-State Key Laboratory of Complex Electromagnetic Environment Effects on Electronics and Information System (电子信息系统复杂电磁环境效应(CEMEE)国家重点实验室).[28]
- A 2023 publication on metallic nanostructures was co-authored by a researcher from TAMU and the Beijing Computational Science and Research Center (CSRC, 北京计算科学研究中心).[29] The research was funded by the National Science Foundation. CSRC was established in 2009 within CAEP and supports research in enhancing capability in national defense and technology, promoting foreign academic exchanges and cooperative research, and advancing China's strategy of military-civil fusion integration.[30] CSRC was added to the BIS Entity List in 2020 for procuring U.S.-origin items for activities contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States, and for being owned, operated, or directly affiliated with CAEP.[31]

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These joint research projects detailed above raise serious concerns about allocating taxpayer dollars for research security initiatives to institutions like TAMU and UW—institutions with documented and ongoing failures in safeguarding U.S. research from PRC defense entities. It is troubling that U.S. institutions that collaborate with China's defense research and industrial base, its nuclear weapons programs, its mass surveillance infrastructure, and institutions on U.S. government national security lists are being entrusted to co-lead the development of national research security frameworks. In several instances, these collaborations have occurred under U.S. government–funded research, including co-sponsorship by federal agencies, undermining the very purpose of a secure and resilient research enterprise.

America's federally funded research is intended to maintain and expand U.S. technological advantage economically and militarily. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that research partnerships and collaborations with entities linked to the PRC military—particularly those identified on U.S. government national security entity lists—could aid China's own economic, science and technology, and defense development efforts.

Universities and federal agencies must do far more—and act proactively—to protect our research and innovation ecosystem. The current posture of passive openness is being systematically exploited by foreign adversaries who understand exactly how to leverage our scientific transparency, collaborative culture, and decentralized oversight. American research institutions cannot continue operating under the assumption that openness alone is a virtue when that openness is being weaponized against us. Protecting the U.S. innovation base requires intentional, forward-leaning measures: rigorous vetting of foreign partners, meaningful conflict-of-interest and conflict-of-commitment enforcement, systematic monitoring of high-risk collaborations, and a willingness to prohibit certain collaborations with China's defense entities.

In light of these concerns, we request that NSF pause NSF SECURE funding while conducting a review of TAMU, UW, and other institutions' participation in the award/program.

Additionally, I respectfully request responses to the following by March 31, 2026:

1. Will NSF pause the SECURE contract and conduct a full review, as outlined earlier in this letter? Subsequently, will NSF provide this committee with the results of their full internal review?
2. Please provide the award and contract details for the SECURE Initiative.
3. Does NSF believe it is appropriate for universities to use U.S. taxpayer funds to conduct research in collaboration with known Chinese defense research and industrial base entities or entities implicated in human rights violations?
4. Will NSF update its terms and conditions to expressly prohibit the use of award funds to conduct research with, or for the benefit of, any entity that appears on a publicly available U.S. government entity list? If not, please explain why.

Sincerely,

John Moolenaar

Chairman

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