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Hearing on “Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC’s Political Warfare and Transnational Repression”

Wednesday, July 23, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.

James P. McGovern
Commissioner, Congressional-Executive Commission on China

As prepared for delivery

Chair Sullivan, Co-Chair Smith, thank you for convening this hearing, the first of the 119th Congress.

Senator Sullivan, congratulations on your appointment as chair of this bipartisan Commission. I served as chair in the 116th Congress. I hope you find it as rewarding and productive as I did.

At that time my co-chair was Senator Marco Rubio. His deputy staff director was Peter Mattis, who sits at the witness table today. It is good to see you back here Peter.

Our biggest accomplishment was the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. This has been a landmark bill. It is human rights legislation with teeth. It applies a real enforcement action – an import ban – to a failure to meet a human rights standard – forced labor.

This bill happened because of the quality work by the professional staff at this Commission. They performed the research, organized a roundtable and a hearing, and helped draft the legislation.

The staff are a valuable resource. I hope you appreciate their work as much as I did.

The Commission’s biggest work product is the Annual Report. It assesses the status of human rights and rule of law in China. It has proved useful not only to policymakers in Congress and the Executive Branch, but to lawyers helping asylum seekers fleeing persecution in China.

But I worry about the quality of this report moving forward.

The 2024 Annual Report includes 322 citations to Radio Free Asia, 52 to Voice of America, 58 to China Labor Bulletin, 40 to Freedom House, and 17 to China Labor Watch.

Each of these organizations has reduced or ceased operations, or been forced to close, due to the decisions of the Trump Administration, which has illegally withheld funds appropriated by Congress.

What will future reports look like without these sources? What insight will we miss? What information will we never see?

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act would not have been possible without the reporting of the Radio Free Asia Uyghur service. It has been our best source of information from inside Xinjiang. And basically the only source of information that Uyghurs get from the outside world.

Now it is all but gone.

What future legislation will the Commission not accomplish because its best sources of information have been eliminated by President Trump?

Today's hearing looks at transnational repression through the lens of Taiwan, and how the Chinese government reaches beyond borders to try to silence people in Taiwan and in the diaspora.

Transnational repression is a concern for all of us. Federal agencies, including the FBI, have taken important strides to address these abuses.

I am pleased to have joined Co-chair Smith and former Chair Senator Jeff Merkley as sponsors of the *Transnational Repression Act* to strengthen the whole-of-government effort against TNR. I hope we can reintroduce it soon.

On June 24, I chaired a hearing of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on transnational repression. We received policy recommendations to strengthen interagency and multilateral coordination to combat TNR. We heard from Freedom House, whose demonstrated expertise on TNR did not protect it from having its grant terminated by the State Department.

I don't make such criticism to be partisan. I make it as a matter of policy.

We are shooting ourselves in the foot. We reduce our ability to understand China. We give gifts to the Chinese government. We vacate spaces their influence fills.

If we really want to help the Taiwanese people resist Beijing's influence, we need invest in counter-TNR resources, rather than pull back. This requires the courage to stand up and say no to DOGE and to President Trump.

The people of Taiwan are wonderful. Taiwan is not the People's Republic China.

But we cannot forget that this Commission's focus is the People's Republic of China. Our mandate is to assess the Chinese government's compliance with international human rights

standards. Not American or Chinese standards. Global standards, as established by UN instruments and treaties.

The rights that the people of China are entitled to enjoy are universal -- not rights as determined by the Chinese government, or by American politicians. Universal rights. The Commission's work must reflect this.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to an informative hearing and to the Commission's work this Congress.