



By: TA | AP Insight

# How China exploits US-funded research on nuclear technology?



China is exploiting partnerships with U.S. researchers funded by the Department of Energy to provide the Chinese military with access to sensitive nuclear technology and other innovations with economic and national security applications, according to a congressional report published Wednesday.

The authors of the report say the U.S. must do more to protect high-tech research and ensure that the results of taxpayer-funded work don't end up benefiting Beijing.

They recommended several changes to better protect scientific research in the U.S., including new policies for the Department of Energy to use when deciding whether to fund work that involves Chinese partnerships.

The investigation is part of a **congressional push** to raise a **firewall blocking** U.S. research from boosting **China's military buildup** when the two countries are locked in a tech and arms rivalry that will shape the future global order.

Investigators from the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce identified more than 4,300 academic papers published between June 2023 and June of this year that involved collaborations between DOE-funded scientists and Chinese researchers.

About half of the papers involved Chinese researchers affiliated with China's military or industrial base.

Particularly concerning, investigators found that federal funds went to research collaborations with Chinese state-owned laboratories and universities that work directly for **China's military**, including some listed in a Pentagon database of Chinese military companies with operations in the U.S.

The report also detailed collaborations between U.S. researchers and groups blamed for cyberattacks as well as human rights abuses in China.

## China pushes back on the findings

The Chinese Embassy in Washington said the select committee "has long smeared and attacked China for political purposes and has no credibility to speak of."

"A handful of U.S. politicians are overstressing the concept of national security to obstruct normal scientific research exchanges, a move that wins no public support and is bound to fail," embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said.

The Energy Department routinely funds advanced research into nuclear energy and the development and disposal of nuclear weaponry, along with a long list of other high-tech fields like quantum computing, materials science and physics.

It doles out hundreds of millions of dollars each year for research. The department oversees 17 national laboratories that have led the development in many technologies.

**The Pentagon in a recent two-year period funded hundreds of projects in collaboration with Chinese entities linked to China's defense industry**

The report followed a number of congressional investigations into federally funded research involving Chinese scientists and researchers.

Last year, a report released by Republicans found that partnerships between **U.S. and Chinese universities** over the past decade had allowed hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding to help Beijing develop critical technology that could help strengthen its military.

Another investigation this year revealed that the Pentagon in a recent two-year period funded hundreds of projects in collaboration with Chinese entities linked to China's defense industry.



## House committee researchers offer ways to tighten rules

The Energy Department has failed for decades to take steps to ensure the research it funds doesn't benefit China, the report's authors found.

They made several recommendations to tighten the rules, including a new standardized approach to assessing the national security risks of research, as well as requirements that the department share information about research ties with China with other U.S. government agencies to make it easier to spot problems.



*The Energy Department has failed for decades to take steps to ensure the research it funds doesn't benefit China*

“These longstanding policy failures and inaction have left taxpayer-funded research vulnerable to exploitation by China’s defense research and industrial base and state-directed technology transfer activities,” the authors concluded.

The Department of Energy did not immediately respond to questions about the report and its recommendations.

Rep. John Moolenaar, a Michigan Republican who chairs the select committee, said in a statement that the “investigation reveals a deeply alarming problem: The Department of Energy failed to ensure the security of its research and it put American taxpayers on the hook for funding the military rise of our

nation’s foremost adversary.”

Moolenaar this year introduced legislation aimed at preventing research funding in science and technology and defense from going to collaborations or partnerships with “foreign adversary-controlled” entities that pose a national security risk.

The legislation cleared the House but failed to advance to become part of the annual **sweeping defense policy bill**.

It was met with strong opposition from scientists and researchers, who argued that the measures were too broad and could chill collaboration and undermine America's competitive edge in science and technology.

In an October letter, a group of more than 750 faculty members and senior staffers from American universities told congressional leaders overseeing the armed services that the U.S. is in a global competition for talent.

They called for “very careful and targeted measures for risk management” to address security concerns.