

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 31, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

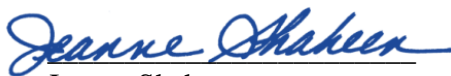
We write to you with concern that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has undertaken a campaign to recruit current and former U.S. service members to bolster the PLA's military capabilities.

According to an Air Force memorandum, the PLA has recruited service members to exploit the sensitive military tactics, techniques and procedures used by the U.S. military.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Chinese government has reportedly used companies that are both overtly and covertly backed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), including using deliberately innocuous and vague job descriptions and promising lucrative pay, to deceive veterans into working for the PLA. Similar targeted recruiting of military veterans has also been exposed in the United Kingdom, where the Chinese have sought to hire former pilots to teach NATO aircraft and aerial doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of these concerning actions to lure service members and veterans into service with the PLA, we drafted legislation that was included in the U.S. Senate passed Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act that would prohibit former service members from seeking employment with the security and military services of the CCP and other countries of concern.<sup>3</sup> However, this issue requires immediate attention. Therefore, we urge you to take all action that is immediately available to resist this targeted recruitment of veterans and separating service members. As part of your response, we recommend you develop and disseminate counterintelligence material to educate service members of the threat and the consequences of their actions. Finally, we request a briefing on the threat posed by CCP recruitment of former U.S. service members and what steps you are taking to rebut those efforts and ensure that any violations of criminal statute, including the Espionage Act, are referred to the appropriate prosecutorial entities no later than December 15<sup>th</sup>.

These actions by the CCP to gain insight on and exploit U.S. national security information and tactics present a current and ongoing threat to our national security. We stand ready to provide you with the appropriate legislative authorities needed to defend against these malign efforts.

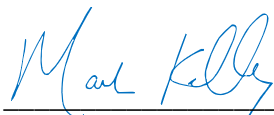
Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Tom Cotton  
United States Senator



Mark Kelly  
United States Senator

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CC: General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

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<sup>1</sup> General Brown, Charles Q. Letter to Airmen. 5 September 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Corera, Gordon. "Ex-UK pilots lured to help Chinese military, MOD says." *BBC*, 18 October 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-63293582>.

<sup>3</sup> Senate-version of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (S. 2226). Section 582, "Prohibition of former members of the Armed Forces accepting post-service employment with certain foreign governments."