



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

Thank you for your leadership of the Department through the unprecedented crisis brought on by the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) disastrous mismanagement and cover up of the COVID-19 coronavirus. As the Lead Republican of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I commend the bravery and dedication of the U.S. diplomatic corps and I will make sure that they get the support they need for themselves and to best assist Americans abroad in this time of need. I write today to urge you to continue your efforts to counter the CCP's dangerous coronavirus disinformation campaign and suggest ways we might work together on this crisis.

I fully agree with your statement yesterday that "The Chinese Communist Party poses a substantial threat to our health and way of life." The CCP's coronavirus coverup is indicative of a regime that values power more than human lives. By causing a local outbreak to become a pandemic, their system, which is designed to censor anything that could be a threat to the regime, is putting millions of American lives at risk. The CCP is carrying out a disinformation campaign in an attempt to transfer blame to the United States that is exacerbating this dire situation. The State Department has demonstrated considerable flexibility and ingenuity in responding to the CCP's information warfare, and I urge you and your team to continue these efforts and to coordinate with willing allies.

The tragic CCP coronavirus coverup is a call to action and a call for fairness. It is no longer tenable for Chinese propaganda outlets to have unrestricted access to the United States when the CCP restricts, intimidates, and even commits violence against employees of our media outlets in China. While U.S. media companies primarily report from China to an international audience, CCP-controlled media are allowed to report directly to the American people, including through paid advertisements that may appear to be news but amount to government propaganda. Furthermore, CCP propaganda outlets and officials can use the open internet to spread misinformation among Americans, while the Chinese internet is censored and closed.

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Recently, I sent a letter to several social media and internet advertising companies that highlighted my concern that CCP officials and media outlets are exploiting the openness of their platforms to carry out an orchestrated disinformation campaign. It is unreasonable for CCP officials to block market access for these U.S. social media platforms in China—especially when Chinese social media platforms have no similar restrictions in the United States—but register verified accounts on the same platforms to spread lies around the world. Regrettably, the actions taken by these companies have been insufficient to safeguard their users from the current CCP disinformation campaign on COVID-19, and other information warfare such as their whitewash of their horrific crimes against Uyghurs and other minorities. As a result, I have urged these companies to ban all CCP media outlets and their officials from their advertising and social media platforms.

Going forward, to continue protecting Americans from CCP disinformation, I recommend that you consider:

- Pursuing a multilateral investigation into the CCP's coronavirus coverup, which will underscore that their pandemic enabling malfeasance is not just an American concern, but a global one. To refute the CCP's dangerous disinformation campaign, United States should work with likeminded democracies, including Taiwan, to produce a definitive account of the origins of the virus, the CCP's culpability, and whether CCP influence undermined the legitimacy of the WHO at this critical time.
- Directing our posts abroad to issue a global demarche with evidence of the CCP's role in allowing the virus to spread.
- Releasing as much unclassified and declassified material as possible to more fully inform the American people and the world about this coverup and subsequent disinformation campaign.
- Briefing Members of Congress, at the appropriate time, on the CCP's coronavirus coverup, global disinformation campaign, and how the United States and our allies plan to respond.
- Continuing your efforts to bring reciprocity to U.S.-China relations. Your recent measures against Chinese propaganda outlets send an important signal that the United States will take necessary actions to address asymmetries across our bilateral relations. The CCP's recent expulsion of several American journalists and firing of local researchers at independent U.S. media outlets should require the Administration to consider full reciprocity for journalists.
- Sending a formal legislative proposal to the House and Senate for any new authorities you may need to most effectively address the CCP's disinformation campaign and any other proposals you may have as they relate to our great power competition with China.

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The CCP's information warfare against the United States on coronavirus and other matters underscores that the Department's counter disinformation and public diplomacy efforts are more important than ever.

I will keep working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure the Department has all the authorities, resources, and backing it needs to continue to reorient U.S. messaging for a new era of great power competition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. McCaul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee