



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

May 31, 2024

Case No. FL-2023-00013

Reed Rubinstein
America First Legal Foundation
611 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, #231
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Rubinstein:

As we noted in our letter dated May 31, 2024, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State (“Department”) has identified one additional responsive record subject to the FOIA. Upon review, we have determined that this record may be released in full.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing these records and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Kevin Bell, U.S. Department of Justice Trial Attorney, at kevin.k.bell@usdoj.gov and (202) 305-8613. Please refer to the case number, FL-2023-00013, and the civil action number, 22-cv-03386, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne Miller". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jeanne Miller
Chief, Programs and Policies Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

People's Republic (PRC) of China Efforts to Amplify the Kremlin's Voice on Ukraine

Government officials and state and party media from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) routinely amplify Kremlin propaganda, conspiracy theories, and disinformation. This amplification rationalizes President Putin's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine while undermining trust in the United States and other countries, democratic institutions, and independent media. Using social media platforms banned within the PRC, PRC and CCP media and PRC "wolf warrior" diplomats convey biased Kremlin talking points to audiences in multiple languages and regions across the world. Meanwhile, within the PRC, CCP and state-backed entities censor credible reporting on Russia's atrocities in Ukraine while blaming NATO and the United States for Putin's brutal war of choice. The "pro-Russia neutrality" of PRC officials avoids explicit public endorsement or condemnation of Russia's invasion of and conduct in Ukraine, and continues to insist Beijing is a neutral stakeholder that respects the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations." However, PRC and CCP media and officials' further uncritical amplification of Moscow's messaging demonstrates Beijing's support for Russia.

PRC TOOLBOX TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION ON UKRAINE:

- PRC and CCP media **present unverified information and claims sourced from Russia's state-run media and officials**. In a feedback loop, Russia's state-run media then **cite PRC and CCP media to portray Russia's position as widely supported**.
- PRC and CCP media favorably cover Russia's false narratives, while heavily **censoring and editing U.S. and other officials from democratic countries and independent media, as well as critical voices from within the PRC, regarding Russia's war against Ukraine and atrocities committed by Russia's forces**.
- PRC "wolf warrior" diplomats **boost Kremlin narratives by amplifying and reposting content from fringe media outlets and anti-NATO and anti-U.S. influencers who align with Beijing's narratives**. Frequently, this content appears in PRC, CCP, and Kremlin propaganda.

TIMELINE OF PRC SUPPORT FOR RUSSIAN DENIALISM & BLAME-SHIFTING ONTO THE WEST:

FEBRUARY 2022 – PRC SUPPORT IN THE LEAD UP TO AND INITIAL FRAMING OF RUSSIA'S INVASION: Just prior to Russia's February 24, 2022, full-scale invasion of Ukraine, PRC and CCP media and officials labeled U.S. and other reports of Russia's imminent invasion a failed "disinformation" campaign and "information terrorism" – echoing Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova's earlier statements. PRC and CCP media and officials have since conspicuously refused to call Russia's unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine a "war," instead calling it a "crisis" or using the Kremlin's official term "special military operation," while primarily using the word "invasion" in "whataboutism" rhetoric aimed at redirecting outrage at the West, NATO, and the United States.

MARCH 2022 – HEAVY AMPLIFICATION OF KREMLIN MESSAGING REGARDING U.S.-

SPONSORED BIOLABS IN UKRAINE: On March 8, PRC MFA Spokesperson Zhao Lijian began amplifying Russia's debunked disinformation alleging the United States sponsored biological weapons laboratories in Ukraine, including direct amplification of disinformation pushed by Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, a frequent contributor to U.S.-sanctioned pro-Kremlin outlets South Front and News Front. **These fabricated accusations build on years of previous opportunistic messaging both by Russia and the PRC.** According to a GEC research partner, PRC amplification of disinformation surrounding U.S. bioweapon laboratories in Ukraine **ultimately became one of the PRC's largest disinformation campaigns since 2018**, with messaging targeting audiences in multiple languages and regions around the world.

APRIL 2022 – DENYING KREMLIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATROCITIES IN BUCHA: After Ukraine accused Russia of war crimes against civilians in Bucha, near Kyiv, PRC authorities suppressed discussion of the topic within the PRC and officials called for an investigation **without acknowledging evidence that discredits Russia's denialism.** On April 3, Russia's MFA and MoD claimed the "footage from Bucha [is]... a staged provocation by the [Kyiv] regime." In the days following Russia's statement, PRC state and party-backed media amplified Russia's **conspiracies that the United States and Ukraine may have fabricated evidence of the atrocities**, even as PRC officials called for "all sides" to refrain from "politicization" and "unfounded accusations."

APRIL 2022– DEFLECTING BLAME FROM KREMLIN FOR KRAMATORSK BOMBING: PRC officials and state media avoided reporting facts that would indicate Russia's responsibility for attacks against civilian targets even when, on April 8, a Tochka-U ballistic missile struck the main railway station in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, killing more than 50 people, including five children, and injuring hundreds. The Russian MFA denied responsibility for the strike, saying only Ukraine was known to use the missile in question, despite evidence that Russia has previously deployed these weapons. As with Bucha, PRC officials responded to the Kramatorsk bombing by calling for a full investigation and for "all sides" to refrain from "politicization" and "unfounded accusations." PRC media and Consul General in Osaka, Japan, Xue Jian, went so far as to **repost the Russian conspiracy theory that Ukraine is responsible for bombing its own civilians in Kramatorsk.**

For additional information about PRC and CCP efforts to amplify the Kremlin's disinformation, you can visit: New York Times, The Atlantic, The Diplomat, the BBC, the Alliance for Securing Democracy, and DoubleThink Lab.