

INTELLIGENCE

## U.S. Intelligence Tracks Chinese Military-Linked Purchases of Land Near Strategic Bases



BY DR. NADIA HELMY JANUARY 25, 2026

*AI generated image*

US intelligence concerns are mounting regarding the purchase of strategic US farmland and real estate by former Chinese military officers and other entities linked to China. These purchases are located near sensitive US military, air, and nuclear bases. Furthermore, US farmland owned by Chinese individuals has been discovered adjacent to a US military base housing US nuclear ballistic missiles. Chinese purchases have been observed near sensitive sites, such as Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas, and Francis E. Warren National Nuclear Base in Wyoming. American military experts have raised the alarm regarding the ownership of two golf courses by a Chinese intelligence officer located near Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, especially because Barksdale is a vital base that controls aspects of what is known as the “American nuclear triad.”

This has fueled American accusations against China, namely that its massive investment in purchasing thousands of acres of farmland and land across the United States, near vital American military and nuclear bases and facilities, has heightened suspicions that Beijing is using them to spy on American institutions, facilities, and military and nuclear bases. This has sparked a wave of American security and military concerns about espionage and the monitoring of Chinese military movements within Washington. This was echoed by US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, who stated that “foreign ownership, particularly by Chinese individuals, of land near strategic bases and American military installations poses a

A report issued by the “U.S. Department of Agriculture” (USDA) revealed that Chinese ownership of approximately 384,000 hectares of farmland in the United States is significant. While this represents only one percent of all foreign-owned farmland nationwide, it is twice the size of New York City. The USDA identified the most serious issue as the proximity of Chinese-owned land to U.S. military sites, including 370 hectares near Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, which houses drones. The Chinese have applied for a permit to build a corn mill just 19 kilometers from the base.

Here, U.S. Agriculture Secretary “Brooke Rollins” expressed concern about Chinese espionage activities through the expansion of Chinese purchases of American farmland and agricultural land. She warned that these purchases could be used to spy on U.S. military and nuclear installations and bases. Rollins announced the “National Action Plan for the Security of American Farms,” emphasizing that “the U.S. administration will work with state and local governments to take swift legislative and executive action to prevent Chinese citizens and other foreign adversaries from purchasing American farmland.”

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A series of recent purchases of American farmland by a former Chinese military officer, who acquired thousands of hectares of farmland adjacent to a military base in Texas, has heightened U.S. concerns about Chinese ownership of farmland and its location, further fueling fears of escalating Chinese espionage activities within the United States.

To counter Chinese ownership of American farmland and its use for illicit activities such as espionage, as alleged in the US indictment, Washington has tightened restrictions through the “Committee on Foreign Investment” in the United States, which is known as (CFIUS). CFIUS aims to address these Chinese investments, which are considered a threat to US national security, especially given the increasing volume of Chinese investment within the US. Chinese investors own hundreds of thousands of acres of American farmland. The most serious scenario, however, is the discovery by the CIA that most of this land, whose Chinese ownership is significant, is located in sensitive US locations. Some of this farmland is situated near strategic military, air, and land bases, particularly in the heart of Texas, raising concerns about Chinese surveillance of US military activities.

To counter these challenges and Chinese investments within the United States, which are of an intelligence and military nature, the relevant US intelligence, security, and military agencies have taken several countermeasures, most notably updating the rules of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to expand its jurisdiction to include real estate purchases by foreign entities. In addition, the US has developed plans to prevent Chinese citizens and foreign adversaries from purchasing agricultural land near sensitive sites. With increased congressional scrutiny and state-level restrictions on foreign real estate investments, these Chinese purchases, in particular, are now viewed as a potential attempt at espionage and undermining US national security, prompting the US administration to take swift legislative and executive action.

Here, Chinese intelligence activities in the United States are considered one of the greatest contemporary security challenges, described by the FBI as “the most serious threat to America’s economic and security future.” The most prominent features of this activity and its recent developments up to the beginning of 2026 can be summarized as *follows*: (Chinese “Police” Transnational Centers): US authorities have revealed the existence of secret, undeclared police centers run by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS). One of these centers was located in Manhattan, New York. These secret Chinese police centers aim to monitor and pursue dissidents who have sought refuge in the United States and to track them down within the US. Furthermore, the US has repeatedly accused China of cyber espionage and widespread hacking. In late 2024 and 2025, extensive Chinese hacking targeting major US telecommunications companies, such as AT&T and Verizon, was revealed. Chinese hackers successfully accessed federal surveillance systems and sensitive data belonging to members of Congress and presidential campaigns. Amid US accusations that China is targeting American infrastructure, officials have warned of the Chinese cyber group “Volt Typhoon.”

According to the American accusations, the “Volt Typhoon Chinese cyber group” seeks to implant malware in water, energy, and communications networks to disrupt them in the event of a military conflict between China and the United States. The

American economy billions of dollars annually. Furthermore, the US has expressed concerns about China's infiltration of academic circles. Cases have been documented of scientists and researchers (some Chinese and some American) who have allegedly smuggled sensitive biological materials or technical information from university laboratories, such as the University of Michigan, to Beijing. With other US accusations against China of military espionage and buying land to spy on US military bases and installations: Repeated attempts by Chinese citizens to photograph sensitive US military installations have been detected, and US concerns have been raised about Chinese-linked entities buying farmland near US strategic air and military bases.

In response to repeated accusations that China has infiltrated the United States, the US has attempted to recruit Chinese personnel. The CIA recently released videos in Chinese aimed at recruiting Chinese dissidents and opponents, a move seen as a response to the surge in Chinese attempts to recruit US military personnel and officials. Numerous figures and facts revealed by US authorities highlight the FBI opening a new case related to China approximately every 10 hours. Furthermore, the US has documented, according to its indictment of China, more than 60 cases of espionage linked to the Chinese Communist Party across 10 US states between 2021 and 2025.

During the period from 2024 to 2026, US legislative and regulatory efforts intensified in response to Chinese ownership of agricultural land and real estate near US military installations and sites. A key measure was the expansion of the powers of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS).

In November 2024, the US Treasury Department implemented new rules that granted "CFIUS" the authority to review real estate transactions near more than 60 additional military installations. Furthermore, numerous state laws were amended. More than 26 US states, including Texas, Florida, and Idaho, passed laws prohibiting or restricting foreign adversaries from owning agricultural land. In July 2025, Idaho began enforcing a mandatory divestment of such properties by the end of 2025. Concurrently with the preparation of numerous bills and legislation concerning Chinese and foreign ownership of agricultural land and real estate in the US Congress, bills such as the "Protect Our Farms and Homes from China Act" and the "Base Protection Act" were introduced in 2025. These bills aimed to prohibit Chinese ownership within 100 miles of any military installation.

*As for the Chinese position on these legal and legislative measures*, Beijing criticized these American restrictions, describing them as protectionist and undermining agricultural cooperation. China considered these concerns to be based on "misinformation" and unfairly targeting Chinese farmers and companies.

