

INVOLUNTARY RETURNS

**China's covert operation to force
'fugitives' overseas back home**



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About Safeguard Defenders

Safeguard Defenders is a human rights NGO founded in late 2016. It undertakes and supports local field activities that contribute to the protection of basic rights, promote the rule of law and enhance the ability of local civil society and human rights defenders in some of the most hostile environments in Asia.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When China launched its much-touted Operation Fox Hunt (猎狐) in 2014, a programme to forcibly return fugitives overseas accused of corruption back home, the government had already claimed that some 18,000 officials had fled abroad.¹ Fox Hunt, which seeks to extend the reach of China's transnational repression, is intricately linked to General Secretary Xi Jinping's domestic "anti-corruption" drive (反腐败斗争), a campaign that is seen as key to the CCP's survival. With the Chinese diaspora growing at an ever faster rate as more people seek to leave China, and with the CCP keen to keep control of them also, Beijing has never been more motivated to expand the powers of its security forces overseas.

Almost all of the claimed ~10,000 people returned to China since Operation Fox Hunt began have been through non-judicial procedures, including illegal operations on foreign soil.

Even before Xi Jinping took power in 2012, China faced resistance in securing foreign governments' cooperation in repatriating its citizens. Many countries were hesitant to enter into extradition agreements with China, and even when deals were struck, the agreements often limited the kinds of people it covered to specific target groups, and even then, extradition requests were sometimes denied.

Against this backdrop, China launched multiple campaigns, some using alternative means, to force the return of target individuals. The scale of these operations, even according to official statistics, has been growing, and there is little to indicate that this will change.

This report exposes **three methods** China employs, outside of bilateral agreements (extradition and deportations), to forcibly secure the return of Chinese fugitives and other targets abroad. This report calls these "*involuntary* returns" in contrast to the CCP's portrayal of these as "voluntary returns." We have found that the vast majority of the 10,000 cases are handled in one of these three ways.

A combination of persuasion, intimidation and harassment is used, either via the target's family, relatives and loved ones still in China (type 1) or by agents approaching the target overseas (type 2). Threats centre on warnings that family members will be arrested or worse, unless the fugitive returns. For type 2, agents may include Chinese police officers working illegally in the target country, as well as locally hired individuals. China describes both types as "persuasion"

***Involuntary* returns:**

The use of non-traditional, often illegal, means of forcing someone to return to China against their will, most often to face certain imprisonment. Methods range from threatening family back in China, sending agents to intimidate target in host country, to direct kidnappings.

(劝返) or “negotiated returns”. Type 3 is the use of state-sanctioned kidnapping, called “irregular methods”(非常规措施) in Chinese, which also includes covert cooperation with host country forces to trick the target into heading to a third country where they can be extradited or simply handed over to Chinese agents for deportation without due process.

This report goes into detail to explain how each type is carried out, along with extensive data and case studies. We also include an analysis of the legal framework created by China as late as 2018 to legalise and regulate repatriations including involuntary returns that have been carried out in over 120 countries². **This includes an official legal interpretation outlining the use of kidnapping.** Type 2 and type 3 cases undermine the judicial sovereignty of target countries, and are clear violations of international rules, and customary State-to-State behaviour. In some cases, China uses involuntary returns first. If this fails, it then moves on to legal methods – extradition or deportation under immigration law. But the reverse order has also been observed; efforts to extradite or deport the individual have failed, thus *in*voluntary return is attempted. *In*voluntary returns are a cornerstone in the expansion of China transnational repression, yet the phenomenon is little known in the West.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| CCDI | Central Commission for Discipline Inspection |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CL | Criminal Law |
| CPL | Criminal Procedure Law |
| NSC | National Supervision Commission |
| NSL | National Supervision Law |
| MPS | Ministry of Public Security (police) |
| MSS | Ministry of State Security |
| IR | <i>In</i> voluntary returns |
| SD | Safeguard Defenders |

INTRODUCTION

Family members of a Chinese national living abroad are visited by their local police at home. Soon thereafter, the relative abruptly returns to China, praises the Party, and goes on trial.

Chinese police enter another country on tourist visas and visit a Chinese national living there, who then reappears back in China, with State media reporting him having returned to face justice.

A Chinese national abroad disappears. Rumors say they've been drugged and kidnapped. Later they reappear back in China, but no immigration record of them leaving exists. Trial follows.

This report examines China's practice of *in*voluntary returns (IR) – the forced return of Chinese nationals (or non-Chinese nationals born in China) located overseas using one of three methods – threats to family back in China; targeting individual overseas; or kidnapping. Official data from China shows that these operations are growing more widespread. This report exposes how China is employing these methods in addition to more traditional approaches, such as extradition and deportation, which are carried out through open and legal channels of cooperation with the host country. There has never been a more urgent need to understand these covert operations, as one recent report on transnational repression put it bluntly; *“China conducts the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world.”*³

Chinese political cartoonist Jiang Yefei (姜野飞) was likely not expecting to be handed over to Chinese agents in 2015 when he was released from Bangkok immigration detention because he had already been granted official refugee status by the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Yet, that's exactly what Thai officers did. Jiang was then smuggled back to China. He remains in prison.⁴ Two years later in 2017, tycoon Xiao Jianhua (肖建华), who is a Canadian citizen, was abducted by Chinese agents from his suite in the luxurious Four Seasons Hotel in Hong Kong. CCTV cameras show him being pushed out of the hotel in a wheelchair, head covered by a blanket, by a dozen people also dragging a huge suitcase.⁵ He has never been seen since, although there are reports that he was spirited back to the mainland to help with police investigations.⁶ Up until 2018 almost 10 similar suspected kidnappings in Australia have taken place according to one source; one victim was reportedly beaten, drugged and taken back to China by sea.⁷

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The use of non-traditional, often illegal, means of forcing someone to return to China against their will, most often to face certain imprisonment. Methods range from threatening family back in China, sending agents to intimidate target in host country, to direct kidnappings.

These cases of extraordinary measures may be the most eye-catching. Most victims however are targeted by coercing their loved ones back in China to persuade them to return or harassed by one of the roving squads of agents, across Australia, Canada and the US, but also occasionally in Europe.

Data in this report, from State and Party bodies, show that China is extending its reach overseas and ensuring that efforts to force returns are more effective so that targets can be sentenced back in China. One way China is doing this is by building a legal framework to legitimise these operations [see page 18]. The catalyst for these changes was Xi Jinping's "anti-corruption" campaign launched as he took power in 2012.⁸

Despite aggressively pursuing extradition treaties⁹ and pursuing immigration law-based deportations, the vast majority of targets who return are coerced via these non-legal channels. In addition, many IR are carried out in such a way as to directly undermine the judicial sovereignty of host countries. What is most surprising is that China is now no longer hiding this covert practice, it has officially "broadcast" the necessity of sometimes employing practices that classify as IR [see page 17].

This report uses case studies to illustrate each of the three involuntary return methods and presents what data there is available to show how the scope of these returns has expanded, particularly since Xi Jinping came to power.

Three types of IR are analysed in this report; those whose return is sought by threatening retaliation against family members or loved ones still in China (type 1); those whose return is sought through threats delivered by having agents in the country of their location (type 2); and those that are kidnapped and brought back to China (type 3).

TYPE 1: Threats to family in China

After Xie Weidong (谢卫东), a former judge on China's Supreme Court, moved to Canada he publicly criticised China's criminal justice system. Chinese authorities accused him of corruption and then attempted to get him to return "voluntarily". When he refused, police detained his sister and then his son back in China. Police also reached out to his ex-wife, a former long-time business

partner and others, such as the lawyer who was representing his sister, all with the aim to persuade him to return. Having been a judge, Xie knew very well what was in store for him should he return and he continued to refuse despite the retaliation against his family members and others. China even sent a lawyer to Canada to persuade him in person in vain.¹⁰

These methods are not exhaustive. Sometimes Chinese nationals abroad are forced to return because the Embassy refuses their request to renew their passports, others are targeted via cyber-attacks and harassment¹¹, while others are harassed through the misuse of Interpol red notices.¹²

China's transnational repression does not end with forced returns. Chinese nationals detained under immigration law have been known to have been visited by Chinese officials and given an ultimatum: accept deportation to China or stay in the host country in exchange for spying on the Diaspora.¹³ Others are harassed using the methods of types 1 and 2, not to have them returned, but to silence them. Sometimes, the threats are delivered as a warning that China 'can get you' if they want. A dramatic example is the use of fleets of fake Chinese police cars cruising through towns in California with large Chinese populations and the same in Australia.¹⁴ Activists from Uyghur and Tibetan communities and also Falun Gong practitioners are even sometimes issued with death threats in order to force them to be silent or return to China.¹⁵ This report will not go into these types of transnational repression, but is merely stated to highlight that IR as a form of transnational repression does not exist in a vacuum.

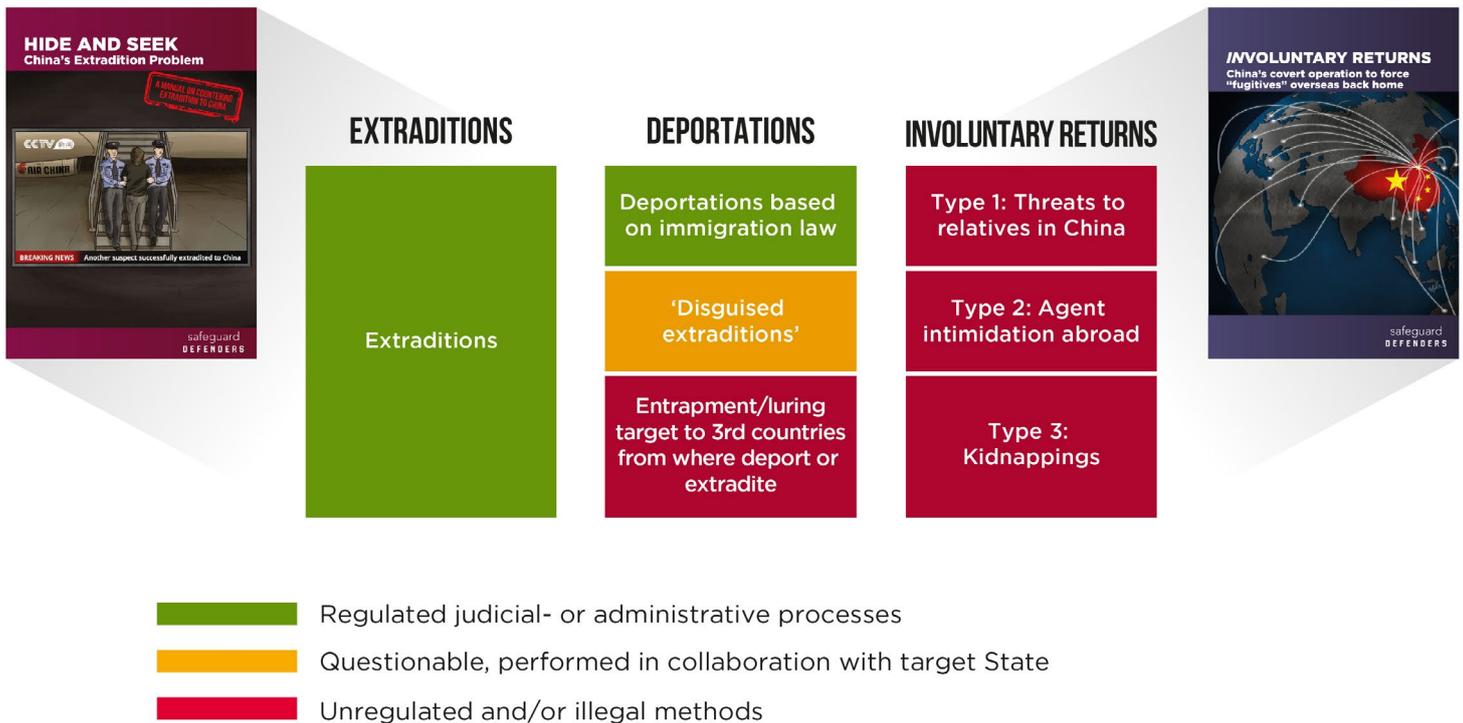
TYPE 2: Targeting victim in foreign country

The first known case of Chinese agents operating undercover in Australia to forcibly return someone is that of Dong Feng (董峰) in late 2014, just months after Xi launched the international arm of his anti-corruption campaign (Fox Hunt). Dong, who had obtained Australian citizenship was a tour group operator and bus driver. He was also a Falun Gong practitioner. Undercover Chinese police officers approached Dong

in Melbourne to persuade him to return and face "justice". He initially agreed to communicate with them because of threats to his family back in China, but in the end, he refused to return and stayed in Australia. However, the news that Chinese police were working undercover in Australia leaked out, causing a diplomatic spat between Canberra and Beijing.

Involuntary returns: China's covert operation to force 'fugitives' overseas back home complements our sister report, *Hide and Seek: China's Extradition Problem*, released concurrently on February 28, 2022, that covers China's expanded use of extraditions to force the return of 'fugitives.' Safeguard Defenders (SD) is also investigating the use of immigration law to have targets deported back, and separately, has released two reports on the misuse of INTERPOL red notices and diffusions.^{16,17} From our research, we conclude that these legal methods – extradition, deportation and INTERPOL mechanisms – are used on only a fraction of those people who are targeted by covert means (IR).

CHINESE LONG-ARM POLICING VS FOCUS OF THIS REPORT



Official data claims that China had successfully returned nearly 10,000 people since the launch of Fox Hunt mid-2014. However, almost none of these were legally processed. The figure of ~10,000 is also likely just the tip of the iceberg. Those targeted but who refuse have clear reason to keep a low profile, to avoid escalation, while those that are returned are unlikely to speak out. Very little data is made public on these returns and what little is published is almost always on those sought for “economic crimes” or Party members or State functionaries. The real number of returns and the real number of people targeted but who do not return is entirely unknown.

TYPE 3: Kidnappings abroad

Chinese human rights defender Dong Guangping (董广平) had already served three years in prison in China on charges of inciting subversion of state power in the early 2000s and had been disappeared for another eight months in incommunicado detention in 2014. To escape further persecution, he slipped into Thailand in 2015, where he was granted official refugee status by the UNHCR (like his

friend, Jiang Yefei, see page 50). As he awaited resettlement to Canada in a Bangkok immigration detention centre, Chinese police walked in, handcuffed him in front of Thai officers, and led him out. Dong later resurfaced in detention in China (there is no official record of his having left Thailand) where was sentenced to three years in prison. He was freed in 2019 after serving his sentence.¹⁸

The expansion of the CCP's reach overseas is instrumental to Xi Jinping's "anti-corruption" campaign. With IR, the CCP's message is that nowhere is safe; fleeing overseas will not save you, there is no escape.

It is not surprising that a party like the CCP, that has always viewed opposition as an existential threat, is investing considerable

resources into expanding its reach overseas faced with a growing and often critical Chinese diaspora. The tools used, operations like Fox Hunt and Sky Net (天网); China's new National Supervision Commission (NSC); and its police and security ministries, will be analysed in detail in this report.

For this report, SD presents information on 80 cases of involuntary return actions, on 62 targets (of which 36 were returned), in 18 countries¹⁹. It has identified a further 46 cases in 10 countries²⁰, but for which not enough data could be collected to be included in the report.

There is also information on similar methods being employed on a considerable number of Uyghurs from China's Xinjiang region. The Uyghur Human Rights Project's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset²¹ contains at least 395 Uyghurs repatriated - a broad term that can include extraditions (very rare), deportations (common) and involuntary return (unknown). This issue however is not the focus of this report.

Expanding the long arm of Chinese repression is key to Xi Jinping's politically-based "anti-corruption".

FOX HUNT VS SKY NET

Operation Fox Hunt (猎狐) was launched by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), China's police, on 22 July 2014 to arrest and bring back fugitives of economic crimes including corruption and specifically those identified in Xi Jinping's "anti-corruption" campaign.²² A central task force of roughly 20 staff was established to lead the repatriation work,²³ members of which have been glorified in official media as "hunters" (猎人).²⁴

The MPS-led task force's mission was to identify and track down those who had fled; build case files on them and establish solutions for how to apprehend them, including using existing laws or security cooperation mechanisms. In addition, they were also tasked with urging the fugitives to return voluntarily; this specifically included to involving the fugitive's relatives.²⁵ It worked with the Procuratorate as well as the Party-organ Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI).²⁶ Fox Hunt continues to this day.

Operation Sky Net (天网), often confused with Fox Hunt, was launched a year later in April 2015,²⁷ under the leadership of the Supreme Procuratorate. The MPS, China's Central Bank, the Central Organization Department of the Chinese Communist Party, and the CCDI were also involved.²⁸

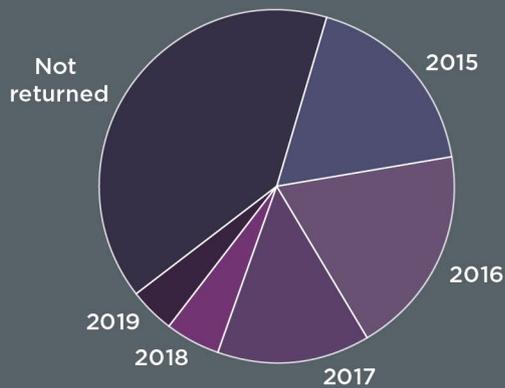
With the launch of Sky Net, Fox Hunt was folded into Sky Net as one of its many programmes. Sky Net is thus a much larger programme, containing numerous operations, of which Fox Hunt is one. In the years since its launch, Sky Net has added additional task forces, a special operations team led by MPS and Bank of China to crack down on money laundering; another led by MPS and the Central Organization Department to crack down on fake passports²⁹; and one led by the Supreme Court, the Supreme Procuratorate and MPS focused on the confiscation of illegal income from those who have fled the country.³⁰ Between 2015 and 2017, Sky Net released an annual Top 100 (百名红通人员) list of wanted persons for which China has applied for INTERPOL Red Notices,³¹ however in 2017, China stopped publicising the list.³²

In April 2018, **Sky Net's leadership was taken over by the newly inaugurated National Supervision Commission (NSC)**,³³ meaning that Operation Sky Net is now led, just like its general international judicial cooperation, by a *non-judicial* organ. The number of people involved with Sky Net or with its special operations are unknown.

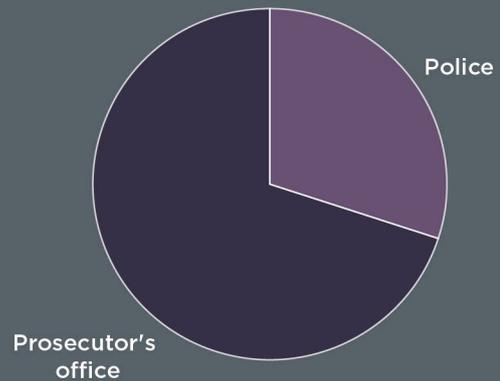
TOP 100

The Top 100 list was a specific campaign, part of Sky Net, launched 22 April 2015, which listed, publically, 100 fugitives the Chinese police were seeking internationally via INTERPOL Red Notices. It was unusual in that it was made public, and each year, the government would proclaim how many of those had been successfully returned. Most were, in the end, returned via involuntary returns and not via INTERPOL channels nor extraditions. The list, and the practice of publicizing those wanted via INTERPOL, were discontinued in 2017.

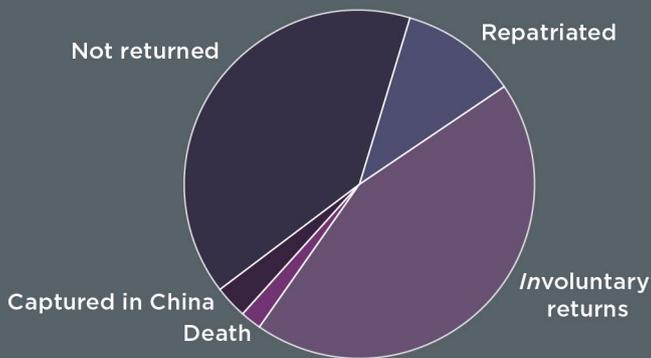
Successful returns by year³⁴



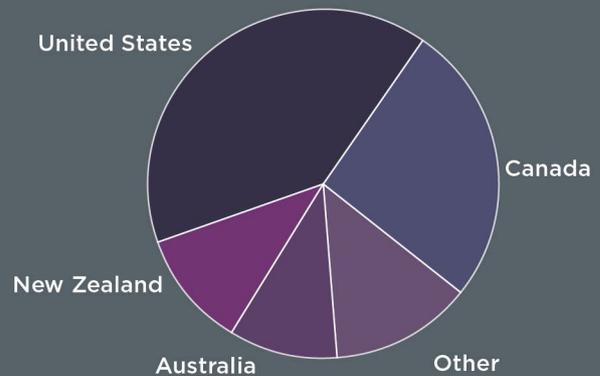
Police vs Prosecutor's office³⁵



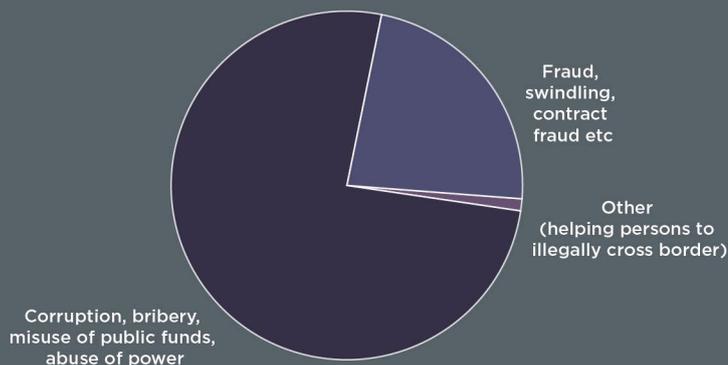
Method of return³⁶



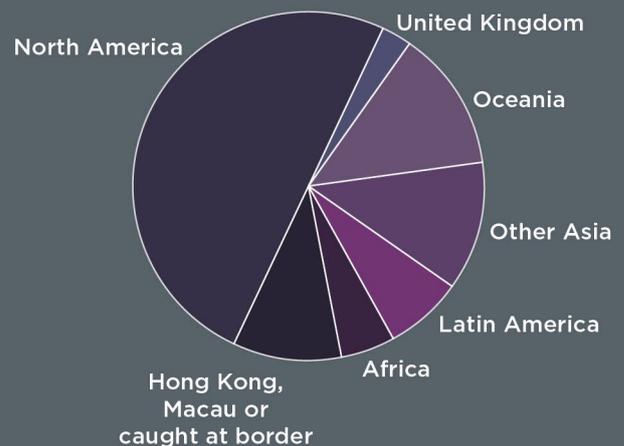
Target location³⁷



Alleged crime³⁸



Returns from where³⁹



PURPOSE

The CCP sought to control the Chinese diaspora from as early as the late 1970s and early 1980s. Then leader Deng Xiaoping referred to overseas Chinese as “living treasures” and sought their help to build up China’s economy and technical capabilities.⁴⁰ Another reason behind efforts to control overseas Chinese is the historical role they played in bringing an end to Imperial China and the establishment of Republican China in 1911/12 and a fear that this could happen again to the CCP.

There have also been numerous incidents where the CCP deliberately targeted defectors. For example, there are rumours that it ordered the assassination of former spy chief Yu Qiangsheng (俞强声) who defected in the 1980s and went missing in the 1990s.⁴¹ That the spy chief defected is of interest because the agency he was in charge of, the MSS, has suffered a string of defections even though it is one of the agencies responsible for controlling the Chinese diaspora. One former MSS agent who defected told western media that the MSS’ most important mission is “to control the Chinese people to maintain the rule of the Communist Party”.⁴² In the same interview, the defector added that the Party’s security trumped that of the country.

Examples of China’s transnational repression have multiplied since Xi Jinping came to power. Every indicator points towards a significant expansion of attempts from Beijing to control the Chinese diaspora and to bring individuals back to China.

Anti-corruption campaign

The expanded global reach of China’s police and other state actors has been directly linked to the “anti-corruption” campaign (反腐败斗争) launched by Xi Jinping in late 2012⁴³, and which remains his signature policy. What lies beneath the drive behind this campaign is a life and death struggle for the Party. It is also a campaign to enforce political loyalty, avoid in-Party factionalism and to more generally instill Party discipline. In short, it is used as a tool to strengthen the CCP’s political control and for Xi Jinping himself under the guise of attacking what is seen as a terminal illness for the party – corruption and the perception of corruption. “The dual objectives of cleaning up the party of corruption and building unassailable personal power are inseparable and mutually reinforcing,” as one 2014 Op-ed in The New York Times ran.⁴⁴

The high number of fugitives – A China Central bank report from 2008, revealed at first in 2011, stated that some 18,000 officials had fled China over between the mid-1990s and 2008⁴⁵ – indicates how much importance the CCP was placing on the operation to get them to return. Another report stated that in just the first six months of 2007 some 8,000 officials had fled.⁴⁶ This and another report indicates a clear increase in the number of officials fleeing (or merely leaving) the country, up until 2008 at least.⁴⁷ Police had claimed that in the five years leading up to 2008 that in the five years leading up to 2008, China had managed to extradite only 230 suspects.

Operation Fox Hunt was launched just a little more than a year after the start of the “anti-corruption” campaign. In 2018, after a renewed push to increase returns, the Supreme Procuratorate published a public notice, previously issued by the CCDI, offering a 130-

“Known as Fox Hunt, this operation tackles corruption. But it also serves to find and silence those who oppose the regime.”

**- David Vigneault,
Director of the SCRS (Canadian
Security Intelligence Service)⁴⁸**

day grace period for those who returned voluntarily to face justice. Put another way, they threatened those that did not return during the grace period would be severely punished if at a later date they were extradited or deported back to China. The announcement also threatened that anyone who supported or aided such targets would also face investigation and offered rewards to anyone who provided information about targets and family and friends if they helped persuade targets to surrender.⁴⁹

Increased opposition

Under Xi Jinping, the CCP has deepened, widened and strengthened its persecution of all perceived sources of opposition ranging from underground churches, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetans, Mongolians, Uyghurs, academia and the media, not to mention its sweeping crackdown in Hong Kong. All these have helped transform China’s image in the international arena. Even though there is no evidence that the general Chinese diaspora has changed its view of the CCP, outside of dissidents and activist groups, in line with a more critical attitude from the West, it is likely that Beijing, sensitive to this change, has also become more suspicious that the West will use members of the overseas community against them.

Increased asylum and emigration

Since Xi Jinping came to power, and the launch of the “anti-corruption” campaign, the numbers of people leaving China has risen sharply. The number of Chinese asylum seekers grew 700% between 2012 and 2020 according to UNHCR data. This upward trend has continued, despite global lockdowns due to the Covid pandemic. About 110,000 people from China sought asylum in 2020, while the numbers of Chinese with official refugee status by the UNHCR reached 175,585 in 2020.⁵⁰

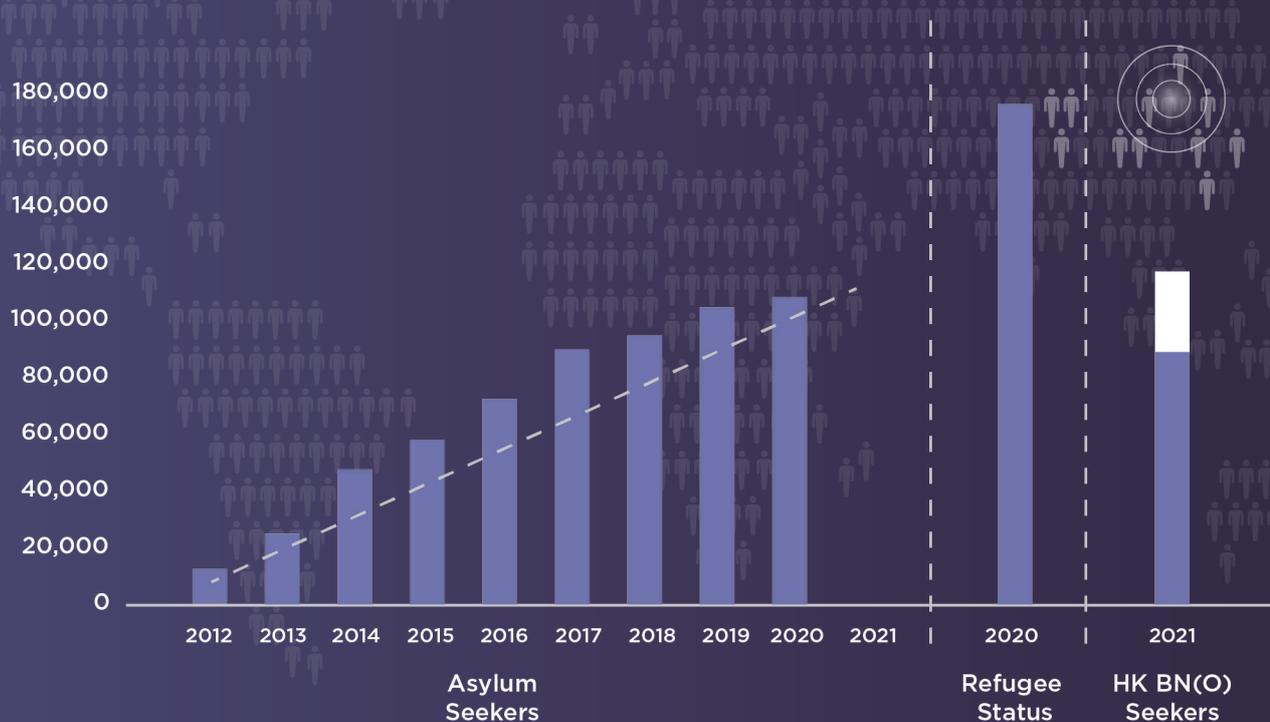
Chinese asylum seekers skyrocketed 700%, with some 110,000 people seeking asylum in 2020 despite the worldwide Covid pandemic and lockdown.

In the first three-quarters of 2021, some 88,000 applications were made by Hongkongers under the British National Overseas passport scheme for resident visas to resettle in the UK.⁵¹ There are estimates that as many as 300,000 Hongkongers will seek to emigrate

this scheme.⁵² In 2020, the Chinese territory recorded its biggest population drop since measurements began in 1961, with almost 90,000 people, which is more than 1% of the population, moving overseas.⁵³

For the wealthy, leaving China rarely entails seeking asylum or refugee status, but rather paying for a new citizenship via investment programmes. For the middle-class, job or study opportunities offer a way out. Their combined numbers are not insignificant. For example, in 2018, approximately 67,000 Chinese nationals emigrated legally to the US.⁵⁴ In 2017, Canada, another favoured destination, received some 30,000 lawful immigrants from China, a jump of 3,000 compared with the prior year⁵⁵, while Australia received about 50,000 Chinese immigrants in the same year.⁵⁶

CHINESE EXODUS



In response to the increasing numbers of Chinese going overseas and growing global criticism of China, the CCP has voiced its intention to strengthen ideological work abroad. In 2017, Xi said: “We will maintain extensive contacts with overseas Chinese nationals, returned Chinese, and their relatives and unite them so that they can join our endeavours to revitalize the Chinese nation”^{57, 58}

What passport one holds is no protection. “The party believes if you’re of Chinese ancestry then you’re Chinese anyway”, as one scholar told The New York Times in 2015.⁶⁰ To the CCP, nationality or borders no longer matter.

Lack of cooperation “forcing” alternative methods

The CCP has become less shy about making public its efforts to expand its powers overseas to capture targets and bring them home. When it does so, it cites lack of progress in securing extradition treaties with key countries, such as Australia, Canada and the US. These three have the largest overseas Chinese communities and they are also by far the largest recipients of recent asylum seekers [see page 16]. The current deputy director of the Research Centre for Government Integrity-Building at Beijing University, Zhuang Deshui openly said: “If the [extradition] treaty can’t be signed in the near future, there are other options, like return by persuasion, illegal immigration and other judicial cooperation ...” A practice he likened to a situation: “when this gate is not open, we can try the window, and if windows are not open, we can try digging holes.”⁶¹

“A fugitive is like a kite. Even though he is abroad, the string is held in China. He can always be found through his family.”⁶²

- Shanghai police officer Li Gongjing

(李公敬)

NSC vs CCDI

For a long time, CCP members were not only subject to investigation, detention and punishment via the regular judicial system for suspected criminal behaviour, but also by an internal Party-run police force called the **Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI)**. It was designed to investigate corruption, political morale, and ensure loyalty. This body was more feared than any part of China’s judicial system because it acted in secret, employing a system called *shuanggui* (双规) to keep a suspect in incommunicado detention, where they would be tortured until they confessed. In March 2018, while the world was busy watching Xi Jinping as he removed the two-term limit to party leadership, the **National Supervision Commission (NSC)** was launched. The NSC is an expanded

version of the CCDI, and its creation is one of the single greatest strikes to the rule of law in China. Designated as a state body, not a Party body like the CCDI, it is effectively a cover for the CCDI to deal with non-Party members. The two bodies are intertwined; almost all NSC data is released by the CCDI. Essentially the two agencies are one and the same. By designating it a state organ, the NSC is able to wield power over non-Party members. The NSC also has investigatory powers over the police, prosecutor’s offices and courts. **In particular, it is the NSC that is leading the growing reach of China’s policing overseas.** And despite *not* being a judicial organ, it is often the department that that leads China’s international judicial cooperation. These expanded powers are written into Chinese law.⁶³

Legal basis for fugitive hunt and use of ‘irregular methods’

China has codified these non-traditional methods for securing overseas fugitives into law through the establishment of the NSC in 2018. This non-judicial organ often called a ‘super-ministry’ has powers over the police, prosecutors and the courts, and it has gradually taken over the long arm of China’s overseas policing, and is now also operating as the lead organ for international judicial cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Article 52 of the 2018 National Supervision Law (NSL) (中華人民共和國監察法) states: “The National Supervisory Commission shall strengthen the organization and coordination of anti-corruption efforts such as international pursuit of stolen assets and fleeing persons and prevention of escape, and urge relevant entities to effectively conduct relevant work.”⁶⁴ It limits the mandate to cooperating with foreign parties when the target is already overseas (paragraph 1); working with foreign counterparts to block, freeze or recover illicit gains (paragraph 2), and monitoring and blocking targets from leaving China (paragraph 3).

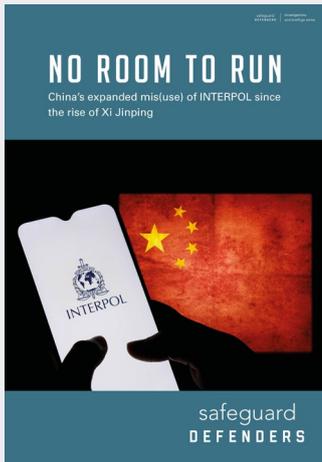
Article 9 of the new Supervision Officials Law (中华人民共和国监察官法), set to take effect in 2022, further states that supervision officials (NSC personnel) shall carry out “international cooperation against corruption” (paragraph 5), without giving any further details.⁶⁵ It also reinforces the legal powers that the NSC has to investigate crimes of abusing public office.

The interpretation of the NSL’s Article 52 (中华人民共和国监察法》释义 – 第六章反腐败国际合作第五十二条) outlines the methods available to officers in securing the return of fugitives overseas; an official nod to the NSC’s role as taking over the lead in such operations. It offers the most detailed descriptions of how ‘fugitive repatriation’ should officially be pursued.⁶⁶

“Our principle is thus: Whether or not there is an agreement in place, as long as there is information that there is a criminal suspect, we will chase them over there, we will take our work to them, any where.”⁵⁶

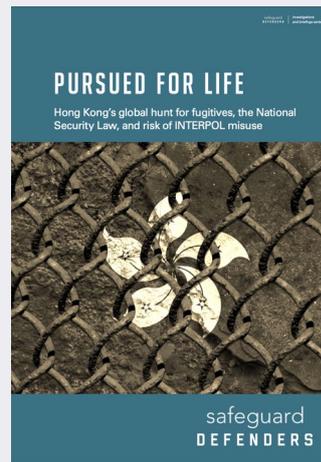
- Former Operation Fox Hunt Director Liu Dong (刘冬)

INTERPOL Red Notices and *Involuntary* returns



INTERPOL Red Notices and Involuntary returns. Most of China's public targets of Red Notices via INTERPOL have been returned instead via IR. It is but one of many forms of abuse of the INTERPOL

system by China, explored for the first time ever in SD's investigation [“No Room to Run”](#) (Nov 2021). After the pro-democracy and anti-extradition protests in Hong Kong,



and the imposition of the National Security Law, Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and government leaders have, in increasingly belligerent language, threatened to use INTERPOL, as well as other legal means to chase ‘fugitives’

around the world. This is the subject of a second investigation by Safeguard Defenders, [“Pursued For Life”](#) (Jan 2021).

The interpretation states that its main purpose “is to further clarify the NSC’s responsibilities in coordinating and supervising the work of anti-corruption international fugitive repatriation”. **The sections that relate to Article 52, paragraph 1 of the NSL greatly expands NSC powers in this regard far beyond the scope of the NSL itself.** It defines “anti-corruption international fugitive repatriation” as an international operation leading to the arrest of those suspected of corruption, bribery, dereliction of duty, or other duty-related crimes who have fled China and where there is sufficient evidence of their wrongdoing. Extradition is the formal and ideal channel of conducting anti-corruption international fugitive repatriation, it explains, adding that repatriation, persuasion, and remote prosecution are all alternatives to extradition.

The interpretation first focuses on three categories of work: extradition, repatriation (having people deported back to China via immigration law), and remote prosecution. This latter is a rarely-used option for fugitives that cannot be returned to China.

There are two common ways: (1) kidnapping (绑架), which means using the methods of kidnapping to arrest fugitives back to the country; (2) trapping and capturing (诱捕), which means luring criminal suspects to the territories of the destination country, the high seas, international airspace, or a third country which has an extradition treaty with the destination country, and then to arrest or extradite them.

- CCDI’s legal interpretation

Non-judicial means are then introduced as two further categories of work - first, persuasion - and then, alarmingly, kidnapping. “The fourth category is persuading to return, which means persuading and educating fugitives so that they would return voluntarily to face prosecution, trial, or penalty. Persuading to return is ideological and political work. Its primary method is to persuade and educate criminal suspects, including convincing them with reasons, touching them with emotion, making them know the law, and giving them the prerequisites for lighter punishments to change their minds.”

Such methods, used alone or concurrently with judicial procedures, are worrying because they undermine the judicial sovereignty of the country where the fugitive is located. However, the fifth category, called “irregular methods” (非常规措施) is the most alarming.

It notes that these methods may “cause diplomatic disputes,” adding “in practice, kidnapping or trapping and capturing are rarely used.” The fact that they “are rarely used”, is an admission that not only are they sometimes used, but that their use is officially sanctioned.

Unlike its Hong Kong counterpart, passed in 2020, China’s NSL, passed in 2015, does not explicitly mention the extraterritoriality of its reach. However, China’s Criminal Law (CL) does. Article 6 of the CL (2017), which covers jurisdiction, specifies that Chinese law applies when an act is committed within its territory. However, if the act has consequences **within China’s territory, even if it is carried out overseas**, then the act is treated as if it took place inside China.⁶⁷ Article 7 stipulates that the CL applies to acts carried out by PRC citizens even if they are not carried out inside China (provided that the penalty is at least three years); while according to Article 8, the CL applies to “foreigners outside the territory of the PRC [who] commit crimes against the PRC or its citizens” unless the act is not a crime in the jurisdiction where it was perpetrated.

The problem with this, of course, is when the NSL comes in. Article 2 of the NSL defines national security as an: “absence of international or domestic threats to the state’s power to govern, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, the welfare of the people, sustainable economic and social development, and other major national interests, and the ability to ensure a continued state of security.”⁶² With such a vague and expansive definition, there are almost no limitations to what kinds of acts can be considered endangering, or attempting to endanger, national security.

“...they [these campaigns, including Fox Hunt] are designed to undermine democratic processes and threaten Canadians in secret and clandestine ways.”

- David Vigneault, Director of the SCRS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service)⁶⁸

The CL elaborates on what is considered endangering national security crimes in 11 articles. Collusion with foreign countries, as well as institutions, organizations or individuals that endanger sovereignty is one. Planning, organizing or committing to undermine unity (splittism), is another. Perhaps the most well-known of the 11 articles is subversion of state power or incitement to subvert state power, which encompasses the act of spreading rumours as an act of subversion. Splittism and subversion conducted in collusion with overseas agencies or individuals are considered more serious and carry higher penalties. Providing funds for such acts is also considered a crime. In fact, national security is defined as the absence of threats to economic and social development, and other major national

interests, and the ability to ensure a continued state of security.⁶⁹ With such a vague and expansive definition, there are almost no limitations to what kinds of acts can be considered endangering, or attempting to endanger, national security.

Yu-Jie Chen (陳玉潔), an Assistant Research Professor at Taiwan's Academia Sinica and specialising in international law and human rights in China, said she has never seen any legal interpretation like the Interpretation of Article 52 before. Chen commented that the parts about irregular methods are saying (to Chinese officials), "Look, you also have

these options. If you have to resort to this (kidnapping or trapping and capturing), it may be alright. But they are not commonly used." However, these methods could actually have become quite common. As further explained by Chen, exceptions stipulated in China's laws often turn into the norm due to abuse by law enforcement.⁷⁰

Target groups

There are two key types of individuals that are targets of China's extraterritorial policing, as covered in this report: those suspected of economic crimes or crimes related to their official duties and, second, critics of the CCP, such as rights defenders and other activists. These are often treated differently. For the first group, the objective is to secure their return to China where they can be prosecuted. However, for the second group, the aim is rather more to frighten them into changing their behaviour, usually giving up their activism. The line between the two can often be blurred, as China usually presents such returns, or other forms of transnational repression, as related to economic crimes.

Former Justice Minister Fu Zhenghua (傅政华) – who is himself now under investigation for "serious violations of discipline and national laws" once said that China should "expand non-governmental channels as well, to squeeze the living space of cult organisations such as 'Falungong' overseas"

In addition to IR, the CCP has been using its extraterritorial powers to intimidate activists and ethnic minorities living overseas, including Tibetans, Mongolians and Uyghurs, to give up their activism, and sometimes to pressure them to spy on their communities. As noted earlier, recently Uyghurs in particular have been at the receiving end of greater transnational repression, through a variety of forms, including repatriation, at least some of whom are IR.

China only makes public data about the first type of target – fugitives listed in Operation Sky Net. Information on the second type is not made public and for the purposes of this report, data has been collected from media, NGO reports and via interviews.

INVOLUNTARY RETURNS

Our research identified three approaches to secure IR of targets overseas. More than one approach may be used against a target, if the first approach does not succeed. Often, type 1, pressuring the family back in China to persuade the target to return, is attempted first. FBI Deputy Assistant Director and chief of the China Branch of the Counterintelligence division described how it starts: “They use pressure, leverage, threats against family, they use proxies”.⁷¹ If that fails, type 2, using Chinese agents in the host country to threaten the target, is then often used.

If that too fails, and legal methods are not available, the authorities may use type 3, kidnapping and smuggling the target back to China. Examples of this, the most extreme type of IR, have only so far been recorded in Asia and Oceania.

The examples of IR presented in case studies in the following pages were undertaken outside of judicial processes, often by breaking the law of the country in which the attempt took place, and undertaken through a coordinated effort by judicial- and non-judicial organs in China and overseen by the NSC.

Alongside these methods, the State also employs encouragement to Chinese at home and abroad to help them locate targets. A notice from 2017⁷³ claimed that both Chinese people at home and abroad were helping in both locating targets, and persuading them to return. In fact, a website⁷⁴ has been established to allow people an easy manner to assist in such, and a new regulation from 2020 specifies that praise and rewards are to be given to those that assist.⁷⁵

“A message delivered in-person in the targets home country is often more effective than 20 messages delivered from China”.

“Although we talked by phone many times, this 20-minute face-to-face talk makes [a suspect] choose to return and confess.”

- Li Gongjing, a Shanghai police officer involved in the Fox Hunt program, told Xinmin Weekly.⁷²



IR 1

Visiting relatives back in China

Ask relatives in China to carry messages to target from police

Publically attacking or shaming target in State/Party media

Harassing relatives in China

Persecution outside judicial procedures of relatives in China

Persecution (prosecution / detention / imprisonment) of relatives in China

IR 2



Non-physical contact with victim in China

Non-physical contact in target country

Physical visits and meetings in target country

Sending third parties to communicate or deliver messages in target country

Sending third parties from China to engage in target country

Sending or planting threats in target country

Surveillance and stalking in target country

Other acts of intimidation in target country



IR 3

Kidnapping without target State's cooperation

Kidnapping with target State's cooperation

IR TYPE 1: LEVERAGE FAMILY IN CHINA



IR TYPE 1: LEVERAGE FAMILY IN CHINA

The first type of involuntary return focuses on pressuring family members in China to persuade the target to come back and surrender. The family may play one or more of three different roles – middleman, hostage or scapegoat.

A Shanghai police officer, who was involved in Operation Fox Hunt once described a fugitive as being: “like a kite; even though he is abroad, the string is held in China. He can always be found through his family.”⁷⁶ His words, reported by Chinese state media, are an indication of how the CCP sees family members as essential tools in tracking overseas fugitives and targets. Indeed, an official government notice published in July 2014, explicitly states that families must be “mobilised” to persuade overseas suspects to come back and surrender as part of Operation Fox Hunt.⁷⁷

A middleman

Often the first people police turn to when trying to locate and contact an overseas target are their family members or close friends.⁷⁸ Their role as middlemen is to persuade the target to return. In 2018, Zhuang Deshui, deputy director of the Research Centre for Government Integrity-Building at Beijing University said that the most common way to secure the return of a wanted suspect overseas was to use their family or friends as intermediaries as it is cheaper and faster than trying to use means, such as extradition.⁷⁹

An Interpretation of the Supervision Law⁸⁰ released by the CCDI in 2018 describes persuasion as a way to “avoid the complicated legal procedures and long judicial cooperation procedures of the countries where fugitives hide that can help to greatly reduce the cost of law enforcement for China and the other country.” According to CCDI statistics, 44 out of the 60 (or just under 75%) most wanted fugitives in China’s Top 100 list returned either through persuasion (or *quanfan* in Chinese) or on their own initiative between 2014 and June 2020.⁸¹ There is incomplete data on all returned fugitives and targets, but *quanfan* accounted for 57.35% in 2014⁸² and 37.45% in 2018⁸³ of all returns; for both years it represented the single biggest proportion of all cases.

Persuade to return (Quanfan, 劝返)

There is even a term to describe the act of persuading someone to come back to China – *quanfan* (劝返), literally “persuade someone to return”. The term was first used in 2007 when Beijing police persuaded a fugitive former official to return to China to face trial.⁸⁴ Since then, it has been adopted to describe one way “with Chinese characteristics” to pursue fugitives overseas. The Interpretation of Article 52 of the NSL further elaborates on what *quanfan* may involve.

Persuading and educating fugitives so that they would return voluntarily to face prosecution, trial, or penalty. Persuading to return is ideological and political work. Its primary method is to persuade and educate

criminal suspects, including convincing them with reasons, touching them with emotion, making them know the law, and giving them the prerequisites for lighter punishments to change their minds.

This official explanation of *quanfan* in the Interpretation is vague and innocent-sounding, with the emphasis on the words “voluntarily return”. However, in practice, *quanfan* is often much more sinister, involving deeply coercive elements. One western media outlet described “persuasion” as “Chinese investigators pressure a fugitive’s family living in China, or Chinese police travel to another country to pressure them to return.”⁸⁵

Communicating with the fugitive

Authorities may order family members to contact the fugitive by phone or video call, text message, record a video, and even personally travelling to the host country to persuade them in person [see chapter on IR type 2].

Often the first step is contact by phone, with police or agents sometimes listening in. Police may also interrupt and talk directly with the fugitive. When Xu Zheng (徐峥), a CCP critic living in exile in the Netherlands, spoke to his parents in 2021 in a 14-second-videocall, he noticed his mother was pale, nervous, and shaking her head as if she was trying to send him a warning message. His father berated him and yelled: “You goddamn traitor, betraying our motherland! You either return to surrender or go to hell!” After the end of the call, Xu’s mother texted him to say that the police had been monitoring the call.⁸⁶ In 2015, Xu Jianhong (许建红), the ex-wife of Chu Shilin (储士林), a businessman accused of stealing \$6 million and who was living in Canada, was first detained and then forced to call her former husband from the detention centre. During the call, an agent took over and warned Chu to come back to China for the sake of his family.⁸⁷

In 2015, the husband of Chen Yijuan (陈祯娟), a former China Mobile employee accused of money laundering and going into hiding in the UK, worked with the CCDI to record a video and write a letter urging his wife to come back to China. The 2019 five-part CCTV documentary⁸⁸ show (CCTV is China’s party/state broadcaster) called Red Notice (红色通缉), followed 15 “fugitive” repatriations, describing how family members handwrote letters and then sent a photo of the letter through social media to their relatives overseas, asking them to return to China.⁸⁹ In 2017, Chinese police forced Daniel Hsu, a US citizen and the son of Xu

Weiming (徐维铭), a former chairman of a state-owned company accused of embezzlement, to make a videotaped message urging his father to come back to China from the US.⁹⁰

In *Red Notice*, the sister of Huang Yurong (黄玉荣), a former official accused of embezzlement and living in the US, said: “It (her sister’s return) is a matter of national strategy. It’s not merely about your personal decision. (She) must return. There’s no way to escape.” The programme also said that Huang’s husband “voluntarily” wrote a letter asking her to come back and surrender. The documentary claimed that the appeal was the family’s own idea and they were the ones who contacted the authorities for help in making the appeal.



Screenshot of the sister of Huang Yurong in *Red Notice*, a five-part 2019 CCTV documentary on chasing fugitives overseas.

In extreme cases, authorities may dispatch family members, friends, and even lawyers to the host country to appeal to the target face-to-face, typically accompanied by officials.⁹¹ The elderly father of Xu Jin (徐进), a former Chinese official accused of embezzlement, was flown to the US against his will in 2017 to try to persuade his son to come back to China.⁹² The lawyer of former China Mobile employee Chen Yijuan’s husband accompanied Chen’s cousin to the UK in 2015 or 2016 in an effort to persuade her to return.⁹³ The father-in-law of Jiang Qian (蒋谦), a former executive of a state-owned corporation and accused of corruption, first recorded a video asking Jiang to return, and then when that didn’t work flew to Canada to plead with him face-to-face in 2016.⁹⁴

Surveillance, harassment, and threats

The types of harassment used against family members or friends to force them to persuade the overseas target to return include:

- Surveillance
- Interrogations
- Loss of employment
- Freeze of assets
- Removing children from school or parent's care
- Other threats to safety or freedom

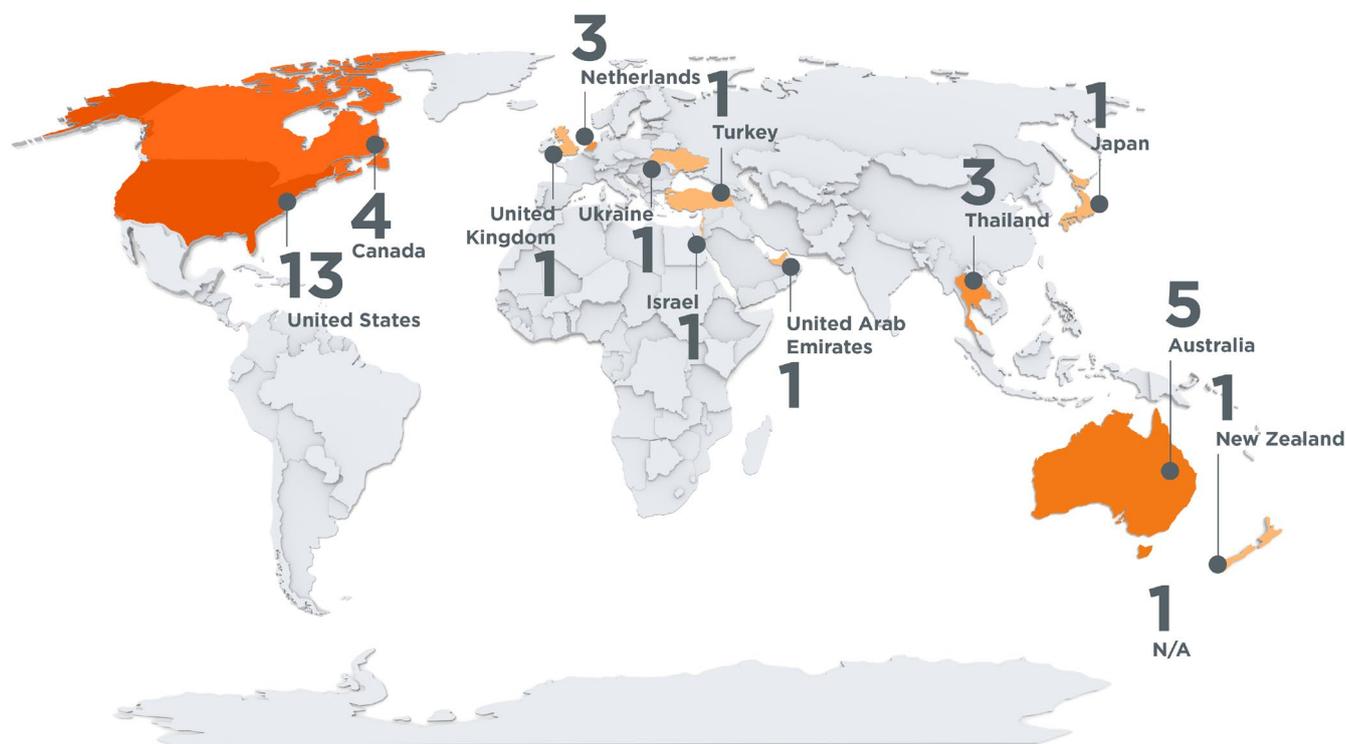
Police or agents may repeatedly visit family members or close friends at their home or workplace. Sometimes, forcing them to hand over their phones for inspection so that their communications can be tracked. For example, Peng Xufeng (彭旭峰), former head of a Chinese state-owned company living in the US who is wanted on corruption charges, described how CCDI dispatched guards to follow his parents in China and install surveillance equipment around their house.⁹⁵ Police also snatched Peng's toddler son from his grandparent's house, placing him in an orphanage and threatening to put him up for adoption unless Peng returned.⁹⁶ The brother of Li Gang (李刚), a businessman from Wuhan accused of corruption and inciting subversion of state power, and now living in exile in the US, had his salary at a state-owned company frozen and was forced to report to the procuratorate's office daily.⁹⁷ The parents of Wang Jingyu (王靖渝), a young critic of the CCP who applied for asylum in the Netherlands, both lost their jobs at state-owned corporations, according to Wang.⁹⁸ Zhou Shiqin (周世勤), a former local official charged with embezzlement who had fled to Australia, finally agreed to return to China after his sister's assets back in China were frozen.⁹⁹

A hostage

When family or friends are unable to persuade the target to return, authorities can ramp up the threat level by arresting them, effectively holding them hostage. The target is then told their release can be won if he or she surrenders and comes back to China. In such cases, police may fabricate evidence to justify the detention of family members used as hostages.

Chinese official reports describe how overseas targets initially refuse to surrender but then change their minds because of "the deterrent effect of the law, policy appeals, and family influence."¹⁰⁰ Of course it goes without saying that there are no laws or regulations giving the police or any other body the powers to hold a family member hostage in order to compel an overseas target to surrender, however, many examples have been documented with evidence from lawyers and victims, indicating that this approach is not uncommon and therefore has likely been authorised at the highest levels in the CCP.

IR TYPE 1: MAP OF COUNTRIES AFFECTED AND VICTIMS IDENTIFIED



For example, Guo Xin (郭欣), a former history professor and a named fugitive on China’s Top 100 INTERPOL Red Notice list accused of taking bribes, was coerced into returning to China from the US in 2017. Before she took her flight, she published a letter online¹⁰¹ in which she said her sister had been threatened by Tang Taihua (唐太华), deputy chief of the Yunnan Province’s Procuratorate Anti-Corruption Bureau in 2016 that the family “would not have a normal life” until Guo returned. She wrote that Tang said he had the power to use any “method to control” the family to get Guo to come back because she was on the Red List.

New York-based lawyer Gao Guangjun (高光俊), who is familiar with how China’s MPS operates, said the CCDI has made it clear to their staff that any method can be used as long as the fugitive returns and surrenders.¹⁰² A 2018 Human Rights Watch statement urging China to end harassment of the families of INTERPOL targets quoted one individual who said the police had told his family that: “the government can take ‘any actions to control’ the relatives of red notice personnel” and “they won’t live a normal life [unless he] returns to China.”¹⁰³

Detentions and interrogations

As hostages, family members are held in detention centres, thrown into black jails and may also be interrogated. In 2018, the estranged wife of Liu Changming (刘昌明), a former state-owned bank executive accused of fraud and living in the US, was held in a black jail to try to compel Liu to give himself up. Liu's wife, Sandra Han, is a US citizen.¹⁰⁴ Peng Xufeng's brother, sister, two cousins, and even in-laws were detained by security agents, likely in 2017.¹⁰⁵ Police arrested and detained the wife of Yun Jian (云健), a former tax official accused of taking bribes and who had fled to New Zealand in 2009, and then forced a relative to contact Yun to tell him about the detention.¹⁰⁶ US citizen Daniel Hsu was detained for six months in RSDL in a bid to force his father to come back to China. He was accused of being an accomplice to his father's suspected embezzlement even though at the time of the alleged crime, Hsu was a student in the US.¹⁰⁷ Former judge Xie Weidong's sister was detained in September 2016, accused of taking bribes, yet she was released and charges were dropped in January 2017.¹⁰⁸ His ex-wife said his son was also detained, and both of them were tortured to get them to beg Xie to come back.¹⁰⁹

Harassment and detentions of Uyghur families are commonplace as a means to force relatives overseas to come back. In early 2017, China ordered Uyghur students studying in foreign universities to return to Xinjiang by 20 May that year. In Egypt alone, more than 200 Uyghur students were detained, and in many of those cases their relatives in Xinjiang had been forced to call them and ask them to come back home.¹¹⁰ During that period, a Uyghur student studying at Al-Azhar University told Radio Free Asia: "They are forcing us to do this (return) by locking up the parents of each student to make them go back. My own father has been detained for the last two months".¹¹¹

China has even harassed the family members of targets **overseas**. For example, China sued Xiao Jianming (肖建明), the former chairman of Yunnan Tin Group, accused of taking bribes and living in exile in the US, and his daughter in a California state court in 2019. His former company named his daughter a co-defendant on allegations that Xiao diverted stolen funds to her. After Xiao returned to China, the charges against his daughter were promptly dropped.¹¹²

Exit bans

Exit bans are used to prevent relatives from leaving China, effectively keeping them hostage until the target gives themselves up. Exit bans are used against both Chinese nationals and overseas visitors. The situation is so serious, that many countries, including the US, Canada, and Australia, have issued travel warnings to their citizens advising them they could be at risk, even for disputes that they are not directly involved in.¹¹³

One of the better known examples is that of former banker Liu Changming's wife and two children, all US citizens, who were prevented from leaving in 2018 after visiting family in China. According to an email Cynthia, Liu's daughter, sent to a family associate, the Chinese authorities said that she and her brother were not under any investigation and the only reason they were being prevented from leaving was "exclusively to lure" their father back.¹¹⁴ The siblings were finally allowed to leave in 2021.¹¹⁵ Daniel Hsu, also a US citizen, and his wife were banned from leaving in 2017 in an attempt to get his father, Xu Weiming, to return to

China. His wife was allowed to leave in April 2020, whereas he was freed and returned to the US in November 2021.¹¹⁶ The son and daughter-in-law of businessman Chu Shilin were prevented from leaving China as a successful tactic that eventually forced Chu to return.¹¹⁷

Exit bans can now be issued not only by judicial organs (law enforcement), but also by the non-judicial organ the NSC. There are now 12 different laws and regulations allowing for placement of exit bans on targets.¹¹⁸

Exit bans are a low-cost tactic that can be extended to more and more members of the family in order to add pressure on the target to return. For example, police first stopped former tax official Yun Jian's wife from leaving the country, then when that did not work, they also banned Yun's sister and brother from leaving.¹¹⁹

Exit bans are used against both Chinese nationals and overseas visitors. The situation is so serious, that many countries, including the US have issued travel warnings to their citizens advising them they could be at risk, even for disputes that they are not directly involved.

A scapegoat

In the event that all approaches to get the target to come back to China fail, the authorities may simply punish the family in their place. The scapegoat role is thus an extension of the hostage role and is an extreme example of zhulian (see Guilt by Association text box on this page).

As in detentions for hostage purposes, police often fabricate evidence to justify the detention and arrest of scapegoats. Authorities accuse family members of conspiring with the fugitive; those connected with reported cases argue that evidence is fabricated. While sometimes the case is dropped, other times authorities carry through with trial and sentencing. For example, the history professor Guo Xin was told that unless she returned to China, all of her family, up to the third generation, including her nieces, would be banned from leaving China, although they had nothing to do with her alleged crimes.¹²⁰ Wuhan businessman Li Gang said that Chinese police had not only harassed his family but also his younger brother on trumped up charges to force him to return and told his brother that he would have to face the charges unless Li agreed to return.¹²¹

Guilt by Association

The Chinese tradition of zhulian (株连) or “guilt by association” comes from the historical practice of punishing family members of a person convicted of a crime dating back to Imperial times. Although guilt by association no longer exists in the legal system in modern China, its practice can still be seen today in how police target family members of targets as both hostages and scapegoats. Police accuse them of being accomplices, even with no evidence.

This mindset is clearly apparent in Zhuang Deshui’s comments to Chinese state media:

The Chinese government is normally in possession of the information of fugitives’ families, including their assets, when the fugitive is investigated, since they are either insiders, participants or agencies involved in crimes.

- Global Times¹²²

THE CASE OF WANG JINGYU: DETAINED IN DUBAI



Wang Jingyu, born in 2001, left China for Europe in 2019. In February 2021, he queried China's official death toll after a deadly border clash with Indian troops

in June 2020 in an online post. Police in Chongqing, Wang's hometown, said that Wang had "slandered and belittled heroes, causing negative social impacts" and said Wang was being charged with "Picking quarrels and provoking troubles". Chongqing police then harassed and even detained his parents, in a bid to force Wang to return. They also contacted Wang directly by phone to pressure him to come back. In April 2021, Wang was arrested in Dubai while changing planes for a flight to the US. He was released after the story broke in western media and human rights NGOs and the US Department of State put pressure on the UAE. Currently, Wang is applying for asylum in the Netherlands.

The persecution against my family started in February [2021]. On 21 February, only half an hour after I posted a query on my Weibo account about the number of real casualties in the China-India conflict, police or some agents went to my parents' home in Chongqing. They searched the house and confiscated lots of stuff, including computers and an iPad, and then took my parents to the police station.

That evening, they detained my parents for hours, releasing them only at midnight. Later they summoned my parents again to the police station and held them all day, only releasing them in the evening and they did this every day for quite a few days. They told my parents to call me and ask me to come back to China and surrender. My parents never did, always giving the excuse that because of the time difference, I was

sleeping. The police also threatened that my suspected crime could be "upgraded" to subversion of state power, if I refused to come back.

The police also threatened that my suspected crime could be "upgraded" to subversion of state power, if I refused to come back.

At 0:41 am on 25 February, my father pretended to take out the trash so that he could secretly call me and tell me what was happening. After Voice of America published my story [on 27 February], I have totally lost connection with my parents; their numbers are now out of service.

However, the police have continued to threaten me. On 23 February, two days after I posted the comment on Weibo, a police officer from my hometown sent me a text message saying if I did not return within three days, my parents would come to a bad end. In March, they started sending me even more absurd threats. For example, that month, Chongqing police told me to return as soon as possible because my mother was dying and was in hospital. In July, they forced my father to record a statement which refuted my criticism against the CCP which I had told media. The police emailed

me those statements and claimed that my parents went to the police station voluntarily to turn themselves in, without giving any reason. I suspect they tortured my parents. On 12 September, Chongqing police emailed me, informing me that my father had been detained. However, they said he was detained because he had told the police about someone else who had tried to get him to go to Hong Kong on an anti-CCP campaign. This is something that the CCP should have congratulated my father for doing, so why did they detain him?

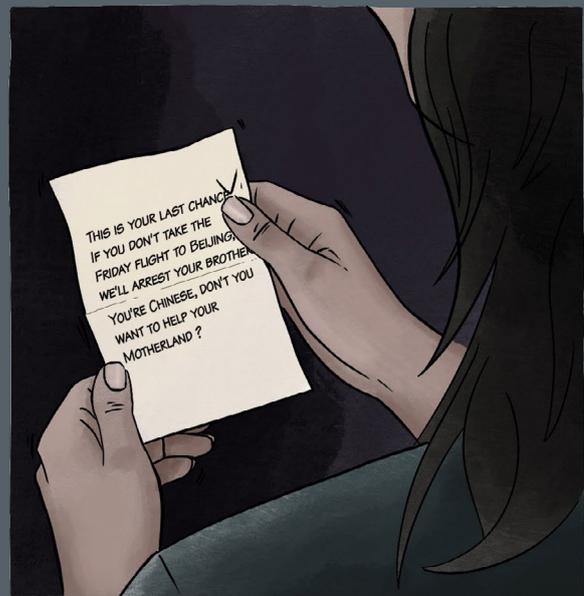


Caption: In September 2021, Chongqing police emailed Wang Jingyu, informing him about his father's criminal detention.

As well as my parents, other family members have been persecuted by the police. After I was released from Dubai in May, my uncle and aunt were called to the police station two or three times a week. They looked through their mobile phones and told them to call me and ask me to come back. My

aunt said she couldn't get in touch with me, but they didn't give up. They even visited the primary school where my young cousin studies and told him that I am a traitor and he should use his mother's phone to call me and get me to come back.

IR TYPE 2: AGENTS OVERSEAS



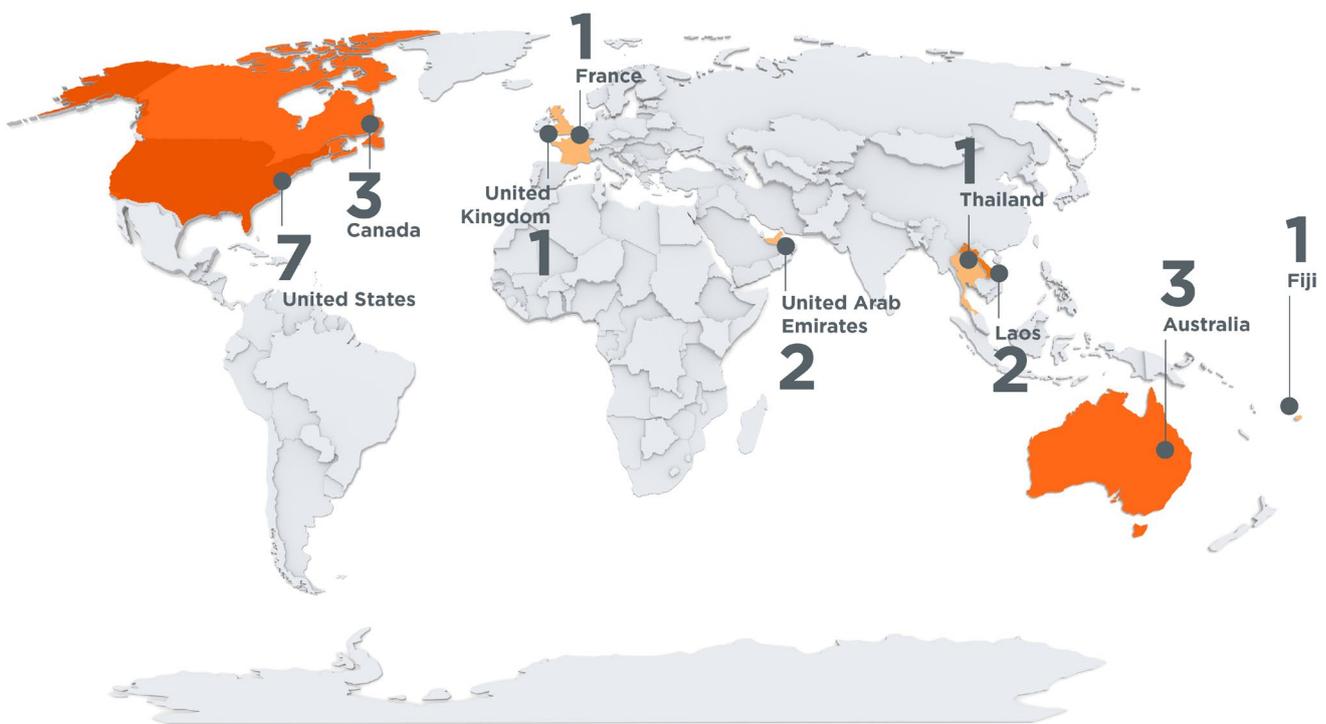
IR TYPE 2: AGENTS OVERSEAS

A riskier and more resource-intensive approach than using family to coerce the target is to send Chinese police, agents and/or non-state actors to the host country to force the target to return by offering promises or threats. These are delivered face to face, via notes left at their house, or by the indirect harassment of friends, family and associates living overseas. This approach can either be attempted legally or illegally, with the host country's permission or undercover.

While legal channels with the host country are clearly preferred, China has made it clear that not having those legal channels is by no means a barrier. Former Fox Hunt director Liu Dong is quoted as saying back in 2015:

“Our principle is thus: Whether or not there is an agreement in place, as long as there is information that there is a criminal suspect, we will chase them over there, we will take our work to them, anywhere.”¹²³

IR TYPE 2: MAP OF COUNTRIES AFFECTED AND VICTIMS IDENTIFIED



China makes no secret of this practice and indeed, since the launch of Operation Fox Hunt in 2014, the authorities have boasted about the power of China's law enforcement agencies and their achievements abroad. Take this 2015 notice posted to the CCDI's website, for example:

“Public security organs have filed investigation requests and sent over 70 working groups to more than 90 countries and regions. Special operations are fully supported by overseas law enforcement agencies, Chinese embassies and consulates abroad, and police liaison officers. All working groups have made progress. More than 30 batches of working groups have been sent to Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia and other countries and caught 229 fugitives, accounting for 34% of the total number of arrests.¹²⁴

While such working groups may not all be involved in covert operations such as *in*voluntary returns type 2 (IR2), it is clear some of them are, and for a lack of any other transparent data, the number of working groups sent overseas on such missions is an indicator of how big an operation IR2 has become for Chinese law enforcement working abroad. Accurate data on the

number of fugitives arrested overseas by Chinese agents or persuaded to return to China are not made public. Occasional media reports have cited the odd figure released by the CCDI or MPS. For example, one report in February 2015 said that the MPS had dispatched 49 police liaison officers to 27 countries to chase fugitives.¹²⁵ Another from October 2019 said that the MPS has established close law enforcement cooperation with 113 countries and regions and dispatched 81 police liaison officers to 46 embassies and consulates in 41 countries.¹²⁶

Analysing reports of individual cases reveals that often non-official actors play a part in locating, stalking and harassing the target. Such non-official actors could include people the target knows, lawyers, local private detectives, hired goons and so on. Occasionally, even family members are dispatched to pressure targets, as was discussed in *in*voluntary returns type 1.

While legal channels with the host country are clearly preferred, China has made it clear that not having those legal channels is by no means a barrier.

Diplomatic rows

China's overseas operations began arousing concern among foreign governments as early as 2015. That year, Washington demanded Beijing halt its practice of sending Chinese agents to the US on tourist or business visas to covertly track down and repatriate fugitives on US soil.¹²⁷ In 2016, a report said that Canadian intelligence services were investigating the same phenomenon there.¹²⁸ In 2018, an anonymous former Canadian official estimated that about two dozen Chinese fugitives had been targeted this way in Canada in recent years.¹²⁹

When the questionable activities of Chinese agents overseas come to light, it has caused diplomatic rows. For example, Dong Feng, a former mid-level manager at a Chinese company had already emigrated to Australia with his family when he was accused of taking bribes. Initially, China pursued him through an INTERPOL notice, but when that failed, they sent two officers to Australia to secretly visit Dong to “persuade” him to return without notifying Canberra.¹³⁰ After the story broke in the Sydney Morning Herald¹³¹ in 2015, “The Abbott government summonsed senior Chinese diplomats in Canberra and Beijing to register “deep concerns” over the “unacceptable” undercover operation”, which was followed by China

vowing “that there would be no repeat of this major breach of protocol”. This was in 2015. In 2018 a US intelligence source said some 10 people had been directly kidnapped in Australia, indicating the continuation of the same type of actions regardless.¹³²

Further government statements from around the world have made it clear they are aware of the practice.

“Without coordination with our government, China’s repatriation squads enter the United States, surveil and locate the alleged fugitives, and deploy intimidation and other tactics to force them back into China where they would face certain imprisonment or worse following illegitimate trials,”

-US Assistant Attorney General John C. Demers¹³³

In response to a question in the British parliament in 2021 about Chinese harassment of people in the UK, Minister Kit Malthouse admitted that they do not have any statistics on this practice but that they are aware of the practice of people being “being harassed by the Chinese authorities in an effort to intimidate them into silence, force them to return to China, or co-opt them into providing information on other [people].”¹³⁴

In France, with which China has an extradition treaty, a Chinese citizen wanted under an INTERPOL Red Notice was successfully returned after a squad of agents arrived in France and “convinced” him to return. Despite being in violation of INTERPOL rules, which states that any Red Notice, once a person is located, must be followed by an extradition request, no French authorities received any information about these actions, nor requests for such extradition. In fact, French authority later announced they were entirely unaware of it until the Chinese government later touted the person’s return afterwards¹³⁵, and where “very upset”¹³⁶.

In the US, the FBI prosecuted nine people in 2020 and 2021, including a Chinese prosecutor and a Chinese police officer, for similar transgressions.^{137, 138}

Working in authoritarian states

When it comes to operating in countries more aligned with China’s authoritarian style of government, particularly in Southeast Asia, China has been able to hunt fugitives much more openly and often with the cooperation of local security forces. For example, Chinese police working groups worked undercover with the Lao police to pursue former tax official Pang Shunxi (庞顺喜) and businessman An Huimin (安惠民) in Laos in 2015 [see IR type 3 chapter].

In 2016, a CCP media outlet reported that: “For countries and regions with a large number of fugitives and better conditions for arrest, the public security agencies sent special working groups, working jointly with the law enforcement agencies of the host countries, to organize arrests. During the operation, a total of 283 fugitives were chased back from Southeast Asia such as Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Cambodia, accounting for 33% of all arrests.”¹³⁹

Analysis of case studies shows that the process of using agents and non-state actors in the host country to track down wanted fugitives and persuade them to return to China involves two key stages: (1) locating the fugitive and (2) pressuring the fugitive.

LOCATING THE FUGITIVE

Coercion of family, friends

Chinese family or friends of the fugitive living in the host country may be coerced into helping the authorities track them down. This might be as simple as providing contact information or as involved as luring the target into a meeting with the agents themselves.

In 2017, a CCDI official from Hunan province, Chen Jian, led a “hit squad” to locate former state-owned company official Peng Xufeng in the US. They forced one of his friends in California to hand over his contact information by threatening to detain her family members back home in China.¹⁴⁰ In 2018, the wife of a friend of Wuhan businessman Li Gang in the US was forced to hand over Li’s contact information after Wuhan police held the friend hostage back in China.¹⁴¹

Another tactic involves an overlap of IR Type I. Chinese agents force family or friends to head overseas to lure the target from their hiding place. For example, in 2017, a Wuhan undercover repatriation team, consisting of prosecutors, police, hired agents, and local actors in the US tracked down former Chinese official Xu Jin. They first forced his aged father in China to travel to the US and then took him to the house of a relative and told him to ask them to find his son. The team waited for Xu to show up to collect his father and then tailed him to find out where he was living.¹⁴²

In 2015, a team involving Chinese police, CCDI agents from Tianjin and prosecutors flew to Laos to hunt two wanted fugitives – former tax official Pang Shunxi and businessman An Huimin hiding out in the country. They identified a girlfriend of an associate of the two men and requested the Laos police to detain her, and allow the Chinese team to interrogate her overnight. When Pang and An found out that she was being held, they turned themselves in to the Chinese Embassy in Laos.¹⁴³

Hiring local detectives

Chinese authorities also turn to local hires, such as ex-police or private detectives in the host country to locate the target. Sometimes, these individuals also assist in the second stage -- coercing the target into giving themselves up. By using local hires, they avoid the risk of extra scrutiny in having too many Chinese agents working undercover. They may even use another local person – a middleman – to directly work with the local hires.

For example, former New York police officer Michael McMahon helped in the team that located Xu Jin in the US in 2017 (see above). Hu Ji (胡驥), a Chinese police officer and the leader of the Fox Hunt team from Wuhan, used several layers of intermediaries, including the relatives of another overseas Chinese fugitive, using false identities to contact McMahon, starting in 2016. McMahon was tasked with following Xu’s father to find out where Xu and his wife were living.¹⁴⁴

FORCING FUGITIVE TO SURRENDER

Carrots and sticks

Targets are coerced into surrendering through a “carrot and stick” approach. One Canadian official told media that: “Individuals were promised leniency if they agreed to cooperate and return to China, while those who resisted were subjected to escalating threats.”¹⁴⁵

According to Lawyer Gao Guangjun (高光俊), who now lives in New York and has represented several wanted fugitives from China, the Chinese authorities use whatever method, even paying money, to get targets to return. One of Gao’s clients, wanted by the Chinese authorities, told the Chinese police that he would lose his business in the US if he returned. The Chinese side then proposed that they give him US\$1 million as compensation in exchange for his return.¹⁴⁶

When the target arrives in China, however, those offers of leniency may not be kept. “Lying is a strategy,” lawyer Gao Guangjun told media, adding, “Many of my clients were lured to return.”¹⁴⁷ According to Gao, several of his clients were given official guarantees that they would be given a light sentence or not be convicted when they went back to China but after they returned, they were handed down long jail sentences. He described one case where three police “persuaded” one of his clients to go back to China by promising him he would only get a three-year sentence. However, the judge eventually gave him seven years behind bars.

In terms of sticks, CCDI official Chen Jian phoned Peng Xufeng and told him, “a squad of 20 local agents and Triads” were standing ready to smuggle him and his wife back to China.¹⁴⁸ Two hired agents showed up in front of Xu Jin’s home, banging the door, peering into the windows and finally taping a threatening note to his door that said: “If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison, your wife and children will be all right. That’s the end of this matter!”¹⁴⁹ In order to force a target surnamed Wang to stop resisting his return to China from Fiji where he was living with his family, Wuhan police travelled to Fiji to warn his family that there would be consequences if he did not give up and return to China.¹⁵⁰

State and non-state actors

Chinese agents, including police, may make direct contact with the target in the host country in order to push for their surrender. For example, in 2014, police agents from Shandong province met with the former manager Dong Feng in Australia to “persuade” him to return.¹⁵¹ In 2017, police from the Ningxia region sent a working group to France to “persuade” and escort suspect Zheng Ning (郑宁), the former Vice President of a state-owned company accused of economic crimes, back to China.¹⁵² The CCDI and Chinese state media praised it as the first successful rendition from Europe of a Chinese wanted fugitive, but it was criticized in France because Chinese police worked undercover on French soil, rather than attempt a formal extradition.¹⁵³

Non-state actors are generally preferred in western countries because having Chinese police or other agents working on the host country's soil has legal implications. Non-state actors include both hires from China or local personnel and include associates of the fugitive, lawyers, family members, private detectives, members of Chinese expatriate organisations or hired goons.

Local hires can be used to intimidate and threaten the target. For example, in the Peng Xufeng case, thugs smashed the windows of his Los Angeles home.¹⁵⁴ Johnny Zhu and his father Jason Zhu, both living in the US, were recruited as spies by the Wuhan Fox Hunt team in September 2016. Their close relative, Zhu Haiping (朱海平), who was the team's target and among China's top 100 fugitives, had just been "persuaded" to return and surrender. The Fox Hunt team told the father and son that they could help their family out during these difficult times if they assisted the team chase another target.¹⁵⁵ In 2017, two people repeatedly rang former judge Xie Weidong's doorbell at 2 in the morning in Canada but ran away before he could open the door. One of them was later identified as the wife of a family lawyer back in China. Xie believed they were there to threaten or kidnap him back to China. Chinese officials admitted they had been trying to recruit associates of Xie to speak with him.¹⁵⁶

Another tactic is to get the target evicted by harassing their landlord. Li Jinjin (李进进), a lawyer who has represented many overseas Chinese suspects in the US, described how China recruits overseas Chinese organisations to put pressure on landlords. For example, Qiu Gengmin (邱耿敏), a former export agent accused of stealing money, was repeatedly kicked out of his flat after thugs pressured his landlords during 2017 and 2018. The harassment only stopped after Qiu sought help from US authorities.¹⁵⁷

The case of Li Gang: A brother held hostage¹⁵⁸



Li Gang, a former real estate developer from Wuhan, Hebei province, emigrated with his family to the US in 2009. Wuhan police first

accused Li of embezzlement and then of inciting subversion of state power. In 2017, one of Li's brothers called him to tell him that the Chinese police wanted him on charges of embezzlement and urged him to come back. Wuhan police continually harassed and threatened his two brothers, mother, and his ex-wife's family in an effort to force Li to surrender. In March 2018, they detained Li's youngest brother, while a few months later, under the constant pressure of police intimidation, his mother died from a stroke. Another of his brothers was told by the police that if Li refuses to surrender, they will simply transfer the charges to his younger brother who then will face jail time.

My friend's wife told me that one of their friends had been detained for half a month in China and then given an exit ban as a way to track me down. That friend was my former business partner. His wife and children live in the US. They held him hostage to force her to spend her own money to hire a detective in the US to find me. That's how they finally got my phone number. A task force consisting of officials from different agencies including the MPS, procuratorate, and NSC were on my case. The two officers who contacted me were Zhou Jian (周剑), the then Deputy Chief Prosecutor of Wuhan Jiang'an People's Procuratorate, and Wang Pengxiang (王鹏翔), the then Deputy Director of Wuhan Jiang'an Supervisory Commission.

Chinese officials started calling me in June 2018. They told me they were organising a team of five people to visit me in the US -- four people from their task force and

my ex-wife's brother. Later, they told me they couldn't get US visas and asked me to go to Canada to meet them. I agreed. However, later they told me they couldn't go to Canada either and asked if I could fly to Japan to meet them. This time I refused. I'm guessing that they didn't dare try to come to the US because of how the US authorities had discovered and then exposed the operation to get Xu Jin.

During the negotiations before they cancelled their plan, I proposed that they release my brother, who had been detained [to try to compel me to return], unfreeze my assets in China, unfreeze my ex-father-in-law's bank account, and give the brother my ex-wife his job back [he had lost it because of my case]. They told me that all these were possible provided I return. If I don't go back, they won't release my brother.

They also had people in the US who came to harass me. One day in November 2018, while I was away from home, a white guy showed up at my landlord's house in New York and

If I don't go back, they won't release my brother.

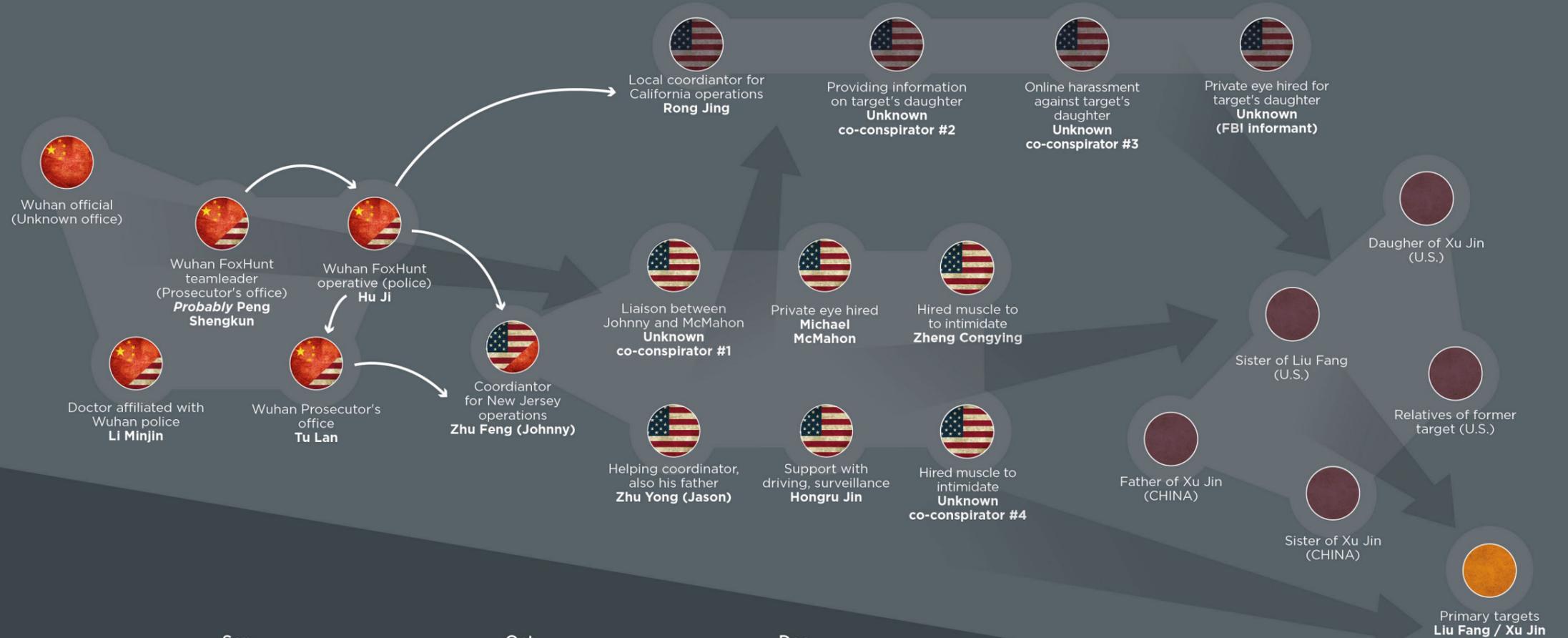
showed him a photo of me asking if I was his tenant. He claimed that he was handling my car insurance claim, but I have never had a car accident in the US. A man went to my

workplace, also with my photo, asking if I worked there or not. In January 2019, a white man, accompanied by a Chinese translator, visited my house in Texas and told my wife they were from the FBI and were sent to protect me. I called the FBI and they said they had not sent anyone. All this time, the task force kept calling me and warning me. They said they would find me, wherever I went.

In March 2019, I changed my number. I haven't heard from them since.

ANATOMY OF A FOX HUNT OPERATION

-  China-based command operation
-  China-based operation in US
-  Primary US operation
-  Secondary US operation
-  Individuals exploited for operation
-  Targets



2015 FoxHunt operation against Houston-based Zhu Haiping begins. New Jersey-based husband Xu Jin and wife Liu Fang announced as targets under Top100, to be targeted by FoxHunt.

2016 Jul After Zhu Haiping is returned in July, and later imprisoned, a relative of Zhu's in the United States - Zhu 'Johnny' Feng - is contacted by his relatives in China. is told he will be contacted by a FoxHunt operative, instructs him to assist this agent.

Sep Fox Hunt Wuhan teamleader Hu Ji, arrives in the U.S. for the first time for this case, entering as a tourist. He meets with Johnny, in Queens, to outline the work to be done: to have Xu Jin and Liu Fang returned to China.

Sep An American private investigator, Michael McMahon, is brought in to assist, connected via a friend of Johnny, a woman only known as co-conspirator 1.

Oct Hu Ji returns for a second visit and meets with Johnny, McMahon, and also Johnny's father, Zhu 'Jason' Feng, who is now also brought in to help in operation.

Dec Hu Ji returns again, this time with his boss (possible Peng Shengkun). The same month Johnny flies to Wuhan, and meets with Hu Ji, Hu Ji's boss, and a new official, Tu Lan, from the Wuhan prosecutor, who seemingly works for Hu.

2017 Apr, 1 The actual operation begins, with surveillance of Xu Jin, Liu Fang and Liu's sister, all in New Jersey. At this point, Xu and Liu's residence is unknown, so Liu's sisters' residence is focus. Another person - Hongru Jin, living in Queens - is brought in to assist as a driver.

Apr, 3 Tu Lan and Johnny returns to the U.S., and next day meet with McMahon. Johnny, McMahon and Hongru intensifies surveillance of Xu.

Apr, 5 To force Xu's return his elderly father, to be deployed as an emotional bomb, is flown over to the U.S., accompanied by a doctor, Li Minjin, with ties to the Wuhan police. Johnny picks them up at the airport, and drops the father at the wife's sister's house. McMahon stakes out the house. The wife's sister calls Xu to tell him what has happened.

Apr In April, Xu's sister, living back in China, is released from detention. Her release coincides with their father's agreement to go to the U.S. to meet his son. She is later arrested after the father fails to get Xu back.

Apr, 6 Xu meets his father, in a public place, while being surveilled. After Xu takes his father to his house, FoxHunt now finally knows where he and his wife lives.

Apr, 6 Xu contacts U.S. law enforcement.

Apr, 7 Johnny informs Tu Lan and doctor Li Minjin that Hu Ji, who is directing the operation from the safety of Wuhan, wants them back to China. Tu Lan returns two days later, claiming she is going to for instructions from the Party's ant.

Apr, 12 Johnny and Xu's father both take a flight to China, but seperatly, with the father unaware of why Johnny is along for the flight. Upon leaving Johnny is questioned by customs, and messages Hongru to delete all chatlogs and other traces. Tu Lan, when notified about what happened, tells Johnny to do the same for his traces to her.

Apr Seemingly, the ambush of Xu's father has failed, at least for now, to change Xu's mind about returning voluntarily.

Apr McMahon tracks down Xu's daughter, living in California. An operation to harass the daughter, and her husband, begins.

Apr During the operation, they access international travel records and the motor vehicle database, identify bank accounts and addresses, drivers license- and social security numbers, and uses "to database" to track down criminal records, information on assets, business information and more.

May Rong Jing, living in Los Angeles, is brought on-board to oversee the surveillance of the sister and be the coordinator for the California operations.

May, 15 Via an unknown co-conspirator 2, Rong Jing gets some basic information on the daughter, and moves to hire a private investigator. The private investigator is an informant for the FBI.

Nov, 9 Johnny, after a prolonged stay in Wuhan, returns to the U.S. He is detained at immigration, questioned and confesses to his role in the operation. He is not held however, and at some point in 2018 Johnny returns to China again.

2018 Apr A company from Wuhan files a lawsuit against Xu and Liu in New Jersey court.

Apr - Jul Daughter and husband targeted in an online harassment campaign which includes a co-conspirator 3.

Sep, 4 Zheng Congying and a co-conspirator 4 shows up at Xu and Liu's house, leaves a thrathning note, walks around house, around the backyard, pounces on the door.

2019 Feb - Apr Liu's sister receives several packages, including photographs and videos from Xu's sister and father, sent from China. In the videos they plead with Xu to return to China. Xi Jinping's book "the governance of China" is placed in sight in the videos. Xu's sister was released from her second arrest shortly before the videos were sent.

Oct U.S. Prosecutor charges eight people for acting as foreign agents abroad. McMahon is arrested. Payments coming from a third PRC official in Wuhan is identified, possibly Xia Jianzhong.

IR TYPE 3: KIDNAPPINGS



IR TYPE 3: KIDNAPPINGS

In extreme cases, Chinese authorities kidnap wanted targets overseas and smuggle them back to China. Incredibly, an official Chinese legal interpretation empowers NSC agents to do this, despite the illegality of such actions in the host country. The legal interpretation of Article 52 of China's Supervision Law lists "kidnapping" (绑架) and "trapping and capturing" (诱捕) as "irregular measures" (非常规措施) to repatriate fugitives overseas¹⁵⁹ [see page 18].

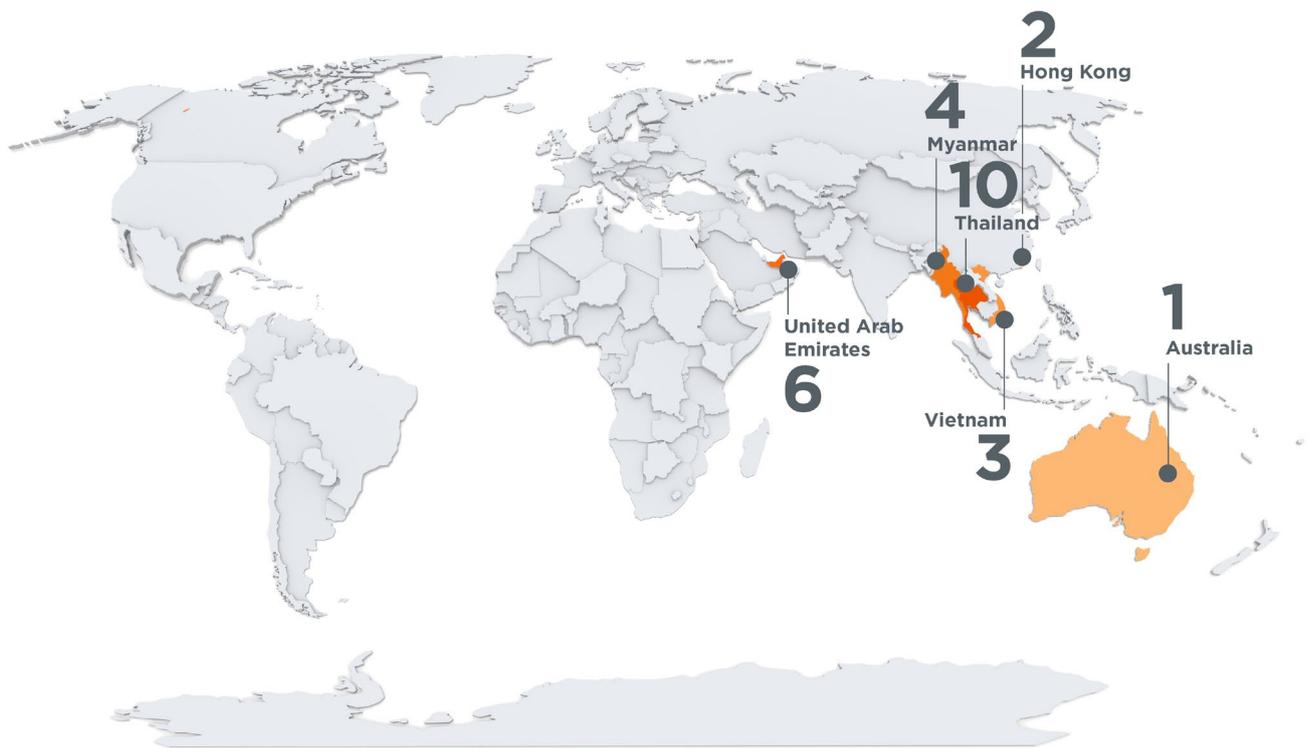
Although the Interpretation cautions that such "irregular measures" may break the law in the host country and adds that "in practice, kidnapping or trapping and capturing are rarely used", the fact that it is discussed as a possibility gives an official greenlight to Chinese law enforcement agencies to kidnap suspects on foreign soil.

The legal interpretation of Article 52 of China's Supervision Law lists "kidnapping" and "trapping and capturing" as "irregular measures" to repatriate fugitives overseas

For this report we have adopted a broad definition of kidnapping that encompasses both the traditional meaning of a covert abduction (**direct kidnapping**) but also a form of kidnapping where the target is captured with the unlawful or covert cooperation of law enforcement in the host country and then handed over to China (**indirect kidnapping**). So, for example, the deportation of a Chinese citizen back to China on legal grounds such as violations of the country's immigration law and following the proper channels, is not considered a kidnapping, however when Thai police handed over two Chinese dissidents to Beijing even though they were tricked into signing away their rights and the handover did not follow proper procedures, nor were they logged in Thailand's border control system as having left the country, that falls under our definition of kidnapping for this report.

Known kidnappings perpetrated by China on individuals overseas have primarily occurred in authoritarian countries where Beijing maintains close ties or significant economic influence. Thailand is a good example and has the greatest number of kidnapping cases (at least 5 have been attempted, four were successful) in our database. As Thailand's largest trading partner and primary source of tourists, China has considerable sway over securing Bangkok's agreement to deport Chinese citizens in the country without even the use of IR (Thailand does not officially recognise refugee status).¹⁶⁰ Our database has 22 kidnapping cases with 18 successful attempts: Thailand (7, 3 failed attempts), Myanmar (4), Hong Kong (2), Vietnam (3), the UAE (5, 1 failed attempt), and the sole democratic nation, Australia (1).

IR TYPE 3: MAP OF COUNTRIES AFFECTED AND VICTIMS IDENTIFIED



It is likely that the real number of kidnappings is much higher than 22. In 2018, an unnamed US intelligence official said they believed the number of suspected kidnappings by China in Australia alone had reached double-digits, **with multiple cases where the victims had been beaten or drugged and dragged onto a boat back to China.**¹⁶¹ Chen Yonglin (陈用林), a former Chinese diplomat who defected to Australia, said he had heard of another kidnapping in New Zealand in 2004 and at least two in Australia while he was working in China's Sydney consulate (2001 to 2005)¹⁶²

Direct kidnapping

Since kidnappings by their very nature are covert operations, it is difficult to get accurate and detailed information about how they are carried out. Sometimes we may know little more than the individual is in one country, disappears and then turns up in China. Much is shrouded in mystery. However, what details are available do allow us to form some kind of a picture.

In two of the kidnappings, there is CCTV footage that shows the actual abduction or the Chinese agents suspected to have carried out the kidnapping. In 2015, a Chinese man in a striped shirt was caught on camera hanging around the residential complex in Thailand where Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai (桂民海) was staying and later spotted getting into Gui's car the day he disappeared. The next time Gui surfaced he was weeping on a forced televised confession in China three months later.¹⁶³ In 2017, CCTV cameras provided by the Four Seasons Hotel in Hong Kong showed Chinese-born Canadian billionaire Xiao Jianhua bundled into a wheelchair and accompanied by around six unidentified men with his head covered by a blanket.¹⁶⁴ He has not been seen since.

In other cases, kidnappings are brought to light because victims are able to tell their story. For example, Wang Bingzhang (王炳章), a prominent pro-democracy activist exiled in the US and accused of spying for Taiwan by the Chinese government, his girlfriend, Zhang Qi (张琦), and friend Yue Wu (岳武) disappeared from Vietnam in 2002. At the time, pro-democracy activists claimed that they were taken by Chinese agents in a cross-border raid, but they did not reveal their sources.¹⁶⁵ A few months later, Zhang and Yue were released from detention in China, but Wang was sentenced to life in prison. In the following year, Zhang held a press conference in the US and said that the men who kidnapped them spoke Chinese and even though they pretended to be abducting them to blackmail their families, they were conveniently “rescued” by Chinese police who then detained the three and nothing was ever heard about the “kidnappers” again.¹⁶⁶

How China manages to smuggle targets across borders is usually a matter of guesswork. In an earlier SD’ investigation, we used all possible clues to surmise that Gui was likely taken by car to the Cambodian border and then onto Laos before being hidden in a boat on the Mekong River heading north, possibly crossing into China in a car again.¹⁶⁷ In 2005, Chinese agents working undercover in Australia were said to have drugged Lan Meng (蓝萌), put him on a fishing boat that was then picked up by a Chinese cargo vessel and shipped back to China. Lan was the son of a former deputy mayor Lan Fu (蓝甫), who was accused of taking bribes.¹⁶⁸ The kidnapping compelled the father to return to China where he was sentenced to life in prison.

Because the target is smuggled out of the country, there will be no official record of them leaving. Thailand admitted that there was no record of Gui ever leaving the country after he disappeared and then resurfaced on Chinese television. In 2016, Li Xin (李新), a Chinese pro-democracy journalist also disappeared from Thailand and then later phoned his wife to say he had returned to China “voluntarily” and was under investigation, yet Thai authorities said immigration records showed that Li was still in Thailand.¹⁶⁹ Hongkonger Lee Bo (李波), a colleague of Gui’s, disappeared from Hong Kong at the end of 2015. In January 2016, the Hong Kong police announced that he was in mainland China, despite there being no official records at the border that he had left Hong Kong.¹⁷⁰

For some of these kidnappings, it is likely that the host country either facilitated or simply turned a blind eye to China’s illegal actions. At the very least, they have not voiced any concern when the kidnapping has been brought to light. For example, Thai police seemed uninterested in Gui’s case and did not appear to conduct a serious investigation into his disappearance.¹⁷¹ Vietnam also seemed unbothered by the fates of Wang, Zhang and Yue. At one point, they even claimed that there was no record that they had ever entered Vietnam.¹⁷²

Indirect kidnapping

As defined earlier, indirect kidnappings describe a covert or unlawful cooperation between security forces of the host country and China to arrest and deport Chinese targets. Naturally, host countries remain secretive about why an individual was deported and, in some cases, even come up with trumped up charges or deny involvement.

For example, Egyptian and UAE police have arrested and deported Uyghurs legally living or visiting, sometimes in joint operations with Chinese police. Ahmad Talip was living in Dubai in 2018 when he was detained by local police. Days later he had been extradited to China yet Dubai prosecutors had earlier said there were insufficient grounds for the extradition and he should be released.¹⁷³ Abduweli, a well-known Uyghur scholar and activist living in exile in Norway, has described how Beijing pressured these countries to detain and deport without proper due process.¹⁷⁴

When CCP critic Wang Jingyu was initially detained in Dubai in 2021, no reason was initially given for holding him. This was later changed to the suspected crime of criticising Islam, which Wang denied. Yet Chinese officials visited him in detention to pressure him to sign an agreement saying that he would return to China.¹⁷⁵ Eventually, because of media and western governments' attention, Wang was allowed to leave for Europe. This case is classified as a failed kidnapping in this report.

After activists Tang Zhishun (唐志顺), Xing Qingxian (幸清贤), and Bao Zhuoxuan (包卓轩), the teenaged son of human rights lawyer Wang Yu (王宇), were snatched in Myanmar and sent back to China in 2015¹⁷⁶, the Burmese government said it had no control over what happened in Shan State (where they were captured) and did not know anything about the case.¹⁷⁷

Indirect kidnappings tend to show two common features:

1. These cases are associated with *cross-border law enforcement* carried out by Chinese agents or police in the host countries' territories.
2. Host states take on the *role of an accomplice*. That is, not only do they allow Chinese police and agents to operate inside the country but they also provide assistance in capturing targets, processing paperwork and covering up the disappearance.

Cross-border law enforcement

In its public announcements and state media reports on the issue of fugitive returns, China betrays either a lack of awareness of other countries' laws or a lack of concern over Chinese agents breaking such laws. For example, a 2015 CCDI announcement on the rapid response capabilities of Sky Net described how agents located and captured a fugitive named Qi (祁某某):

"It only took 14 hours for the relevant agencies from Hunan Province to find that Qi had left China via Hong Kong, lock down his location in Thailand, and successfully control him."¹⁷⁸

The word control (控制) leaves open the extent to which Chinese police or agents were operating illegally on Thai soil. Worth noting is that the announcement did not make any mention of cooperation or permission given by Thai authorities. Displaying a lack of respect for local laws, Chinese police and agents regularly chase, apprehend, and interrogate targets on foreign soil.

While many of the detentions in the UAE targeting Uyghurs for deportation are not carried out openly by Chinese police, Chinese agents have been reported present in some cases. For example, Chinese agents pursued Huseyin Imintohti, a Uyghur man at a restaurant in Dubai shortly before he was deported.¹⁷⁹ Another Uyghur man, Yasinjan Memtimin, was interrogated twice by Chinese police before his deportation.¹⁸⁰ Tang Zhishun, Xing Qingxian and Bao Zhuoxuan, were interrogated by Chinese police inside the Myanmar border before they were taken back to China.¹⁸¹

Host state as an accomplice

In acting as an accomplice to Chinese agents and police, security officers from the host country may assist in tracking down targets and detaining them and providing China with resources such as manpower and holding facilities. Because these detentions and deportations are unlawful or do not follow proper procedures in the host country, local officers may also help in using underhand ways to facilitate the deportation, for example in tricking the target into signing away their rights. A feature of these cases is their secretive nature: host states routinely refuse to disclose any information about detentions and deportations. For example, the UAE has never responded to enquiries about what happened to Imintohti (see below).

Dong Guangping and Jiang Yefei, Chinese political dissidents who were seeking asylum in Thailand, were detained over immigration violations in 2015. Even though both had been granted asylum status by the UN, Thai police handed them over to Chinese agents, by first urging them to sign a form in Thai without providing a translation, telling them they could only be released from immigration detention if they agreed. After they did so, Thai police let them out of their cell and into the hands of Chinese officers. It is likely that paperwork gave them the “legal” justification for doing so. Dubai police likely tried the same trick on CCP critic Wang Jingyu in 2021 when they asked him to sign a document written in Arabic without a translation; a document that Chinese diplomatic staff were also urging him to sign. His refusal in the end may have saved him from being deported.¹⁸²

The host state may also try to prevent the departure of a target on China’s request. For example, in 2017, Chen Guiqiu (陈桂秋), the wife of Chinese human rights lawyer Xie Yang (谢阳), and her two young children were under the protection of the US Embassy in Bangkok as Chinese officers pursued her deportation. She was stopped at the airport because she did not have the paperwork allowing her to leave the country (paperwork needed because she had been detained earlier on immigration charges)¹⁸³ Thai immigration officials told her they were being pressured by Beijing not to allow her to leave. If the US Embassy had not jumped in to help her, Chen and her children would almost certainly have been deported to China.¹⁸⁴

Third country trick

In recent years, a new trend in *in*voluntary returns has emerged: Beijing works with the host country, which does not have an extradition treaty with China and from where it is not convenient to deport the individual directly, instead luring the target to a third country that does have extradition procedures in place. Indeed, this practice is outlined in the official definition of “trapping and capturing” in the Interpretation of Article 52 of China’s Supervision Law, as:

“...luring criminal suspects to within the borders of the country, the high seas, international airspace, or a third country which has an extradition treaty, and then to arrest or extradite them.”¹⁸⁵

Turkey is a good example. In 2017, a Uyghur man, Huseyin Imintohti, was arrested in Istanbul, on dubious grounds.¹⁸⁶ Turkish police and a Chinese agent interrogated him and three other Uyghur detainees, giving them three options: stay detained in Turkey, go free in exchange for spying on other overseas Uyghurs for China; or leave Turkey and fly to a third country (the UAE, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, or Kyrgyzstan). All four chose to fly to Dubai, where shortly after they disappeared. It is not clear whether Imintohti and the others were formally extradited from the UAE or whether they were simply kidnapped by Chinese agents there. In 2017, Turkey did not have an extradition agreement with China, unlike all of the five third country options presented to them. At least four Uyghurs were deported from Turkey to Tajikistan in 2020 from where they are believed to have been sent back China.¹⁸⁷

The case of Tang Zhishun: Kidnapped in Myanmar¹⁸⁸



Tang Zhishun is an engineer by trade but later became a rights activist after he battled the illegal demolition of his house in Beijing in 2004. He worked with activist

Xing Qingxian to smuggle rights lawyer Wang Yu's son Bao Zhuoxuan into Myanmar in 2015. Both of Bao's parents were being secretly detained at the time and the two were hoping to help Bao travel overseas to go to school as he had been prevented from leaving China. However, they were kidnapped inside Myanmar by local and Chinese police and taken back to China. Tang spent months in incommunicado detention under China's notorious Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location accused of "organizing others to cross national borders." Tang was eventually released in December 2016. In August 2021, he managed to leave China for the US, reuniting with his family members.

Even though the township of Mong La is on the Myanmar side of the border with China in a part of the country known as Shan State, so many Chinese people live here – hotel owners, traders, even security agents and spies -- that you could be forgiven for mistaking it for China. Many of the hotels are Chinese-run, Chinese guests are required to show their Chinese ID cards, Renminbi is acceptable as currency and China Mobile and China Unicom offer Internet services.

On the evening of 2 October 2015, Tang Zhishun, Xing Qingxian and Bao Zhuoxuan arrived in Mong La and started looking for a hotel. In the lobby of one, they spotted a suspicious-looking man reading a newspaper. Spooked, they left and found another place. Once they had checked in, they all turned off their mobile phones so that they could not be traced.

They planned to leave the next day, but their travel agency asked for more money for paperwork they needed to move on. They

had no other choice but to stay. However, they switched hotels in case they were being tracked.

The following day, Bao, who was just 16 years old at the time, wanted to eat Chinese food, he was tired of eating the Burmese food provided by the hotel. So, the three of them headed out for a breakfast of soybean milk and deep-fried dough sticks. Tang complained that the boy was being difficult, thinking to himself that Bao was just being rebellious because of his age. However, from then on, they started taking their meals outside the hotel to please Bao.

The next day, 5 October, after dinner the three of them were walking back to their hotel when a man on a red motorcycle began trailing them. They realised they were being followed and so stopped. The man stopped too and just watched them. Bao, who thought they were safe because they had already left China, stood in front of the man and stared at him. Later, Tang scolded Bao:

“What’s wrong with you? Are you worried they might capture the wrong person so you want them to see you clearly?” Tang realised then that it was only a matter of time before they were caught.

The yell came out of nowhere. “Don’t move! Hands up!” It was the next morning, the three were quietly having breakfast at a local market and a local policeman was pointing a gun at their table. A huge group then descended. There were Chinese plainclothes police (who did not show their ID), local police officers and Shan State army personnel. Bao and Xing were shocked, but Tang said he knew that this would happen. Calmly, Tang replied: “Would you wait a second? Let us finish our porridge first.” The police officer was so surprised that he just barked at them to hurry up. Another officer standing beside him then yelled furiously: “Handcuff him, right now! Take his mobile away! Don’t let him destroy it.” Tang later saw the man on a CCTV programme about his case. He was identified as a Chinese police officer from Jinghong Public Security Bureau from Yunnan province. He recognized another officer from the raid, this one surnamed Liu, on the same programme.

They were taken to a local police station in Mong La where they were interrogated separately. A Burmese officer briefly questioned Tang first, but a Chinese officer who Tang did not remember seeing that morning quickly replaced him. He asked him some routine questions such as who he was and why he was in Myanmar, but both of them knew this was just a formality. The police knew exactly who they were and why they were there. After the interrogations

were over, they were driven handcuffed by the Burmese police to the border marked by a barbed-wire fence and then uncuffed and handed over to Chinese police.

The yell came out of nowhere. “Don’t move! Hands up!” It was the next morning, the three were quietly having breakfast at a local market and a local policeman was pointing a gun at their table

Chinese officers handcuffed them again and drove them to Daluo Police Station in Menghai County, Yunnan for further interrogation and then a physical examination. When Tang saw the police remove money from his wallet, ostensibly to pay for the physicals, he thought how absurd this all was. Promises to reimburse him later were not kept. Things only got more absurd. Tang failed the blood test which meant that he should have been released on health grounds, but the police simply gave him another blood test, which he conveniently passed.

They were then sent to Menghai County Detention Centre, where Tang was interrogated by the same Chinese officer who had questioned him in Myanmar. From this, he surmised that the officer was a Yunnan police officer. Later, police from Beijing arrived to question him, including the Deputy Chief of Beijing’s Public Security Bureau. When Tang asked him why they had detained Bao, he replied: “Old Tang, do you really need us to explain?” When Tang pressed them, they just answered that it was on the Party’s orders.

Foreign collusion and cooperation

In most cases, known examples of local law enforcement cooperating undercover with, or turning a blind eye to, Chinese operations hunting fugitives in the host country have been limited to other authoritarian states in the Middle East or China's neighbours in Southeast Asia. In such instances, it has been described in the case examples identified in this report.

However, Safeguard Defenders has found cases where democratic countries, for example Canada, Switzerland and the US, have cooperated secretly with Chinese law enforcement to track down and deport claimed fugitives, or offered to do so, and this issue deserves mentioning, as it relates to, even if not part of, *in*voluntary returns.

Documentation from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) from late 2014¹⁸⁹, drawn up whilst Canada was in negotiations with China about a possible readmission agreement¹⁹⁰ showed that Canada was assisting Chinese officials and police in entering the country to carry out “negotiations” with Chinese nationals there, with the expressed intent of “persuading” them to return to China. Assistance was offered for both Chinese embassy staff, as well as visiting Chinese police, and includes help in securing the visiting police officers’ visas. CBSA clarified that it does not participate in the negotiations between the Chinese national and the official Chinese side, which indicates that such meetings, carried out inside Canada, are unsupervised. The documentation continues to state that in the event negotiations are successful, CBSA can assist with logistics at the airport to help with the smooth departure of the individual. The documentation acknowledges that those sought are alleged criminals in China and not convicted of crimes in Canada.

Over in Europe, Switzerland entered into a secret agreement with China in 2015, officially calling it as a *readmission agreement*. However, not only was this “readmission agreement” not made public

like readmission agreements Switzerland had made with other states, but the content of this agreement was nothing like a typical readmission agreement. Safeguard Defenders made the content of this agreement public at the end of 2020.¹⁹¹ Similar to the CBSA documentation, it authorised assistance in providing visas to Chinese police to enter Switzerland to carry out “interviews” with Chinese nationals. The visas provided to Chinese agents by Switzerland’s State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) were tourist visas, allowing them to theoretically roam the entire Schengen area (covering 26 European countries) unobserved on their visas. Interviews were supposed to take place at SEM facilities, but there was no requirement for SEM to monitor interviews through an interpreter. SEM claims the duration of the visas issued were brief, and therefore would in practice make it difficult to those agents to travel outside of Switzerland. It also did not notify EU- and Schengen area members of approval of such visas, and agreed to China’s request that such visits be considered unofficial.

There are tens of thousands of Chinese nationals in the US awaiting deportation in the US for violating immigration laws. In 2015, for example, that figure was 39,000.¹⁹² Such a huge backlog had built up because China drags its feet on providing the paperwork to make deportations of these people possible. In 2015, Beijing provided Washington with a list of almost 200 people it did want back¹⁹³, making it clear it would only take some of the illegals the US wanted out if they helped track down those people on the list. Following the joint agreement of a “memorandum of understanding”, two Chinese police officers travelled to the US to interview 70 Chinese nationals it wanted returned. Their fate remains unknown. Just ahead of the 15 November 2021 meeting between President Biden and General Secretary Xi Jinping, seven Chinese wanted by the Chinese government were repatriated (but not extradited) by the U.S., presumably in exchange for help in processing the return of illegals in the US.¹⁹⁴

THE EXPANDING USE OF INVOLUNTARY RETURNS

[Even during] “the Covid-19 pandemic... China’s international anti-corruption efforts have never stopped.¹⁹⁵ Despite travel restrictions, in the first 11 months of 2021, some 1,114 persons were returned.¹⁹⁶ At current speed, based on official government data, the total number of people returned via Sky Net would have **surpassed 10,000** sometime in December 2021, the majority being involuntary returns.

The Chinese State has a long history of withholding data, and numerous datasets are considered State secrets, while others are withheld or obfuscated, to make comparisons difficult.^{197, 198} Regarding the issue of involuntary returns, this is further complicated by the fact data is not released consistently, the categories used appear only on occasion, and often change.

To read this, keep in mind, this data concerns:

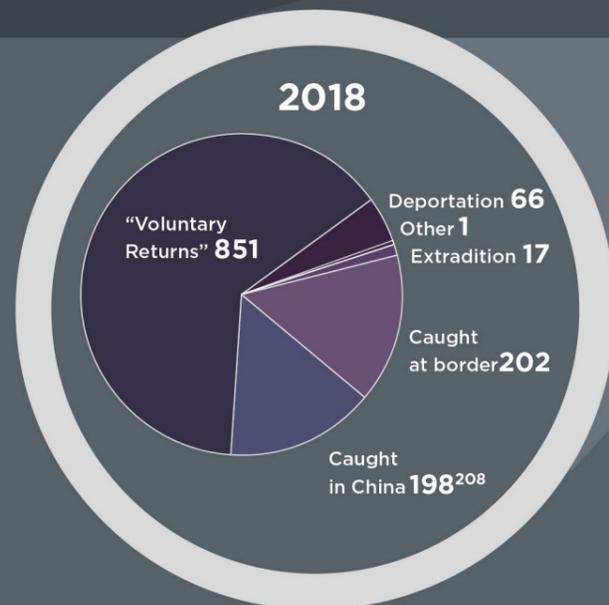
- only those captured,
- only those captured for economic- or duty crimes,
- only those captured via Sky Net operations, and
- says little about how many are targeted (i.e., the true scope of operations).

One of the principal dissident groups now being targeted are the Uyghurs. Some of the transnational repression of them is focused on controlling them in their host country, not necessarily to have them returned. The Uyghur Human Rights Project’s Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset¹⁹⁹ contains 1,151 cases of Uyghurs being detained in their host country, at least 395 of which was repatriated – a broad term that can include extraditions (very rare), deportations (common) and involuntary return (unknown). There is for now a lack of data, but a great many ad-hoc reports indicates they are extensively targeted for forced returns through ‘irregular’ methods.

Total returnees



| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| # Countries affected | N/A | 66+ | 70+ | 90+ | 100+ | N/A | 120+ | N/A |
| # Year on year growth (%) | N/A | 50% | 1% | 26% | 3% | 53% | -30% | N/A |



Despite the fact that the number of officials fleeing China is now “much lower” than the number who have returned²⁰⁹, China in 2021 announced Sky Net would expand, and target those who had “bad political or social impact”, and would “beef up” and go after those in the fields of finance, State-owned enterprises, political and legal affairs, and civil affairs.²¹⁰ In addition, 2020, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, saw the second highest number of claimed returnees so far.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues raised in this report constitute a clear and present danger to Chinese nationals abroad, whose right to due process is being undermined; to national judicial sovereignty for host countries; to the rule of law and international standards for cross-border judicial cooperation.

The fugitive or target is placed in a highly prejudicial situation with the possibility of a fair trial severely undermined. Their *in*voluntary return effectively denies them right to be presumed innocent. There are cases where targets have been threatened with greater penalties if they refuse to return and the scope of actions carried out in China and overseas in securing their return indicates that their guilt has been decided even before any trial. Upon return, if they are arrested, it is almost guaranteed that they will be found guilty. Conviction rate at criminal trials already stand at 99.95% to 99.96%.²¹¹

The extent to which China goes to return targets returned also places them at greater risk of torture including forced confessions, to secure a guilty verdict at trial.

For those involuntarily returned, the already significant risk of torture and forced, confessions inside China's criminal justice system increases even further.

While there are legitimate reasons for, albeit cautiously, engaging in international judicial cooperation with Beijing, China's violations of other nations' judicial sovereignty and breaking customs in international judicial cooperation undermines the trust required for entering into such cooperation, or continuing existing cooperation. China's pursuits via IR should be a significant obstacle to legitimate judicial cooperation to counter cross-border crime.

Furthermore, the transfer of responsibility for such cooperation to a non-judicial organ, the National Security Commission (NSC), run directly by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and not the Chinese government, raises several issues;

- Using a non-judicial organ for judicial cooperation further undermines the ability to enter into judicial cooperation with China, and
- The legalization, in the official interpretation of the relevant law, of not merely using irregular methods such as 'persuasion' but also using entrapment to third countries, and outright kidnapping, places the NSC as responsible for grave human rights violations, further undermining the ability to enter into cooperation with the body.

China faces an uphill battle in getting many democratic nations to agree to signing extradition agreements with it; and even when such agreements have been ratified,

extraditions are notoriously difficult, costly and slow. Yet, extending such cooperation is a key policy of Xi Jinping's. The CCP is highly motivated to have control over elements of the Chinese diaspora and ensuring that critics of the CCP inside China do not seek safe haven abroad to continue their activism.

The strong desire by Beijing for a variety of judicial cooperation agreements provides foreign governments with significant leverage, which should be used to protect Chinese nationals abroad, uphold rule of law, and defend judicial sovereignty.

Foreign nations must disengage from the NSC, forcing any judicial cooperation to be held with an appropriate, judicial, body, while pressure must be put on Beijing to revise the NSL and its interpretation to ban illegal actions, like kidnapping, overseas.

The mere signing of extradition treaties, but also other forms of judicial cooperation agreements, is a major win for China, and often entered into without clear risk assessment, nor any analysis of what it brings to the other party, nor what such agreements mean to Beijing. Many times, entering into such agreements is to squander sorely needed leverage to push China for judicial reforms. That some such agreements are signed with the NSC also helps legitimize a body that should not be legitimized (for judicial cooperation purposes), and which stands credibly accused of four counts of crimes against humanity.²¹²

Foreign governments need to start having the conversation on how to engage with China on judicial cooperation issues. This includes the need to disengage from the NSC, suspend extradition treaties, and begin cross-party dialogues on formulating a strategy for these issues, while engaging with China about China's criminal justice system. Foreign governments must also discuss publicly the issue of whether they should maintain mutual legal assistance agreements (MLATs) with China, or the need to renegotiate them, if China continues to expand its unregulated and often unlawful work with IR and the use of 'irregular' methods.

In addition, when China is caught operating illegally on foreign soil, the relevant foreign government should take countermeasures to create the needed leverage to force China to cease such operations, most often by suspending Beijing's most wanted form of judicial cooperation and agreements.

Foreign governments must ensure all diplomatic discussions on these issues take place in an open, transparent and public space and, where possible, expose activities carried out on its soil by overseas agencies that violate its judicial sovereignty. Without transparency, violators are encouraged to continue and expand their activities. Silence will increase the transgressions, not reduce them.

Foreign governments also need to investigate methods being used and targets groups at risk of China's IR. It should increase monitoring of such activities and take action to better protect those at risk, such as ensuring asylum requests take into account these activities. In addition, in response to efforts by China to extradite or deport individuals, local agencies and courts should be made aware of China's IR efforts and the risks of sending individuals back to China where they are at risk of torture and where they are near certain to not be given a fair trial.

To that end, foreign ministries should issue regular country reports on the situation in China to allow administrative and judicial bodies to fairly assess the merits in returning an individual to China on Beijing's request.

As a final note of concern, about such extra-legal operations on foreign soil is the acknowledgement in 2015, by CCDI, after complaints from several countries, that China was changing its tactic, without saying what that meant, but presumably meaning hiding its work better.²¹³

APPENDIX: COMPLETE LIST AND DATA MATRIX ON CASES

LEGEND

| | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Type 1 | Leverage family in China | Local Collab | Collaboration from local authorities | Off/State | From government, State media, or official documentation |
| Type 2 | Agents overseas | Victim | Contact with victim, family or lawyer | Type crime/victim | RELigious/ethnicity, ECONomic, POLitical, REGular |
| Type 3 | Kidnappings | Media | Reports in media | | |

| # | Target country | Name Pinyin | Name CN | Sex | Year | IR Type | | | Local Collab. | Returned | Datasource | | | Type crime (accused) | Type victim | Link |
|----|----------------------|---------------|---------|-----|------|---------|---|---|---------------|----------|------------|-------|-----------|----------------------|-------------|---|
| | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | Victim | Media | Off/State | | | |
| 1 | United States | Xu Jin | 徐进 | m | 2017 | x | x | | | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/nine-individuals-charged-superseding-indictment-conspiring-act-illegal-agents-people-s |
| 2 | United States | Liu Fang | 刘芳 | f | 2017 | x | x | | | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/nine-individuals-charged-superseding-indictment-conspiring-act-illegal-agents-people-s |
| 3 | United States | Peng Xufeng | 彭旭峰 | m | 2018 | x | x | | | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-corruption-president-xi-communist-party-fugitives-california-lawsuits-us-courts-11596032112?mod=article_inline |
| 4 | United States | Jia Siyu | 贾斯语 | f | 2018 | x | x | | | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-corruption-president-xi-communist-party-fugitives-california-lawsuits-us-courts-11596032112?mod=article_inline |
| 5 | United States | Liu Changming | 刘昌明 | m | 2018 | x | | | | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/25/us/politics/china-exit-ban.html?smid=fb-share&fbclid=IwARIEUFfUKrCCnnI5_GLWo7sDzAjNcywFpGikUGd_dIOM1N148KIBOR2if9s |
| 6 | Canada | Chu Shilin | 储士林 | m | 2016 | x | x | | x | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | http://www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2017-04/18/c_1120827944.htm |
| 7 | New Zealand | Yun Jian | 云健 | m | 2016 | x | | | x | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | http://newspaper.jcrb.com/2016/20161124/20161124_011/20161124_011_5.htm |
| 8 | Australia | Lai Mingmin | 赖明敏 | m | 2018 | x | | | x | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/china-pressures-family-of-australian-based-corruption-suspect-to-ensure-his-return-20180824-p4z2nf.html |
| 9 | United States | Xiao Jianming | 肖建明 | m | 2019 | x | | | x | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-corruption-president-xi-communist-party-fugitives-california-lawsuits-us-courts-11596032112?mod=article_inline |
| 10 | United States | Guo Xin | 郭欣 | f | 2017 | x | | | x | | | x | x | ECO | REG | https://www.voachinese.com/a/red-notice-20170502/3835040.html |
| 11 | United Kingdom | Chen Yijuan | 陈祎娟 | f | 2016 | x | x | | x | | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/31/china-families-interpol-targets-harassed |
| 12 | Australia | Zhou Shiqin | 周世勤 | f | 2016 | x | | | x | | | x | x | ECO | REG | https://www.smh.com.au/world/operation-fox-hunt-melbourne-grandmother-zhou-shiqin-prosecuted-after-return-to-china-20161026-gsalul.html |
| 13 | United States | Huang Yurong | 黄玉荣 | f | 2015 | x | | | x | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0o0Tzt_FZ0 |
| 14 | Canada | Jiang Qian | 蒋谦 | m | 2016 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | http://zgjjc.ccdi.gov.cn/bqml/bqxx/201704/t20170407_96898.html |
| 15 | United Arab Emirates | Wang Jingyu | 王靖渝 | m | 2021 | x | x | x | x | | | x | x | POL | POL | https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/china-expands-tracking-online-comments-include-citizens-overseas |
| 16 | Japan | Mihray Erkin | 米芮·艾尔肯 | f | 2021 | x | | | x | | | x | | — | REL | https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/niece-05252021132121.html?fbclid=IwAR3ZA3RsewQTSNEN5EgyoGrbtM3JfSVNz70xNvoGyYmHj24ehWdTP1W9tDE#_YK2ZFkcN-xE.facebook |
| 17 | United States | Xu Weiming | 徐维铭 | m | 2020 | x | | | | | | x | | ECO | ECO | https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/us-couples-nightmare-held-china-away-daughter |
| 18 | United States | Yang Xiuzhu | 杨秀珠 | f | 2016 | x | | | x | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.voachinese.com/a/yang-xiuzhu-20160901/3489290.html?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter |

| # | Target country | Name Pinyin | Name CN | Sex | Year | IR Type | | | Local Collab. | Returned | Datasource | | | Type crime (accused) | Type victim | Link |
|----|----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----|------|---------|---|---|---------------|----------|------------|-------|-----------|----------------------|-------------|---|
| | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | Victim | Media | Off/State | | | |
| 20 | Netherlands | Qelbinur Sedik | 凯尔比努尔·赛迪克 | f | 2021 | x | | | | | x | | | — | REL | https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-56563449 |
| 21 | Netherlands | Xu Zheng | 徐峥 | m | 2021 | x | | | | | x | x | | — | POL | https://www.voachinese.com/a/yearning-to-be-free-he-escaped-from-china-20210715/5965675.html |
| 22 | Ukraine | Yilisen Aierken | 伊力森·艾尔肯 | m | 2021 | x | | | | | x | | | — | REL | https://www.rfi.fr/cn/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/20210212-%E8%A2%AB%E5%9B%B0%E5%9C%A8%E7%83%B8%E5%85%8B%E8%98%AD%E7%9A%84%E6%96%B0%E7%96%86%E5%93%88%E8%96%A9%E5%85%8B%E9%9B%A3%E6%B0%91%E5%9C%A8%E7%B6%B2%E7%B5%A1%E5%91%BC%E7%B1%B2%E6%B1%82%E5%8A%A9 |
| 23 | Thailand | Gui Minhai (Swedish) | 桂民海 | m | 2015 | | | x | x | x | | x | x | POL | POL | https://safeguarddefenders.com/en/blog/gui-minhai-s-last-days-thailand |
| 24 | Hong Kong | Lee Bo (British) | 李波 | m | 2015 | | | x | | x | | x | x | — | POL | https://hongkongfp.com/2016/06/17/lee-bo-denies-he-was-kidnapped-following-claims-from-fellow-bookseller-lam-wing-kee/ |
| 25 | Vietnam | Wang Bingzhang | 王炳章 | m | 2002 | | | x | | x | | x | x | POL | POL | https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/10/world/china-orders-life-sentence-for-dissident-with-us-tie.html |
| 26 | Vietnam | Yue Wu | 岳武 | m | 2002 | | | x | | x | | x | x | POL | POL | https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/10/world/china-orders-life-sentence-for-dissident-with-us-tie.html |
| 27 | Vietnam | Zhang Qi | 张琦 | f | 2002 | | | x | | x | | x | x | POL | POL | https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/10/world/china-orders-life-sentence-for-dissident-with-us-tie.html |
| 28 | Myanmar | Peng Ming | 彭明 | m | 2004 | | | x | x | x | | x | x | ECO | POL | https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/chinese-dissident-warned-of-accidents-years-before-his-sudden-death-in-prison-12022016094755.html |
| 29 | Australia | Lan Fu | 蓝甫 | m | 2000 | x | | | | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/29/the-disappeared-china-renditions-kidnapping/ |
| 30 | Australia | Lan Meng | 蓝萌 | m | 2000 | | | x | | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/29/the-disappeared-china-renditions-kidnapping/ |
| 31 | Thailand | Li Xin | 李新 | m | 2016 | | | x | x | x | | x | x | — | POL | https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/04/world/asia/china-thailand-li-xin.html |
| 32 | Hong Kong | Xiao Jianhua (Canadian) | 肖建华 | m | 2017 | | | x | | x | | x | x | — | POL | https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/world/asia/xiao-jianhua-china-hong-kong-billionaire.html |
| 33 | Thailand | Chen Guiqiu (American) | 陈桂秋 | f | 2017 | x | | x | x | | x | x | | — | POL | https://apnews.com/article/151d0f86ae2f4c43826a23887b07275c |
| 34 | Thailand | Chen Guiqiu's daughter 1 (American) | — | f | 2017 | x | | x | x | | x | x | | — | POL | https://apnews.com/article/151d0f86ae2f4c43826a23887b07275c |
| 35 | Thailand | Chen Guiqiu's daughter 2 (American) | — | f | 2017 | x | | x | x | | x | x | | — | POL | https://apnews.com/article/151d0f86ae2f4c43826a23887b07275c |
| 36 | Thailand | Dong Guangping | 董广平 | m | 2015 | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | POL | POL | https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/repatriation-11162015113959.html |
| 37 | Thailand | Jiang Yefei | 姜野飞 | m | 2015 | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | POL | POL | https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/repatriation-11162015113959.html |
| 38 | Myanmar | Tang Zhishun | 唐志顺 | m | 2015 | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | REG | POL | https://www.epochtimes.com/b5/15/10/9/n4546445.htm |
| 39 | Myanmar | Xing Qingxian | 幸清贤 | m | 2015 | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | REG | POL | https://www.epochtimes.com/b5/15/10/9/n4546445.htm |
| 40 | Myanmar | Bao Zhuoxuan | 包卓轩 | m | 2015 | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | REG | POL | https://www.epochtimes.com/b5/15/10/9/n4546445.htm |
| 41 | Laos | Pang Shunxi | 庞顺喜 | m | 2015 | | x | | x | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201504/t20150421_135794.html |
| 42 | Laos | An Huimin | 安慧民 | m | 2015 | | x | | x | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201504/t20150421_135794.html |
| 43 | Australia | Dong Feng | 董峰 | m | 2014 | x | x | | | | | x | | ECO | REG | https://www.smh.com.au/world/chinese-police-chase-corruption-suspects-in-australian-suburbs-20150414-1mkwd2.html |
| 44 | Australia | Yang Xiaomei | 杨晓梅 | f | 2014 | x | x | | | | | x | | ECO | REG | https://www.smh.com.au/world/chinese-police-chase-corruption-suspects-in-australian-suburbs-20150414-1mkwd2.html |

| # | Target country | Name Pinyin | Name CN | Sex | Year | IR Type | | | Local Collab. | Returned | Datasource | | | Type crime (accused) | Type victim | Link |
|----|----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----|------|---------|---|---|---------------|----------|------------|-------|-----------|----------------------|-------------|---|
| | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | Victim | Media | Off/State | | | |
| 45 | United States | Li Gang | 李刚 | m | 2018 | x | x | | | | | x | | ECO | REG | https://www.voachinese.com/a/ccp-s-harassment-of-red-notice-fugitives-overseas-and-their-family-members-in-china-20201107/5651894.html |
| 46 | Canada | Xie Weidong | 谢卫东 | m | 2018 | x | x | | | | | x | x | ECO | POL | https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/china-admits-to-having-agents-in-canada-as-former-judge-harassed-in-toronto/article37616456/ |
| 47 | Thailand | Li Yong (pseudonym) | 李勇 | m | 2018 | | x | | x | | x | x | | — | POL | Case file only |
| 48 | Australia | Zheng Jiefu | 郑介甫 | m | 2015 | | x | | | | | x | | — | POL | https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/chinese-presidents-war-on-corruption-finds-its-way-to-brighton-20150405-1merr5.html |
| 49 | United States | Qiu Gengmin | 邱耿敏 | m | 2017 | x | x | | | | x | x | | ECO | ECO | https://www.propublica.org/article/operation-fox-hunt-how-china-exports-repression-using-a-network-of-spies-hidden-in-plain-sight |
| 50 | United Arab Emirates | Huseyin Imintohti | 侯赛因-伊明托赫提 | m | 2017 | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | — | REL | https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/dubai-11282017160655.html |
| 51 | France | Zheng Ning | 郑宁 | m | 2017 | | x | | | x | | x | | ECO | ECO | http://news.sina.com.cn/sf/news/ajji/2017-03-14/doc-ifychhus1201755.shtml |
| 52 | Fiji | Wang Mou (not full name) | 王某 | m | 2015 | | x | | | x | | x | | ECO | ECO | http://hb.sina.com.cn/news/qy/2015-03-09/detail-iawzune0569012.shtml |
| 53 | United States | Guo Wengui | 郭文贵 | m | 2017 | | x | | | x | | x | | ECO | ECO/ POL | https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/31/china-families-interpol-targets-harassed |
| 54 | Canada | Liu Baofeng | 刘宝凤 | m | 2019 | x | | | | x | | x | | ECO | ECO | http://www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2019-07/15/c_1124752371.htm |
| 55 | Australia | Dong Wuyuan (pseudonym) | 洞物员 | f | 2020 | x | | | | | x | x | | — | POL | https://www.epochtimes.com/gb/20/6/4/n12161920.htm |
| 56 | United Arab Emirates | Yasinjan Memtimin | 亚森江·买麦提明 | m | 2017 | | | x | | | x | x | | — | REL | https://www.shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=9599 |
| 57 | United Arab Emirates | Osman Omer | — | m | 2017 | | | x | | x | x | | | — | REL | Case file only |
| 58 | United Arab Emirates | Ahmad Talip | 塔利普 | m | 2018 | | | x | | x | x | x | | — | REL | https://edition.cnn.com/2021/06/08/middleeast/uyghur-arab-muslim-china-disappearances-cmd-intl/index.html |
| 59 | Turkey | Melikzat Habibul | — | f | 2017 | x | | | | | | | | — | REL | https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/07-1150-JUN-21-UTFW-034-Malikzat-Habibul-English.pdf |
| 60 | Netherlands | Yunus Tohti's brother Eli Tohti | — | m | 2020 | x | | | | | | x | x | — | REL | https://www.state.gov/report/custom/d3ccdc6a18/ |
| 61 | Israel | Tahir Imin | — | m | 2017 | x | | | | | | x | | — | REL | https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/meghara/china-uighur-spies-surveillance |
| 62 | Unknown | Pu Zhehao | 朴哲浩 | m | 2021 | x | | | | x | | x | x | ECO | ECO | https://www.ccidi.gov.cn/yaowen/202108/t20210803_247523.html |

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