



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1403

August 13, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

I write to raise concerns that Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota may not have complied with foreign travel reporting requirements for his security clearance during his many trips to the People's Republic of China ("China") while serving with the Nebraska and Minnesota National Guards.

As you may know, Governor Walz served in the National Guard for nearly 24 years and left the Guard in 2005 as a senior enlisted service member. The vast majority of senior enlisted service members in the Army and Army National Guard receive a Secret level security clearance as part of their duties. Walz almost certainly received such a clearance.

Because of the enormous trust the military places on security clearance holders to protect our national security, all service members and employees of the Department of Defense with clearances are required to report foreign travel plans to their organization's security office before they travel abroad. Clearance holders often require prior approval and threat briefings for foreign travel to prepare them for the risks of hostile foreign intelligence activity. These intelligence threat concerns are far greater when a security clearance holder travels to an adversary nation like the People's Republic of China, especially when that clearance holder travels there on dozens of occasions. Clearance holders who return from foreign travel are also required to complete debriefing questionnaires for their security office, detailing their trip and reporting any potentially suspicious interactions that occurred during their travels.

Walz traveled to China constantly between 1989 and 2005, and he and his wife also organized trips to China from 1994 to 2003 at least annually. During this whole period, Walz remained a service member in either the Nebraska or Minnesota National Guards and presumably held a clearance for much or all of this time. Walz claimed in 2016 that he had traveled to China nearly 30 times; it is likely that at least a dozen of these trips occurred while he was a guardsman.

In addition to his regular trips, Governor Walz has also shown a concerning affinity for China and a willingness to downplay and overlook the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party. In 2016, Walz said that he "totally [disagreed]" that the U.S. relationship with China was "an adversarial relationship" and "there's many areas of cooperation that we can work on." Walz chose to have his honeymoon in China and even bizarrely planned his wedding date to coincide with the 5th anniversary of the 1989

Tiananmen Square massacre. Observers have noted his views on China continue to be “overly optimistic, almost Polyannish”. The CCP can use this optimism to exploit naïve foreign visitors, particularly visitors who are military servicemembers. Walz bragged after one trip to China that “they gave me more gifts than I could bring home” and that “I will never be treated that well again.”

Any individual traveling dozens of times to an adversary nation in a personal capacity while having access to classified information poses an obvious security risk. An individual with a clearance should have had the good judgment not to engage in such travel in the first place, and any superiors or security officers for that individual are obliged to prevent such risky behavior. This is particularly the case when that individual is willing to repeatedly accept gifts from, and develop relationships with, foreign nationals of a hostile nation—or when said individual refuses to acknowledge a nation is a foreign adversary to begin with.

I am therefore concerned that Governor Walz may have failed to comply with foreign travel reporting requirements during these trips to China, despite his duty as a security clearance holder to protect our national security. It strains credulity that Walz’s National Guard superiors would not have had some concerns about his pattern of behavior, and it stands to reason that they may have expressed concerns or opposition to Walz about his travel. If Walz’s superiors in the Guard did not reject requests for approval of, or express concerns about, his repeated travel to China, it is a very real possibility that this is because they were not made properly aware of the extent of his travel or informed of his interactions during and after those trips.

Given Walz’s history of pro-China positions and his already irresponsible personal decision to repeatedly travel to an adversary nation while holding a clearance, the most plausible explanation for this lapse in security is that Waltz may have failed or refused to comply with Department of Defense foreign travel reporting requirements. If Walz did fail or refuse to report foreign travel to an adversary nation to his superiors, the Department of Defense must investigate this reckless disregard for our national security and set the public record straight about this security failure.

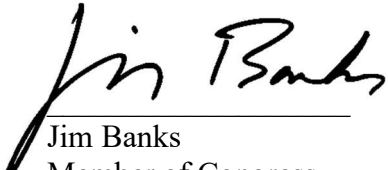
Given these concerns, I ask that you provide me with answers to the following questions no later than August 20, 2024:

1. Did Governor Walz hold a security clearance during his time in the Minnesota National Guard?
 - a. If yes, when was Walz first granted his security clearance and when did his security clearance become inactive?
 - b. If yes, what level of security clearance did Walz hold?
 - c. If yes, when did Walz complete any required security clearance renewal applications and did he disclose in that paperwork his travel to China or contact with Chinese nationals or officials before, during, and after his many trips?
2. How many times during his service with the National Guard did Walz travel to China while holding a security clearance?
3. Did Walz ever fail to report an upcoming trip to China to the appropriate security office prior to departing on the trip?
 - a. If yes, how many times did he fail to report travel to China prior to departure?
4. Did Walz ever fail to receive prior approval for his travel to China from the relevant security office?
 - a. If yes, how many times did he fail to receive this approval?

5. Did Walz ever decline to attend a foreign intelligence threat briefing prior to traveling to China?
6. Did Walz ever fail to complete a Debriefing Questionnaire or similar form upon returning from travel to China?
7. In any of the Debriefing Questionnaires which Walz may have completed, did Walz report that he had met with or had any discussions with a government official of the PRC or an official of the Chinese Communist Party?
 - a. Did Walz ever report that he experienced probing inquiries about his position or any other possible approaches by a foreign intelligence service?
 - b. Did Walz ever report receiving financial or in-kind gifts while on the trip, and whether those gifts were provided to him by a government official of the PRC or an official of the Chinese Communist Party?
 - c. Did Walz ever report meeting with any organization that was tied to or subject to the control of the United Front Work Department?
8. Was Walz ever investigated, disciplined, or reprimanded in any way for failing to report or receive approval of travel to China or for failing to debrief the relevant security office following his travels to China?
9. Did any superior of Walz or any official in the relevant security office overseeing Walz's clearance express concern about Walz's travels to China or warn him that his trips posed a risk to national security?
 - a. If so, when were those warnings issued to Walz? Did Walz then continue his travels to China despite a warning that his actions jeopardized the national security of the United States?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Jim Banks
Member of Congress

Cc: LTG Jonathan M. Stubbs, U.S. Army, Acting Chief, National Guard Bureau