

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2022

Elon Musk
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter
1355 Market St #900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Musk,

We write today to express our deep concern about the platform manipulation campaign on Twitter that restricted access to news about the protests in the People's Republic of China (PRC). We are gravely concerned about the potential impacts of the PRC's growing cyber-enabled capabilities, including foreign malign influence operations, on U.S. national security interests both at home and abroad. We respectfully request that you provide us with additional information regarding the recent malicious activity and include any indications whether this activity was directed by the PRC.

As you are aware, Chinese protestors took to the streets of several major cities and university campuses last week after a fire killed 10 people and injured nine in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang region, on November 24. Thousands of protestors across China blamed the PRC's strict coronavirus lockdown measures for delaying the firefighters' arrival and called for an end to the restrictions. As the demonstrations spread to major cities and protestors began to demand political freedoms as well, CCP authorities violently cracked down on the protests, reportedly beating, dragging, and pushing protestors.

Video evidence of these confrontations, however, was suppressed online. CCP censors scrubbed them from the internet in China, and on Sunday, November 27, numerous Chinese-language accounts and bots spammed Twitter with links to escort services alongside city names in what researchers believe was an effort to suppress news regarding the widespread protests.¹ For hours, searches on Twitter for information about the protests in the PRC were filled with spam and useless tweets, while Twitter's reduced staff reportedly worked to resolve the information campaign.

The National Intelligence Council's recently declassified assessment on "Cyber Operations Enabling Expansive Digital Authoritarianism"² highlights that "China leads the world in using digital tools... to repress internal dissent" and "builds on its success at domestic repression when it conducts cyber operations in other countries." To ensure that the United States is prepared to counter, thwart, and deter foreign influence threats online, it is critical that we understand the extent of the PRC's potential manipulation of Twitter and identify how recent changes at Twitter are affecting the threat of CCP foreign influence operations on social media.

In light of these concerns, please provide the following information regarding the misinformation campaign during recent protests in the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party's involvement in that activity, and Twitter's ability to respond to foreign influence campaigns and malicious activity:

1. Has Twitter had any indication that the obstruction of access to Tweets on recent demonstrations in the People's Republic of China was state-led?


¹ Menn, Joseph. "Twitter Grapples with Chinese Spam Obscuring News of Protests." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 28 Nov. 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/11/27/twitter-china-spam-protests/>.

² Cyber Operations Enabling Expansive Digital Authoritarianism. National Intelligence Council Assessment, 7 Apr. 2020, https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/NICM-Declassified-Cyber-Operations-Enabling-Expansive-Digital-Authoritarianism-20200407--2022.pdf?trk=public_post_comment-text.

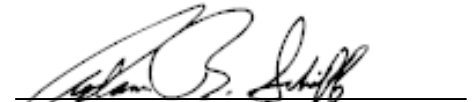
2. Does Twitter have any evidence on its platform of efforts by the People's Republic of China or any other state actors to deliberately suppress access to information through the use of bots or other manipulations?
3. Does Twitter currently have the capacity to identify largescale misinformation, disinformation, and information suppression on its platform as it occurs?
4. Given Twitter's emphasis on free speech, what measures are in place or underway to block efforts to prevent access to information through the network?

We kindly request answers to the questions listed above by December 31, 2022

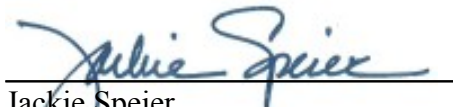
Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress