



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 27, 2012

Communist China Uses “Journalists” as Spies, Ex-Xinhua Writer Confirms

The communist dictatorship ruling mainland China uses its so-called “news agencies” and “journalists” to spy on dissidents and foreign governments, charged Canadian author and reporter Mark Bourrie, who resigned from the regime’s Xinhua service after realizing what was going on. He recently blew the whistle on the scheme — long suspected by intelligence agencies and well documented by analysts — with an explosive August 23 article in *Ottawa Magazine*.



According to Bourrie, a respected journalist with insider access to Canadian politics, his Chinese editors regularly requested articles on critics of the regime and their activities in Canada. Those stories, unsurprisingly, were never published, sparking suspicions by Bourrie that he was being used to collect intelligence.

One assignment, for example, was to find the names and addresses of people who protested against a 2010 visit by Chinese tyrant Hu Jintao to Canada. Another involved determining which Canadian government department was charged with suppressing “evil cults” — an obvious reference to Falun Gong, a spiritual discipline that was banned by the Chinese regime and is now relentlessly persecuted.

Then, in April, Xinhua asked Bourrie to cover a visit by the Dalai Lama. The Buddhist spiritual leader opposes the ongoing communist Chinese occupation and destruction of Tibet, so he is considered an enemy by the communist dictatorship. According to Bourrie, the sole purpose of the assignment was to gather intelligence for Beijing.

“They tried to get me ... to write a report for the Chinese government on the Dalai Lama using my press credentials as a way of getting access I wouldn’t otherwise have,” Bourrie [explained](#) in an interview with Canada’s *National Post*. “We were there under false pretenses, pretending to be journalists but acting as government agents.”

Bourrie asked his editor if the material would be published, but the boss informed him that Xinhua does not normally print anything related to the topic. “When the crunch came with the Dalai Lama, it was obvious they weren’t working as reporters anymore; that they were working as agents of the Chinese government,” he said.

For Bourrie, that was the last straw.

“There are times in life when you have to draw a line and say, ‘This is wrong.’ And to do it — to actually know that I could do it and not make excuses for continuing it — was cathartic,” he [told](#) the *Epoch Times*, a leading international news service focusing on the Chinese regime, after writing for Xinhua for almost two years. “It feels good to get away from them, to know I will never do business with these people again.”

Now, Bourrie and others are hoping to alert the public and governments about the true nature of



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Xinhua and the Chinese regime's intelligence-gathering apparatus. Among other problems, the Canadian journalist says there are individuals within the agency who are actually spies monitoring practitioners of Falun Gong, Dalai Lama supporters, and any other critics of the communist dictatorship.

"That, I know for sure," Bourrie explained.

Of course, it is hardly the first time that Beijing's "news" services have come under fire for similar allegations. A 2005 U.S. diplomatic cable from Chile signed by then-Ambassador Craig Kelly, for example, [noted](#) that Chinese journalists were "assumed" to be involved in some kind of intelligence gathering activities.

More recently, in Canada, the issue of journalist espionage surfaced again when a member of Parliament was caught sending flirtatious messages to a female Xinhua reporter. And among the Canadian intelligence community, while rarely acknowledged in public, suspicions over the communist dictatorship's activities in Canada are [serious and widespread](#).

Xinhua has long been known as a front for the communist regime abroad. Senior Chinese diplomat Chen Yonglin, who held a high-level post with the regime in Australia before defecting to the West, has revealed that fact recently. "They play the role of a spy because Xinhua is actually an outreach organ of the CCP's intelligence agencies," he told the *Epoch Times* last year. "The nature of their work means they must use all means to infiltrate and obtain intelligence."

The group Reporters Without Borders (RSF), dedicated to freedom of the press, also documented the problem in a 2005 report. "Xinhua is de facto run by the Propaganda Department," the organization reported based on information obtained from former journalists working for the communist regime. "The agency gets its editorial line from this organ of the CCP and sticks to it slavishly."

So when Bourrie was offered a job with Xinhua, considering what was already known publicly, he was immediately on high alert. "There was one drawback," he [wrote](#) in a previous article for *Ottawa Magazine* about the offer. "It was a common perception Xinhua was a spy agency."

Bourrie decided to contact Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and ask for advice. He left a message asking whether Xinhua was a threat to Canada or whether there was any reason not to write for it. Nobody ever called back.

The Xinhua agency was created by the Chinese Communist Party in the 1930s — well before the totalitarian mass murderers had [seized power](#) and killed tens of millions — to spread pro-communist propaganda. It is still run by the communist regime, but now attempts to portray itself as a legitimate global news service. And it is expanding around the world, helping to project Beijing's so-called "soft power."

"In the course of day-to-day things, that probably won't matter much," Bourrie explained. "But when China's interests come up in any important way, the mask comes off and you see the repression."

Unsurprisingly, Xinhua's Ottawa "bureau chief," Dacheng Zhang, [dismissed](#) the allegations. "Nobody told him to pretend to be a journalist and act for a foreign power," the regime operative was quoted as saying by the *National Post*. "That is his Cold War ideology."

However, experts say there is little doubt about the veracity of Bourrie's revelations. Brock University Professor Charles Burton, who specializes in Chinese politics and formerly served as a diplomat in Beijing, told the *Post* that the accusation "confirms everything we know about Xinhua."



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“The function of the Xinhua news agency is to gather information for the regime,” Burton added.

As [The New American](#) and other publications have [documented extensively](#), the Chinese regime has a long history of massive and aggressive spying — especially directed at advanced, Western nations. From [economic and military espionage to monitoring and suppressing dissidents abroad](#), Beijing has been caught repeatedly in far-reaching and audacious intelligence-gathering operations.

Experts say the regime’s espionage apparatus — estimates suggest it involves millions of individuals around the world — is the single largest spying machine in the world. It uses the “[vacuum cleaner](#)” approach, gathering unimaginably vast amounts of data on just about everything for future use by the communist dictatorship.

The latest scandal surrounding the regime comes amid a [growing outcry over its bid to purchase Canadian energy giant Nexen](#), which also has significant holdings of U.S. oil in the Gulf of Mexico. Critics [say](#) no foreign governments — especially mass-murdering totalitarian ones, no matter how much [lobbying](#) they engage in — should be able to own the natural resources of America or Canada.

According to news reports, the Canadian government investigates “all credible threats,” though it declined to comment on the Xinhua revelations specifically. Officials charged with clearing journalists to cover Parliament will also be probing the scandal and listening to both sides. For the sake of the West, critics of the communist regime hope authorities will take the threats more seriously in the future.

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