

FEATURE

Wolf Amendment

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The Wolf Amendment is a law passed by the United States Congress in 2011 that prohibits the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) from using government funds to engage in direct, bilateral cooperation with the Chinese government and China-affiliated organizations from its activities without explicit authorization from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Congress.

History

In May 1999, the Report of the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China was made public.

It alleged that technical information provided by American commercial satellite manufacturers to China in connection with satellite launches could have been used to improve Chinese intercontinental ballistic missile technology.

In 2010, Rep. John Culberson urged President Barack Obama not to allow further contact between NASA and the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

In a letter addressed to the President, he wrote:

I have grave concerns about the nature and goals of China's space program and strongly oppose any cooperation between NASA and CNSA's human space flight programs without Congressional authorization.

In April 2011, the 112th United States Congress banned NASA from engaging in

bilateral agreements and coordination with China.

As stated under Public Law 112-10, Sec. 1340:

(a) None of the funds made available by this division may be used for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration or the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop, design, plan, promulgate, implement, or execute a bilateral policy, program, order, or contract of any kind to participate, collaborate, or coordinate bilaterally in any way with China or any Chinese-owned company unless such activities are specifically authorized by a law enacted after the date of enactment of this division.

(b) The limitation in subsection (a) shall also apply to any funds used to effectuate the hosting of official Chinese visitors at facilities belonging to or utilized by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Editor's Note:

Excerpted from Bad Idea: The Wolf Amendment (Limiting Collaboration with China in Space) | Defense360 (csis.org)

In 2011, Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) introduced what is now commonly referred to as the Wolf Amendment into the annual commerce, justice, and science (CJS) appropriations bill. This amendment limits U.S. government agencies, such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), from working with Chinese commercial or government agencies.

Although Rep Wolf retired in 2014, the amendment has perpetuated and continues to be included in the annual CJS appropriations bill.

Though the amendment does not prohibit all collaboration between the two countries, the result has proven to be a significant hindrance to bilateral civil space projects.