

Peter Zeidenberg:

The U.S. Department of Justice has embarked on a new “Red Scare”. This time, instead of the targets being suspected Communist sympathizers, now the targets are Chinese-American scientists suspected of economic espionage. This is not to say the threat to American businesses and intellectual property is not real; some cases brought appear to have validity. But all too many other cases are over-hyped or, frankly, imaginary. Government investigators are so laser-focused on finding Chinese-Americans involved in economic espionage, they focus on the “red-flags” but ignore all of the exculpatory evidence that would be readily apparent to a more dispassionate investigator.

Ironically, the harm being suffered by the United States is, all too often, self-inflicted: patriotic, hard-working Chinese-American scientists are understandably concluding that they are not wanted here and deciding to relocate to China. It is an ironic development: the major concern of the U.S. government is that Chinese-American scientists will be lured back to China by the 1000 Talents Program. Instead, government investigators are harassing these same scientists to the point they decide their only viable option is to relocate back to China – the very harm that the U.S. government is trying to prevent.

Until the government’s paranoia abates, the unfair targeting of Chinese-American scientists is likely to continue. The victims will be not just the scientists themselves; it will be the U.S. society, which is chasing away some of its most talented and productive citizens.