



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

September 24, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

I'm writing to you today with regards to the U.S. Secret Service's [purchasing](#) of 8 surveillance drones from Shezen-based company Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI) on July 26, 2021.

As a Member of the House Armed Services Committee who has been briefed on the cyber security threat that these Chinese-made drones pose, I am very concerned that these drones will be used by malevolent actors within the Chinese Communist Party to spy on individuals the Secret Service is charged with protecting. These individuals include President Joe Biden and his immediate family, Vice President Kamala Harris and her immediate family, former presidents Donald Trump, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter and their spouses, and other visiting heads of foreign states.

Our awareness about cyber vulnerabilities associated with DJI products and subsequent government restrictions on the use of DJI drones are not new. On August 7, 2017, the U.S. Army [decided](#) to ground drones by DJI over security concerns, referring to classified studies about DJI drones that were first released at the end of May.

On August 9, 2017, a leaked Department of Homeland Security [memo](#) cited a reliable source that claimed DJI's commercial drones and software are "providing U.S. critical infrastructure and law enforcement data to the Chinese government" and banned them shortly thereafter.

On May 3, 2018, the Department of Defense [banned](#) the purchase and use of DJI drones also citing "cybersecurity risks," and on January 29, 2020 the Interior Department [grounded](#) its 810 drone fleet of DJI drones over security fears.

These actions and a *New York Times* [report](#) about DJI potentially sharing user information with the Chinese government prompted me to [write](#) to former Attorney General Bill Barr in July 2020 urging him to also ban drones manufactured by DJI. In October 2020, I was glad to see that the Department of Justice complied with my request and issued an [internal policy memo](#) banning the purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles by DJI.

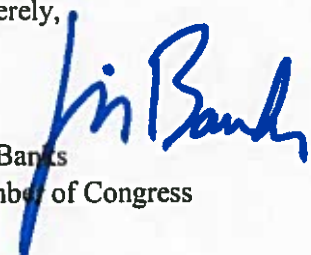
Believing that policy unchanged, you can imagine I was shocked to read procurement records obtained by [Axios](#) that reveal the FBI spent more than \$72,000 on 27 DJI drones during the month of July, in an apparent violation of DOJ policy. Eight of those drones, as previously mentioned, will be operated by the Secret Service.

Therefore, I request answers to the following questions:

- Has there been a quiet reversal of DOJ policy Congress is not yet aware of?
- If there has been a reversal in policy, and the DOJ is now permitting the purchase of drones manufactured by DJI, how do you justify that decision considering the Department of Defense's July 23, 2021 [statement](#) claiming DJI products "pose potential threats to national security?"
- Will the eight drones purchased by the Secret Service be used to monitor the activities and conversations of those in the Secret Service's protection?
- What is the intended use of the additional nineteen drones purchased by the FBI?

As these matters are of urgent national security concern, I urge you to provide a prompt response no later than October 12, 2021.

Sincerely,



Jim Banks
Member of Congress