

US Energy Dept blocks participation in China's 'Thousand Talents' program

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China's Zhongnanhai leadership compound: Washington alleges that the country's "Thousand Talents" program is designed to illicitly obtain US science and technology secrets

The US Department of Energy has moved to block its scientists from

participating in China's controversial "Thousand Talents" program in order to protect US competitive strengths and national security.

An order issued quietly last week said department staff and contractors would be barred from involvement in a foreign government's talent recruitment program that involves unauthorized transfer of scientific and technical information.

The order, obtained by AFP on Wednesday, did not mention any specific country.

But officials pointed to Beijing's "Thousand Talents" program, which offers rewards and high pay to lure ethnic Chinese working overseas and non-Chinese to deliver top-level technology to China.

US security officials say the Energy Department, which conducts advanced research in everything from [particle accelerators](#) to supercomputers to [nuclear weapons](#), has been a particular target of the program, which aims to help China catch up to more technologically [advanced economies](#).

"While international cooperation is essential to accelerate research and development, some governments, like the Chinese Communist Party, are aggressively pursuing access to foreign science and technology advancements and intellectual property to the detriment of our economic prosperity and security," a [department](#) official said on condition of anonymity.

"In addition to illicit acquisition of US technology through intellectual property theft and forced technology transfer, DOE is concerned about things such as undisclosed foreign government or institutional affiliations by US researchers, undisclosed funding of US researchers from [foreign government](#) talent recruitment programs, and breaches of

the peer review process," the official said.

The move comes amid heightened tensions over Chinese economic espionage, alleged state-ordered theft of intellectual property, and a growing trade war between the two countries.

US agencies with research arms have discovered a number of cases of scientists cooperating with the decade-old "Thousand Talents" program without permission to share their own or others' work.

In May, the FBI arrested Turab Lookman, a scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, one of the most sensitive Energy Department facilities, on charges that he lied about his participation in the Chinese program.

And in April, a cancer research center of the National Institutes of Health ousted an ethnically Chinese scientist related to his ties to the program.

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