

EXHIBIT A

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◆ WSJ NEWS EXCLUSIVE | U.S.

FBI Probes Chinese Exile, Including Work With Former Trump Aide Steve Bannon

Feds question source of funds for media company tied to Guo Wengui

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Former senior Trump adviser Steve Bannon teamed up with exiled Chinese businessman Guo Wengui to launch what was billed as a \$100 million effort to investigate alleged abuses of power by Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Communist Party. PHOTO: DON EMMERT/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

The FBI is examining exiled Chinese businessman Guo Wengui and the money used to fund his media efforts in the U.S., including his work with Steve Bannon, a former senior adviser to President Trump, according to people familiar with the matter.

Federal Bureau of Investigation national security agents in recent months have asked people who know both men for information on Mr. Guo's activities, including the source of funds of a media company linked to him that hired Mr. Bannon in 2018 as a consultant, the people said.

As recently as last week, the FBI met with one person familiar with the companies tied to Mr. Guo, the people said. The probe has been under way for more than six months, and

prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney's offices in Manhattan and Brooklyn have been involved, some of the people said.

The purpose of the FBI's interests couldn't be determined.

A lawyer for Mr. Guo said his client hadn't been contacted by the FBI.

"The FBI has never reached out to Mr. Guo or his colleagues about any of these matters," the lawyer said. "Mr. Guo is honored to have the freedom in the United States working alongside others to eliminate the Chinese Communist Party and free his fellow countrymen in China."

Mr. Guo, a former property tycoon in China, in 2014 fled the country, where he is accused of wrongdoing including bribery, fraud, money laundering, kidnapping and rape—allegations he has denied. He also has applied for asylum in the U.S.

Mr. Guo has vexed Beijing with online videos and social-media posts alleging corrupt links between China's political and corporate elites. Mr. Guo won the support of China hawks in the Trump administration in 2017 with a stream of criticism directed at Beijing.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Bannon said, "Neither Steve or any of his affiliates have been contacted by the FBI about anything, let alone this matter."

Mr. Bannon described himself as "public enemy #1" of the Chinese Communist party.

A person familiar with Mr. Bannon's activities added that the contract signed in 2018, with Guo Media, was for one year only and wasn't renewed.

"Mr. Bannon and Mr. Guo have worked together on fighting the [Chinese Communist Party] and also on setting up a media and technology distribution platform that breaks through the firewall directly to the Chinese people in China and across the globe," the person said.

China's embassy didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Wall Street Journal couldn't determine the source of funds used to pay Mr. Bannon. But Mr. Guo has in the past used what appeared to be a third party to provide funds to a contractor. He said in a court filing that a Hong Kong company, ACA Capital, paid a \$1 million deposit on separate work he commissioned from a research firm, Virginia-based Strategic Vision. At the time of the payment in January 2018, ACA Capital was owned by a man named William Je, Hong Kong corporate records show.

FBI agents have asked people familiar with Messrs. Bannon and Guo's activities whether they knew of Mr. Je and ACA, or the source of the money for Mr. Bannon, according to people aware of the inquiries.

A spokeswoman for the FBI declined to comment. Neither Mr. Je nor his attorney responded to messages seeking comment.

Mr. Bannon teamed up with Mr. Guo after Mr. Bannon left the White House in August 2017, and together they launched what was billed as a \$100 million effort to investigate alleged abuses of power by Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Communist Party. He has also appeared in online videos alongside Mr. Guo and in social-media feeds.

Mr. Bannon entered into a \$1 million contract with Guo Media, which is owned by a Delaware entity, in 2018 for "strategic consulting services," which included "introducing the Company to media personalities," according to the contract, a copy of which was published by Axios.

Last month the two men started a campaign to create a "New Federal State of China," and Mr. Guo persuaded two of China's most celebrated athletes to denounce the ruling Communist Party, a stunning display for a country used to seeing its sports heroes lavish praise on authorities for their personal successes.

Still, some have raised doubts about Mr. Guo's loyalties. Mr. Guo hired Strategic Vision in 2018 to investigate certain people he said were tied to top officials of the Chinese Communist Party, according to court filings.

The contract between Strategic Vision and Mr. Guo is now in litigation. After examining the research list provided by Mr. Guo, Strategic Vision accused Mr. Guo himself of being a Chinese "dissident hunter," according to one of the court filings in the litigation; Mr. Guo has denied that claim. Mr. Guo, through a company he controlled, first sued Strategic Vision over breach of contract, and the research firm countersued with its own breach of contract claims.

A New York state court on June 28 dismissed a lawsuit filed by Mr. Guo against Dow Jones & Co. over its reporting about the litigation between Strategic and the Guo-linked entity.

The FBI viewed Mr. Guo as a potential informant for the agency and tried unsuccessfully to cultivate him as one around 2017, according to people familiar with his recruitment. The FBI at that time also confronted Chinese agents who had allegedly come to the U.S. to force Mr. Guo to return to China and ordered them to leave the country, the Journal previously reported.

Mr. Guo for years has been a public target of China's government. When Twitter last month removed from its platform tens of thousands of accounts it labeled as fake and operated by the Chinese government, a Stanford Internet Observatory analysis of the accounts found that one of the four main topics addressed in the tweets involved attacks on Mr. Guo and his work with Mr. Bannon.

When Strategic Vision, the research firm that is involved in the dispute with Mr. Guo, attempted to subpoena Mr. Bannon last year to testify about his relationship with Mr. Guo and their contract, an attorney for Mr. Bannon said that the former White House adviser worked with Mr. Guo, but dismissed the subpoena as a fishing expedition.

"Strategic Vision is attempting to use the subpoena to harass, intimidate, and embarrass Mr. Bannon by prying into his professional relationship with Mr. Guo as well as his personal finances...in order to drum up a media circus and further harass Mr. Bannon," Mr. Bannon's attorney at the law firm Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP wrote in a December 2019 letter filed in the litigation.

Earlier this year, the judge overseeing the case said the scope of the questions to Mr. Bannon was overbroad and largely irrelevant to the lawsuit, but allowed written questions to be submitted to Mr. Bannon, which he answered.

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