



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D.C. 20535-0001
March 8, 2017

Honorable Judy Chu
Member of Congress
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

I am writing in response to your December 22, 2016, letter to the FBI concerning the FBI's "Don't Be a Puppet" website and the cases of Ms. Sherry Chen and Dr. Xiaoxing Xi. I apologize for the delay in responding.

As we have previously stated, the "Don't Be a Puppet" website was designed with considerable input from several faith and civic groups with the intent to educate teens about violent extremism and strengthen their resistance to possible radicalization and recruitment. Over 1000 people from outside of the government evaluated and reviewed the website prior to its launch, and the overwhelming majority of them recommended the site and thought it would serve as a useful tool for communities and schools. The FBI also accepted suggestions from the Department of Education following several meetings. However, as indicated by your letter, there were other groups who expressed concerns with the website. In an effort to encourage an open dialogue with these groups, the FBI has since reached out to civil liberties advocates, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) offering to meet with them and receive their feedback. Please be assured the FBI remains open to suggestions from groups and individuals to improve the content of the site and to alleviate any concerns from our communities.

In your letter you ask what data the FBI has in support of "Don't Be a Puppet." While there is no hard data showing how "Don't Be a Puppet" will curb violent extremism, the idea for the website is based on the combination of several variables. For example, we looked at how teens are being targeted by extremists, considered what platforms teens are most comfortable using, and thought about how we could reach a wide audience while still being cost-effective. Based on our findings, it was determined the "Don't Be a Puppet" website would be an effective resource to raise awareness about the growing threat of violent extremism. To be clear, the website was not created with the intent to identify recruiting efforts by violent extremist groups, and therefore we purposefully omitted personal information from the site such as a log in name. Instead, the goal of the site is to educate teens about the risks of engaging in violent extremism. However, because we do not solicit information about the individuals using the website, this also means our primary metrics are simply the number of visits the site receives. In the future, we hope to see a decline in the number of counterterrorism assessments and cases involving teens as a benchmark of the website's success.

Honorable Judy Chu

In reference to your second concern, please be assured the FBI investigates every lead it receives in an impartial manner. In all cases, the FBI will follow the facts developed throughout the investigation while being responsible for protecting the civil rights and liberties of all Americans. In the case of Ms. Sherry Chen, the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) for the Southern District of Ohio on March 10, 2015, in consultation with and without objection from Ms. Chen's counsel, exercised its discretion to dismiss the indictment without prejudice. This should not be understood as a reflection on the strength of the evidence in the case or the legal basis for the indictment; rather, the USAO exercised its discretion by choosing to withdraw the indictment prior to trial which occurs from time to time.

Dr. Xiaoxing Xi's indictment was also dismissed without prejudice on September 11, 2015, by the USAO for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. This action was taken as a result of information that became available after the indictment, which led prosecutors to conclude that proceeding with the matter was not in the interests of justice nor consistent with the *Principles of Federal Prosecution*. As was the case with Dr. Xi, if the FBI or Department of Justice (DOJ) develops information at any time during the course of an investigation or prosecution that leads to a conclusion that the matter should not proceed, we take appropriate action. Dr. Xi's attorney has also been advised the USAO will not be refiling charges.

I appreciate your bringing these matters to our attention, and I hope this information will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,



Gregory A. Brower
Assistant Director
Office of Congressional Affairs