

Politics Federal International affairs

This was published 3 years ago

## Political donor Chau Chuk Wing behind UN bribe scandal, Parliament told

By Nick McKenzie &amp; Richard Baker

May 22, 2018 – 7:19pm

One of Australia's most generous political donors has been named in Parliament as funding the bribery of a senior United Nations official, and as being closely associated with the lobbying arm of the Chinese Communist Party.

In a dramatic move that may further inflame diplomatic tensions between Beijing and Canberra, Liberal MP Andrew Hastie has used parliamentary privilege to identify billionaire businessman Chau Chuk Wing as an unindicted co-conspirator in an FBI bribery case.



Chau Chuk Wing in 2012 after donating a large sum of money to the UTS business school. SAHLAN HAYES

Mr Hastie, who chairs the joint intelligence and security committee, told Parliament on Tuesday that he had recently learned from US authorities that Mr Chau – a big donor to both main Australian political parties – was the co-conspirator identified in a New York court indictment as "CC-3".

CC-3 is alleged in the indictment to have funded a \$US200,000 (\$263,000) bribe which was funnelled to the former president of the UN general assembly, John Ashe, in 2013.

Mr Hastie's speech to Parliament is the first time that Mr Chau has been formally identified as co-conspirator 3.

"It's time we applied sunlight to our political system and a person who has featured prominently in Australian politics," Mr Hastie said.

"For reasons that are best undisclosed, the United States government did not seek to charge CC-3 for his involvement in the bribery of John Ashe. We know that CC-3 was willing to participate in the bribery of the 68th United Nations President of the General Assembly in 2013. We also know that ... CC-3 was in close contact with the United Front, the influence arm of the Chinese Communist Party in 2007.

"He has also been a very significant donor to both of our major political parties. He has given more than \$4 million since 2004. He has also donated \$45 million to universities in Australia. It is now my duty to inform the House – and the Australian people – that CC-3 is Dr Chau Chuk Wing."

Mr Hastie said CC-3's identity "was confirmed to me by authorities in the United States" whom he met while leading a delegation of members of the Parliamentary Joint Committee for Intelligence and Security. The delegation had travelled to the US to discuss the Turnbull government's proposed reforms to espionage and foreign interference legislation.

Mr Hastie said he was partly motivated to speak out in Parliament, where he cannot be sued for defamation, because of Mr Chau's decision to launch multiple defamation actions after media outlets reported on his alleged activities.

"The Australian press has reported these matters and others, and have been sued for defamation by CC-3," he said.

"My concern is that defamation claims can have a chilling effect on our free press. Any attempt to silence our media from telling the truth – provided it is the truth – through a defamation claim cannot stand."

Mr Hastie said it was in "the national interest" for him to disclose this information to the House.

Chinese-Australian businesswoman Sheri Yan, who ASIO suspects is a Chinese intelligence operative, was jailed in the US in 2016 after pleading guilty to bribing Mr Ashe.

In June 2017, [Fairfax Media and Four Corners identified Mr Chau](#) as "CC-3" in reporting that also detailed the Australian citizen's close ties to the Chinese Communist Party and concerns held by ASIO about his donations activity.



Liberal MP Andrew Hastie speaks in the Federation Chamber at Parliament House. ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN

In response to these reports, Mr Chau issued defamation proceedings and told *The Australian* newspaper that he did not know of the Chinese Communist Party's lobbying arm, the United Front.

In his speech, Mr Hastie also detailed the contents of a leaked US diplomatic cable to raise questions about whether there was a deeper motive behind the bribery of UN chief John Ashe to attend in his official UN capacity an international conference hosted by Mr Chau in 2013.

"The answer may lie in a sensitive US government cable from 2007 that details a conversation between the Guangzhou US Consul General Robert Goldberg and [Mr Chau]," said Mr Hastie.

Mr Hastie said that in the cable, Mr Goldberg described Mr Chau's leadership of a business association that was part of Beijing's United Front system.

"In the final paragraph of the cable, Goldberg wrote that the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Businessmen's Association was 'essentially a creature of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front program'," Mr Hastie said.

"The United Front is a platform of the Chinese Communist Party that is tasked with influence operations for the People's Republic of China. It aims to influence the choices, direction and loyalties of its targets, with a particular focus on political and business elites. The primary objective of the United Front is to shape thinking and attitudes in a way that is favourable to China."

Mr Hastie used his speech to defend proposed Coalition legislation aimed at requiring people interfering with or influencing Australian institutions on behalf of an overseas state to declare their activities or face prosecution. The proposed laws also seek to modernise antiquated espionage laws.

However the laws and the political commentary surrounding them have created a tense relationship with China, which has frozen visits by Australian politicians and slowed down Australian imports at Chinese ports.



**Nick McKenzie** is an Age investigative journalist who has twice been named the Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year. A winner of 10 Walkley Awards, he investigates politics, business, foreign affairs, human rights and criminal justice. Connect via [Twitter](#) or [email](#).

**Richard Baker** is a multi-award winning investigative reporter for The Age. Connect via [email](#).





