

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

September 18, 2026

Dear Secretary Bessent:

The United States and China are global competitors, but neither country can afford to ignore the growing risks posed by increasingly powerful artificial intelligence. We believe each party has incentives that can drive it toward targeted bilateral cooperation.

Your upcoming U.S.-China Summit in Washington, DC, offers an opportunity to begin building the communication, shared understanding and relationships necessary to reduce the growing dangers presented by AI.

The United States and China should prioritize mutual recognition that catastrophic AI risks threaten the security of both countries and commit to an ongoing dialogue among a consistent group of diplomats and technical experts.

Despite the ongoing competition between the U.S. and China, it is in each nations' self-interest to cooperate to address these shared risks. Both societies will be destabilized if non-state actors acquire access to increasingly powerful cyberoffensive capabilities, or if AI systems lower the barrier to chemical and biological weapons development. Unexpected escalation stemming from AI's growing role in national security tools, or accidental loss of control of frontier AI models, could also pull the two nations into a spiraling conflict that neither would choose.

AI's risks – just like its benefits – do not respect borders.

Today, rogue actors are already using AI tools¹ to develop and guide weapons. In Yemen² earlier this year, a militant cell used Claude to develop guidance, navigation and control software for a guided rocket and ballistic missiles. A small freelance team in Russia used the model to build software for

¹ Anthropic, "Detecting and Countering Misuse of AI: September 2026," Anthropic, September 10, 2026, <https://www-cdn.anthropic.com/e50be2e51e7695dc4b1366a37a245a597377d3b5/Anthropic-Detecting-and-countering-091026.pdf>.

² Reuters, "Factbox – How Anthropic Says Claude Was Used for Weapons, Spying and Cyber Operations," Reuters, September 11, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/how-anthropic-says-claude-was-used-weapons-spying-cyber-operations-2026-09-11/>.

an autonomous kamikaze drone swarm³. And cybercriminals and other threat actors⁴ are using AI to accelerate reconnaissance, social engineering and malware development, allowing them to operate faster and at greater scale.

Strategic competition does not eliminate shared interests. Targeted cooperation to reduce catastrophic AI risks would not require either country to surrender its technological advantage, disclose sensitive capabilities or accept binding commitments before sufficient trust and verification mechanisms exist. Targeted cooperation recognizes that both countries have much to lose from threats that could destabilize their societies, and would bring both societies closer to more effectively averting potential conflict or catastrophe.

In addition to the general commitment to ongoing dialogue, we recommend that AI-related discussions between the United States and China pursue the following outcomes:

1. **Reaffirm Human Control Over Nuclear Weapons Decisions.** The United States and China should reaffirm their 2024 commitment⁵ that decisions regarding the use of nuclear weapons must remain under human control.
2. **Establish a Shared AI Risk Glossary.** The two governments should commission a joint expert group to develop a shared glossary of terms related to AI risk reduction.
3. **Create a Dedicated AI Risk Reduction Channel.** Modeled on previous risk reduction mechanisms⁶ for high-consequence technologies, the United States and China should establish an authenticated and continuously staffed government communications channel connecting AI experts in both countries.

³ The Guardian, "Ukraine War Briefing: Russian Developers Used AI to Build 'Kamikaze' Attack Drone Software, Anthropic Says," The Guardian, September 12, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/12/ukraine-war-briefing-russian-developers-used-ai-to-build-kamikaze-attack-drone-software-anthropic-says>.

⁴ Akshay Joshi, "AI Speeds Cybercrime by Exposing Flaws, and Other Cybersecurity News," World Economic Forum, June 15, 2026, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/cybersecurity/ai-cybercrime-and-other-cybersecurity-news/>.

⁵ The White House, "Readout of President Joe Biden's Meeting with President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China," The White House, November 16, 2024, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/11/16/readout-of-president-joe-bidens-meeting-with-president-xi-jinping-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-3/>.

⁶ U.S. Department of State, "History of the National and Nuclear Risk Reduction Center," U.S. Department of State, accessed September 2026, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/history-of-the-national-and-nuclear-risk-reduction-center/>.

4. **Hold Regular Expert Summits on Catastrophic AI Risks.** The United States and China should build on the May 2026 announcement of a bilateral working group⁷ on AI governance by establishing dates and reciprocal hosting arrangements for semiannual summits through 2028.

As the world's top two economies, the United States and China will continue to compete. That reality makes direct communication about the growing catastrophic risks posed by a powerful technology like AI more important. Neither country benefits from an AI-enabled attack on critical infrastructure, a bioweapon built by a rogue actor, or an accidental military action. Both nations have a responsibility to reduce the likelihood of such outcomes.

The September summit offers an opportunity to begin that work. We urge you to use it.

Sincerely,

Brad Carson

President

Americans for Responsible Innovation

⁷ Meredith Chen, "China and US to Hold Dialogue on AI Governance, Beijing Confirms," South China Morning Post, May 19, 2026, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3354123/china-and-us-hold-dialogue-ai-governance-beijing-confirms>.