

CHINA IS HIDING ITS COUNTERFEIT ELECTRONICS PARTS

The Senate Armed Services Committee is trying to investigate how allegedly counterfeit parts get into the military supply chain. But China won't give visas—or promise freedom of movement without minders—to its investigators.

Two key US senators on Tuesday accused China of hampering a congressional probe into how counterfeit electronics end up in the US military supply chain by denying entry visas to investigators.

[snip]

And the senators said China had required that government minders attend any interviews conducted in China as part of the investigation, which was announced in March, but agreed that request was a “non-starter.”

Levin and McCain said that they had worked for weeks to get entry visas for staff to visit the city of Shenzhen in Guangdong province, which they described as the epicenter of the fake parts trade based on US government reports.

The development is interesting for several reasons. First, while the article cites F-15 and USMDA parts as the problem, most cybersecurity initiatives these days suggest we've got parts that are helping people hack our network. Thus, while Levin suggests China isn't really our adversary, these “counterfeit” parts may well be designed for more than failure. It seems someone has gotten a backdoor into some of our networks because of hardware vulnerabilities.

Then there's the more obvious issue raised by this. If military contractors can't source parts to China without being “infiltrated” with

counterfeit parts, and if China won't let us investigate how these counterfeit parts keep getting into our supply chain, then why are we still allowing contractors to use Chinese parts? It seems to me this shows precisely why our outsourcing—and the consequent loss of manufacturing capacity—is really a defense issue.