

March 9, 2026

Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA): Foreign Principal Locations and Activities in the United States

The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA; 22 U.S.C. §§611-621) requires foreign agents (i.e., individuals and groups) doing political, advocacy, or representational work in the United States on behalf of a foreign principal to register with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and report their activities. FARA does not prohibit any specific activities; rather it requires registration and disclosure.

What Is a Foreign Principal?

Foreign principals include (1) a government of a foreign country and a foreign political party; (2) a person outside of the United States, unless “it is established that such person is an individual and a citizen of and domiciled within the United States,” or “is not an individual and is organized under or created by the law of the United States ... and has its principal place of business within the United States”; or (3) “a partnership, association, corporation, organization, or other combination of persons organized under the law or having its principal place of business in a foreign country” (22 U.S.C. §611(b)(2)).

Who Is a Foreign Agent?

FARA requires the registration of “any person who acts as an agent, representative, employee, or servant, or any person who acts in any other capacity at the order, request, or under the direction or control, of a foreign principal” (22 U.S.C. §611(c)(1)). An agent of a foreign principal is an individual or organization

who directly or through any other person—
(i) engages within the United States in political activities for or in the interests of such foreign principal;

(ii) acts within the United States as a public relations counsel, publicity agent, information-service employee or political consultant for or in the interests of such foreign principal;

(iii) within the United States solicits, collects, disburses, or dispenses contributions, loans, money, or other things of value for or in the interest of such foreign principal; or

(iv) within the United States represents the interests of such foreign principal before any agency or official of the Government of the United States. (22 U.S.C. §611(c)(1))

Exemptions to FARA

FARA contains eight exemptions that allow a potential registrant to avoid registering with the DOJ (22 U.S.C. §613). The eight exemptions are for (1) diplomatic or consular officers; (2) officials of foreign governments; (3)

staff members of diplomatic or consular officers; (4) private and nonpolitical activities, including the solicitation of funds; (5) religious, scholastic, or scientific pursuits; (6) defense of a foreign government vital to U.S. defense; (7) certain persons qualified to practice law and who are engaged in certain legal representation; and (8) persons engaged in lobbying activities and registered under the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA; 2 U.S.C. §§1601-1614).

Foreign Principals and Foreign Agents

FARA requires foreign agents to register with the DOJ and to indicate the foreign principals they represent. Past congressional interest included a 2022 House Judiciary Committee hearing.

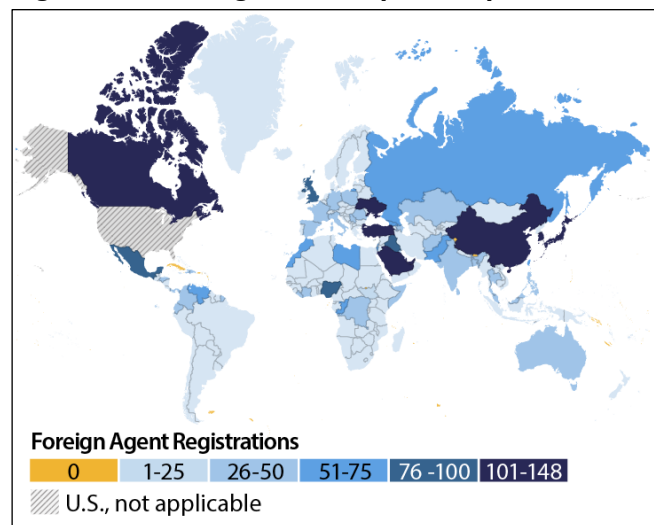
To better understand FARA registrations and activities, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) partnered with graduate students at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University during the 2024-2025 academic year (September 2024 to May 2025) to collect and analyze FARA data from required semiannual reports to Congress and from the DOJ’s FARA database.

Foreign Agent Registrations by Country

Nearly every foreign country has hired at least one foreign agent between 2001 and 2021, the time period analyzed.

Figure 1 shows foreign agent FARA registrations by country of foreign principals represented.

Figure 1. FARA Registrations by Country, 2001-2021



Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of FARA data.

As reflected in **Figure 1**, foreign agents have registered under FARA for foreign principals in 219 countries,

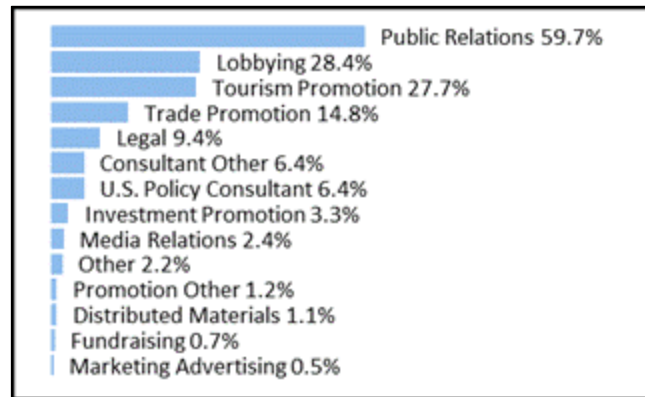
territories, and regions. During the time period covered, the most FARA registrations on behalf of foreign principals in a country was 148 (Saudi Arabia and Japan) and the fewest was 1 (21 countries and territories). Overall, more than 100 FARA registrations were filed by foreign agents representing foreign principals in nine countries—Saudi Arabia (148), Japan (148), Ukraine (145), United Arab Emirates (130), South Korea (127), Canada (118), Qatar (108), Turkey (105), and China (104). Together, these foreign countries account for approximately 26% of all FARA registrations by foreign agents on behalf of a foreign principal between 2001 and 2021.

Foreign Agent Activities

FARA requires foreign agents to register with the DOJ for each foreign principal they represent and submit a supplemental disclosure report of their activities on behalf of the foreign principal every six months (22 U.S.C. §612). FARA requires the foreign agent to provide a “detailed statement of every activity which the registrant is performing or is assuming or purporting or has agreed to perform” (22 U.S.C. §612(a)(6)).

To collect the required information, the DOJ has foreign agents report their activities and the “nature of service” provided to the foreign principal (28 C.F.R. §5.202(e)). The DOJ uses the “nature of service” to categorize foreign agent activity for its semiannual reports to Congress. The same activity could be counted in more than one category (and for this reason, the percentages in **Figure 2** total to greater than 100%). **Figure 2** shows the percentage of agent activities on behalf of a foreign principal that were labeled in each nature-of-services category as specified by the DOJ.

Figure 2. Foreign Agent Nature of Services, 2001-2021



Source: Bush School of Government and Public Service and CRS data analysis of FARA data.

Figure 2 shows that the most common services, as categorized by the DOJ, provided by a foreign agent for a foreign principal between 2001 and 2021 were public relations (59.7% of DOJ categorized entries), lobbying (28.4%), tourism promotion (27.7%), policy consulting (14.8%), and legal (9.4%). Each of the other categories represented less than 7% of all reported activity.

Activity in two of DOJ’s nature-of-services categories could also be subject to FARA exemptions—legal services (22 U.S.C. §611(g)) and lobbying (22 U.S.C. §611(h)). As a result, additional activity in these areas on behalf of foreign entities may be occurring but would not be captured in the data discussed above. Lobbying activities exempt under FARA would be potentially reported separately under the LDA.

For more information on the FARA, see CRS Report R46435, *Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA): Background and Issues for Congress*, by Jacob R. Straus; CRS In Focus IF10499, *Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA): An Overview*, by Jacob R. Straus; and CRS In Focus IF11439, *Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA): A Legal Overview*, by Whitney K. Novak.

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