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Chinese spy case in Chicago linked to larger foreign espionage scheme

By [Chuck Goudie](#) and [Barb Markoff](#), [Christine Tressel](#) and [Ross Weidner](#)

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

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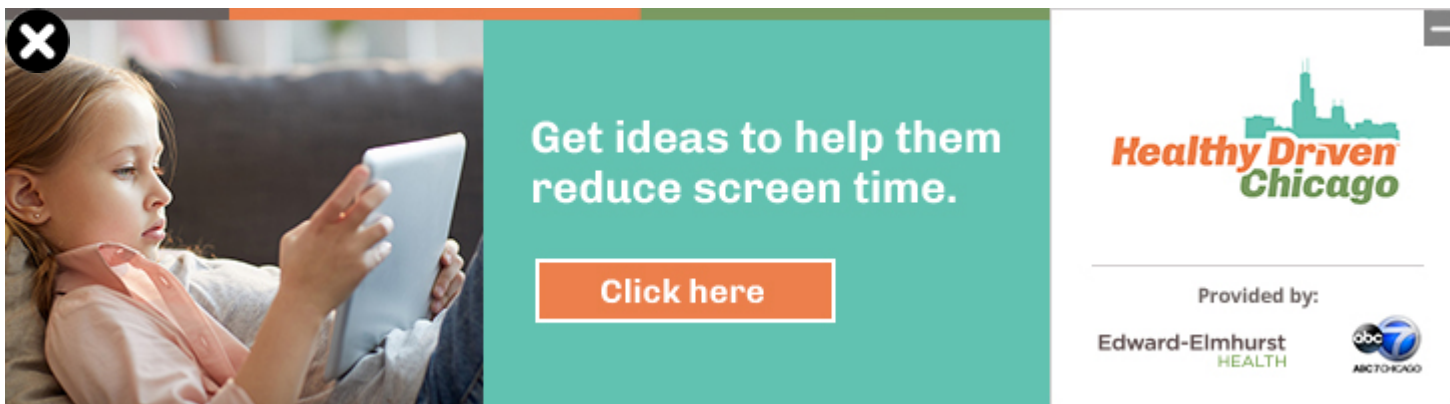


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Ji Chaoqun's federal court appearance in Chicago on Thursday is routine, in an anything-but-normal case.

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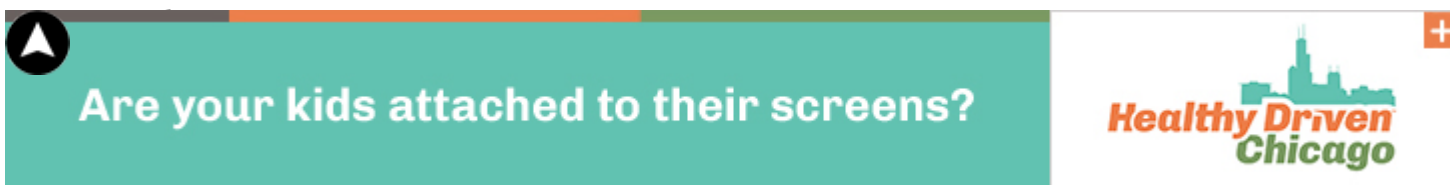
Chinese national Chaoqun, 30, is charged with providing intelligence officials in China with background check information on eight American citizens including defense contractors, federal investigators say. He had arrived in Chicago in 2013 with a student visa to study electrical engineering at IIT on the South Side but since being arrested has been locked up at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in the Loop for allegedly violating America's Foreign Agents Registration Act.

In the Cincinnati case, Yanjun Xu is being held on charges he tried to steal trade secrets from GE Aviation, the giant military contractor and manufacturer. Xu, 40, is accused of downloading GE Aviation records onto his personal laptop and then smuggling them on a flight to China. As part of the charged scheme, federal authorities said Xu had posed as a technology association official and invited a GE Aviation employee to travel to China for a presentation. Xu became the first suspected Chinese intelligence official ever extradited to the U.S. He was arrested in Belgium and is now being detained at the federal penitentiary in Milan, Michigan.

So, what's the connection between Cincinnati's Xu and Chicago's Chaoqun? While there is no indication the men were actual associates, commiserated in crime, or even ever met, the alleged link is buried in a Chicago court file.

Chaoqun's criminal complaint cites a "clandestine and overt human source collection" used by Chinese officials to recruit spies and gather stolen intelligence.

"Chinese intelligence services conduct extensive overt, covert, and clandestine intelligence collection operations against U.S. national security entities, including private U.S. defense companies, through a network of agents within and outside of China," states FBI Special



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The nexus between the two men is that unnamed, un-arrested and uncharged handler, whom investigators say is part of a widening web of Chinese government recruiters, working surreptitiously 6500 miles from Beijing.

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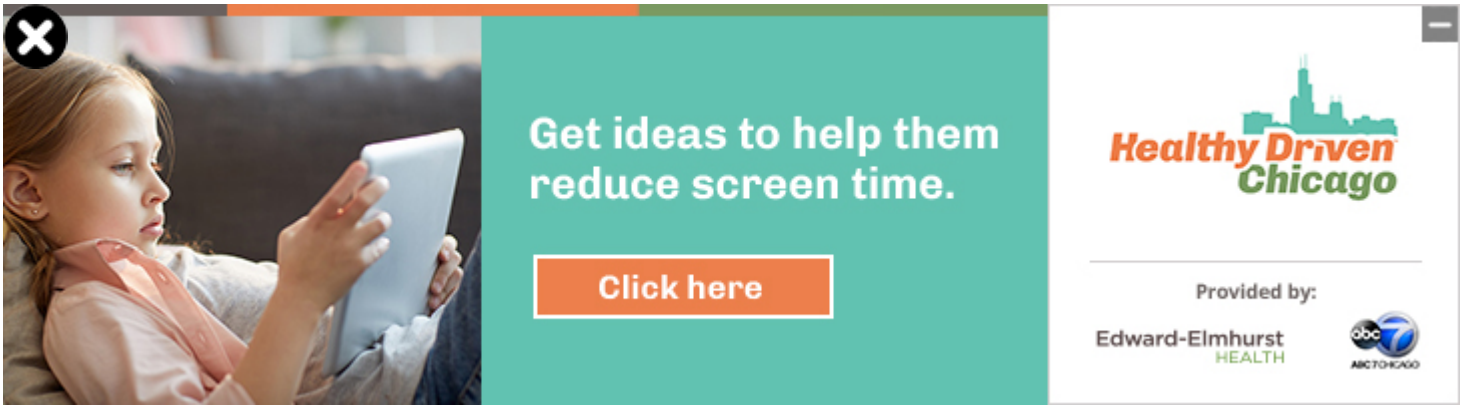
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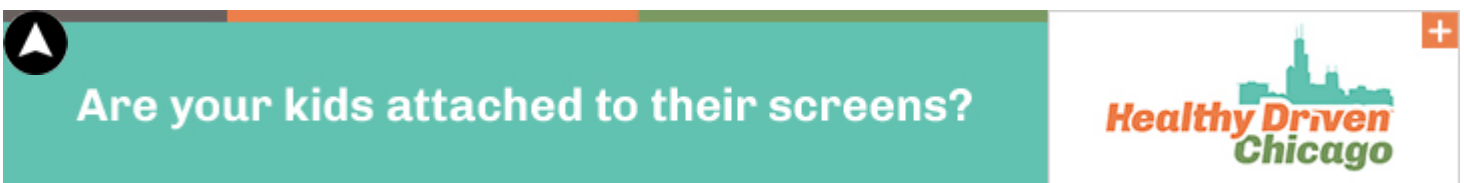
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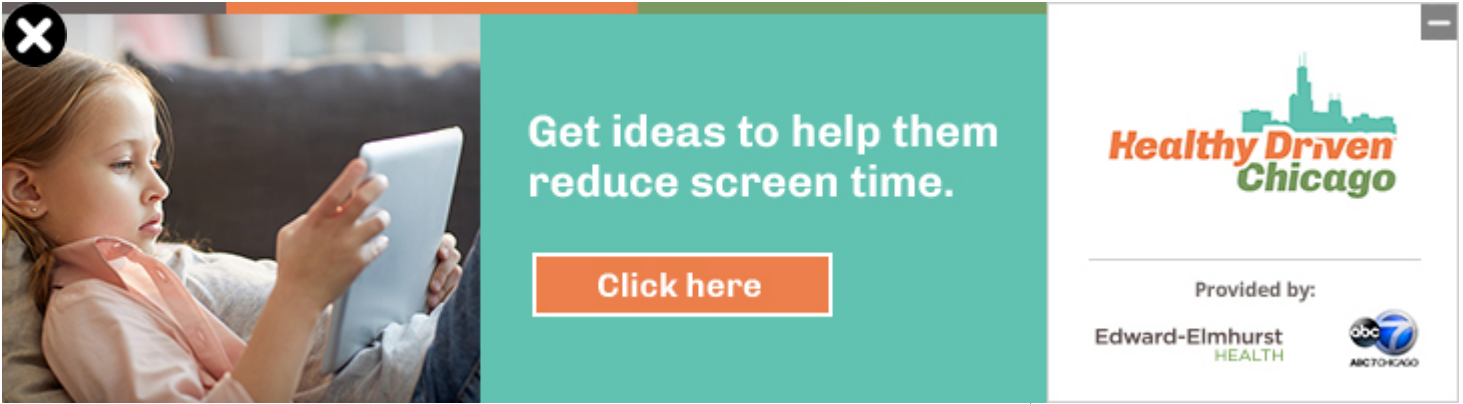
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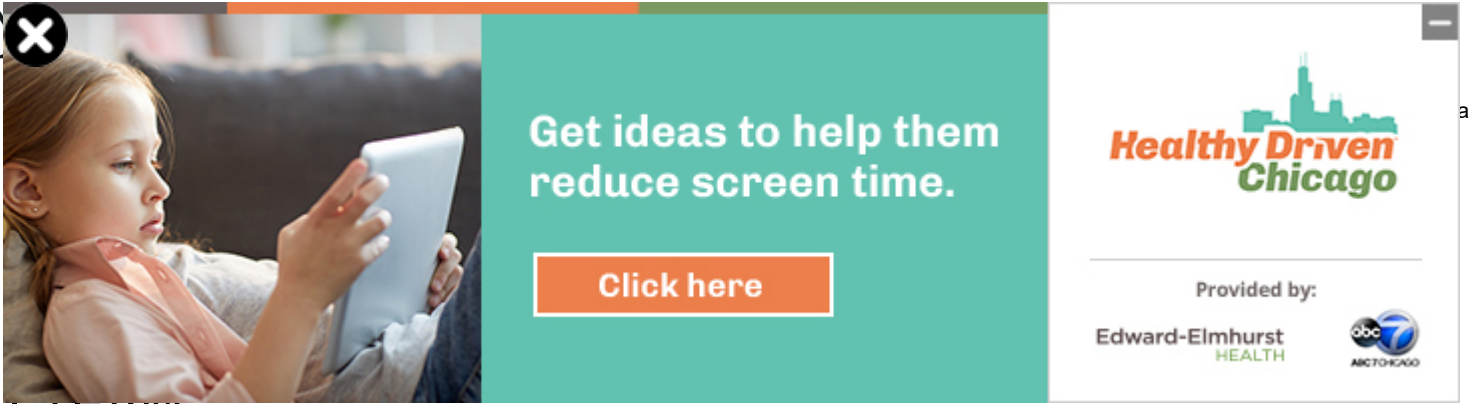
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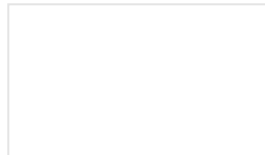
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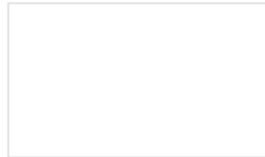
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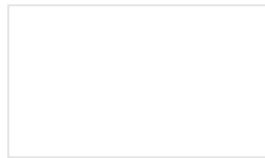


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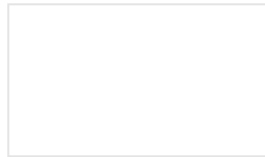
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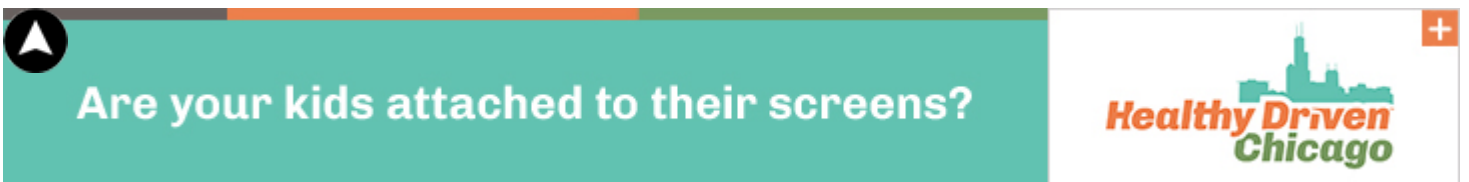


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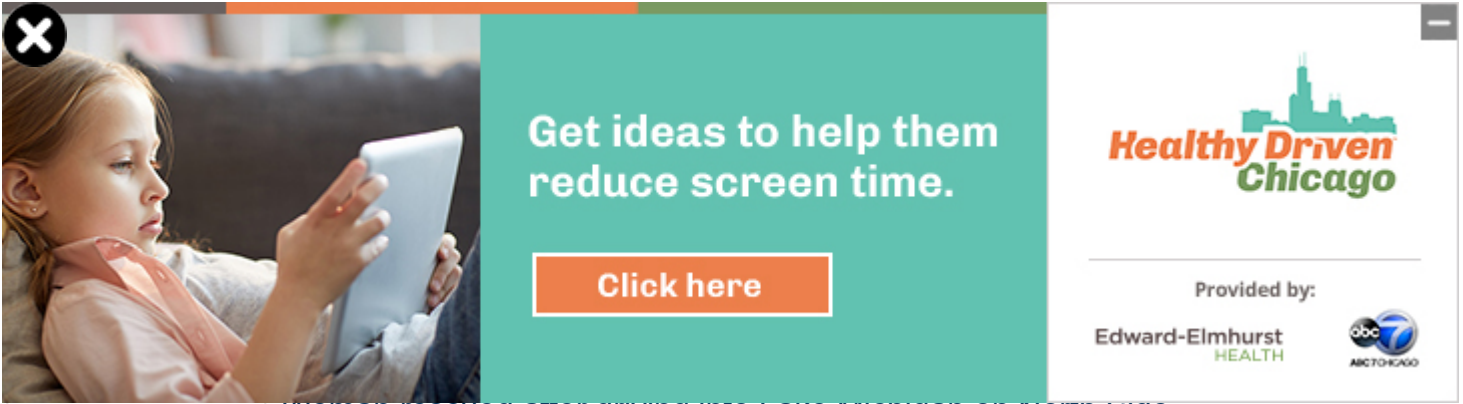
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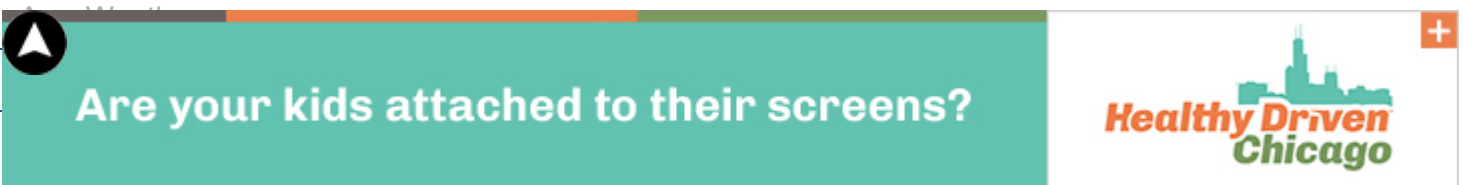
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