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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 25, 2018

Chinese National Arrested for Allegedly Acting Within the United States as an Illegal Agent of the People's Republic of China

Ji Chaoqun, 27, a Chinese citizen residing in Chicago, was arrested in Chicago today for allegedly acting within the United States as an illegal agent of the People's Republic of China.

The arrest and complaint were announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney John R. Lausch, Jr. for the Northern District of Illinois, and Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey S. Sallet of the FBI's Chicago field office.

Ji worked at the direction of a high-level intelligence officer in the Jiangsu Province Ministry of State Security, a provincial department of the Ministry of State Security for the People's Republic of China, according to a criminal complaint and affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in Chicago. Ji was tasked with providing the intelligence officer with biographical information on eight individuals for possible recruitment by the JSSD, the complaint states. The individuals included Chinese nationals who were working as engineers and scientists in the United States, some of whom were U.S. defense contractors, according to the complaint.

The complaint charges Ji with one count of knowingly acting in the United States as an agent of a foreign government without prior notification to the Attorney General. He will make an initial court appearance today at 5:00 p.m. EDT (4:00 p.m. CDT) before U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael T. Mason in Courtroom 2266 of the Everett M. Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago.

According to the complaint, Ji was born in China and arrived in the United States in 2013 on an F1 Visa, for the purpose of studying electrical engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. In 2016, Ji enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves as an E4 Specialist under the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program, which authorizes the U.S. Armed Forces to recruit certain legal aliens whose skills are considered vital to the national interest. In his application to participate in the MAVNI program, Ji specifically denied having had contact with a foreign government within the past seven years, the complaint states. In a subsequent interview with a U.S. Army officer, Ji again failed to disclose his relationship and contacts with the intelligence officer, the charge alleges.

A criminal complaint is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. The charge carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison. The statutory maximum penalty is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge.

The U.S. Army 902nd Military Intelligence Group provided valuable assistance. The government's case is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Shoba Pillay of the Northern District of Illinois and Senior Trial Attorney Heather Schmidt of the National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section.

Attachment(s):

[Download 2018 09 25 Ji Complaint](#)

Topic(s):

Counterintelligence and Export Control

Component(s):

National Security Division (NSD)

USAO - Illinois, Northern

Press Release Number:

18-1253

Updated September 25, 2018