# China Accused of Targeting U.S. Soldiers, Officials in Expanding Espionage Campaign

Federal authorities have unveiled a troubling series of espionage allegations against two active-duty U.S. Army soldiers, in what officials describe as a broader Chinese campaign to infiltrate the American military and government.

The Department of Justice announced indictments in March against Jian Zhao and Li Tian, both currently serving in the U.S. Army, accusing them of leaking highly classified military secrets to individuals connected to China. According to federal prosecutors, both men were operating independently but shared a common thread: Chinese handlers and substantial financial compensation.

Tian, who served at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington, allegedly transferred classified documents — including detailed information about the Army's Stryker combat vehicle and other weapons systems — through digital platforms like Google Drive. Prosecutors say Tian received tens of thousands of dollars in exchange, funneled through a former soldier, Ruoyu Duan, who acted as a middleman for Chinese intelligence contacts.

Surveillance footage reportedly shows Tian printing classified materials and using a personal cellphone inside a secure area — both serious breaches of military protocol. Investigators say he made multiple trips into classified areas, often staying for hours, while collecting sensitive data.

In a parallel case, Zhao is accused of selling 20 military hard drives — some marked "Secret" — to a Chinese national. Among the data Zhao allegedly provided were operational details about the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and U.S. military readiness in the event of a conflict with China. The Justice Department says Zhao received at least $15,000 for his efforts.

"These cases show that the Chinese government continues to target those who serve and protect our country," said FBI Director Kash Patel. "Bribery and espionage are intolerable threats to our national defense."

National security experts are sounding the alarm over what they describe as a methodical and increasingly aggressive Chinese espionage strategy targeting the United States. Dan Hoffman, a former CIA station chief, warned that both active and retired U.S. government personnel are now firmly in Beijing's crosshairs.

“China will use any means necessary to gather U.S. intelligence — deception, impersonation, social media. They’re playing a long game,” Hoffman told Fox News Digital.

He emphasized that intelligence from the U.S. military ranks high among China’s priorities, citing the potential for future military conflict in Asia. “They’re not just going after the U.S. They’re after NATO allies, too,” he said.

This strategy appears to extend beyond the military. In October 2024, five former University of Michigan students were charged with spying on a National Guard training session at Camp Grayling. Prosecutors allege they were acting on behalf of the Chinese government and attempted to surveil exercises involving U.S. and Taiwanese forces.

Michael Sobolik, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, sees this as part of a wider Chinese campaign to exploit American vulnerabilities.

“China is using every tactic at its disposal to obtain our military secrets — often for shockingly small sums,” Sobolik said. “It’s a new Cold War, and they are willing to win it by any means necessary.”

The incidents underscore a growing concern among U.S. officials about the breadth and audacity of China’s intelligence-gathering operations. Prosecutors say many operations involve so-called “cut-outs” — individuals who act as trusted intermediaries, masking the Chinese government’s involvement while recruiting Americans with access to sensitive information.

As investigations continue, the Department of Justice warns that the threat is unlikely to fade. The cases of Zhao and Tian, officials say, are not isolated — but rather the visible tip of a deeply entrenched and evolving espionage network.