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China mole had free access to CIA data, U.S. charges

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By Bill Gertz
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Former CIA translator Larry Wu-Tai Chin had access to data from U.S. covert agents and helped draft intelligence assessments of China during his career as a mole for Peking's intelligence service, according to a new indictment filed yesterday in Alexandria.

The details were contained in a second federal grand jury indictment charging Mr. Chin with 16 new counts of espionage, passing classified documents, tax evasion and failing to report money held in a Hong Kong bank. The alleged activities spanned more than three decades, the indictment showed.

If convicted on all counts, Mr. Chin faces a maximum sentence of two life prison terms plus 47 years and additional fines totaling more than \$2.5 million.

Mr. Chin worked in the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service in Rosslyn until 1981. Following his retirement from the CIA, he worked as a contract employee with the CIA's Joint Publications Research Service, a translation arm of the Broadcast Service.

While employed with the CIA, Mr. Chin was granted access to "classified material at all levels including secret and above," the indictment states.

Mr. Chin was first indicted Nov. 26 on one count of espionage following a two-year FBI investigation, the indictment said.

The indictment followed his Nov. 22 arrest at which time he admitted he had spied for China since 1952, the indictment said. The revelations came in a six-hour interview at his Alexandria office with FBI agents, according to court documents.

"... Larry Wu-Tai Chin, while employed by FBIS, reviewed, translated and analyzed classified documents from covert and overt human and technical collection sources which went into the West's assessment of Chinese (PRC) strategic, military, economic, scientific and technical capabilities and intentions," the new indictment states.

"In addition, [he] was involved in and aware of the West's intelligence requirements regarding the PRC and the agency's tasking to obtain that intelligence."

Federal authorities said the case is one of

the most damaging national security failures because his career spanned three decades.

Court papers in the case revealed that Mr. Chin helped Chinese intelligence operatives in an attempt to recruit a CIA employee into the Chinese spy service.

Mr. Chin told FBI agents he had worked as a Chinese agent and met secretly in Hong Kong, Macao, Peking and Toronto and offered to return to Peking as a "double agent" for the United States, according to court papers released last week.

The 34-page indictment reveals that Mr. Chin worked in the U.S. Army Liaison Mission in Shanghai between 1948 and 1952, joined FBIS in 1952 as a foreign national monitor specialist in Okinawa until 1962, and in Santa Rosa, Calif., until 1972.

The latest indictment provides more details on the first espionage count and adds one additional espionage charge which alleges that Mr. Chin received \$2,000 in 1952 for providing communist Chinese operatives with the location of Chinese prisoner of war camps during the Korean war and details of what information American and Korean military forces were seeking from Chinese POWs.

Mr. Chin is also charged with four counts of passing classified information, including the transfer of U.S. intelligence reports on China once in 1952 and 1980 and twice in 1979.

The tax charges stem from Mr. Chin's alleged failure to report an unspecified amount of money received "from his employment as an agent of the People's Republic of China Intelligence Service" on tax returns filed between 1981 and 1985.

The new indictment does not provide a total sum Mr. Chin allegedly received from China, but states that Mr. Chin deposited 150,000 Hong Kong dollars in a Hong Kong bank during three trips to the island in 1978, 1980 and 1981.

Court papers released last week indicate Mr. Chin was involved in financial work with a Hong Kong bank. When asked to identify a photo of what FBI agents claimed was a Chinese intelligence operative, Mr. Chin told the agents the man "looked like a Bank of China official that he had met while he was working on a \$1 billion loan to the Bank of China."

He is also charged with five counts of failing to report financial holdings in a Hong Kong bank between 1980 and 1984. The maximum fine for the five charges is \$2.5 million.