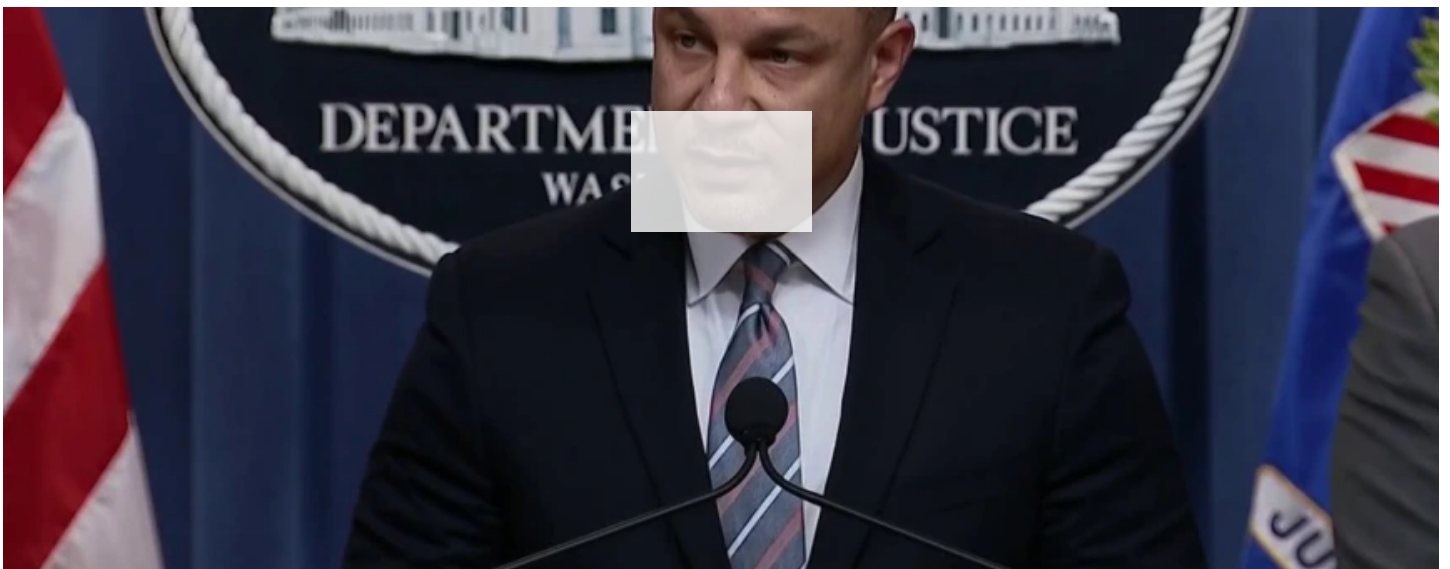


NATIONAL SECURITY

## Justice Department accuses Chinese agents of trying to intimidate critics in the U.S.

Among the targets was Arthur Liu, a lawyer and political activist in the San Francisco Bay area and the father of Olympic figure skater Alysia Liu.

**Justice Department announces criminal charges against Chinese government over efforts to intimidate**



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**By Pete Williams, Andrew Blankstein and Jonathan Dienst**

WASHINGTON – The [Justice Department](#) unsealed criminal charges Wednesday involving what prosecutors said were three separate efforts by agents of the [Chinese government](#) to intimidate critics of the regime living in the U.S., including a congressional candidate.

“The complaints unsealed today reveal the outrageous and dangerous lengths to which the PRC government’s secret police and these defendants have gone to attack the rule of law,” said Breon Peace, the U.S. attorney in Brooklyn, New York, where the cases were filed. “PRC” is short for the People’s Republic of China.

Among the targets, according to law enforcement officials, was Arthur Liu, a lawyer and political activist in the San Francisco Bay area.

“They are still paying attention to me after 30-some years, since I organized protests and hunger strikes for democracy in China,” he said.

In the 1990s, Liu said, a student who was sent to spy on him ended up confessing what he was up to after Liu took him into his house and helped find him work. “I’m a little bit surprised that after all this time, they’re still keeping track of me,” he said Wednesday.

Prosecutors said a Long Island, New York, businessman hired a former Florida corrections officer, Matthew Ziburis, to spy on Liu and get copies of his passport and his Social Security number. According to court documents, Ziburis tried to discourage the idea of having someone bribe an IRS employee to provide the information.

“Boss has to realize that this isn’t China where there is far more corruption than in the US,” Ziburis wrote to his Chinese handler, the charging documents said.

Liu is the father of the Olympic figure skater Alysa Liu, who has credited him with supporting and encouraging her. “He just helps me so much,” she said during the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing.

Another target of Chinese agents was a Democratic candidate for Congress in New York, Xiong Yan, according to officials familiar with the case. He was involved in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Court documents said the Chinese agent, Qiming Lin, contacted a private investigator in New York and encouraged him to “find dirt” to discourage Yan from staying in the race.

“Can we manufacture something?” the agent asked, according to court documents. Lin recommended hiring a prostitute and even suggested that the private investigator could figure out some way to injure Yan, by beating him or involving him in a car accident.

“Right now, we don’t want him to be elected,” Lin said, according to the court documents.

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Yan is a naturalized U.S. citizen who served in the U.S. Army. His campaign office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. He is a Democratic candidate in New York's 1st Congressional District, represented by Republican Lee Zeldin.

Justice Department officials said they believed it was the first case of the Chinese government's trying to intimidate a U.S. congressional candidate.

In both cases, the private investigators contacted by Chinese agents became concerned about what they were asked to do and contacted the FBI, which then monitored their communications, prosecutors said.

The Long Island businessman was also accused of targeting a California artist, Weiming Chen, who created a sculpture depicting Chinese President Xi Jinping as a coronavirus molecule. It was destroyed in a fire last year.

The FBI said Chinese agents arranged to have cameras and microphones hidden in the artist's studio.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to requests for comment about the unsealed charges.

FBI Director Christopher Wray, one of the government's most outspoken critics of Chinese spying, has said Chinese Americans are among the people most victimized by Beijing's spying. "We have seen efforts by the Chinese government that reach here into the United States to engage in repressive conduct," he said in a recent interview.

Matthew Olsen, the assistant attorney general in charge of the National Security Division, said he has seen an alarming rise in such efforts by authoritarian countries to intimidate their critics in the U.S.

In the past two years, federal prosecutors have also accused Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt and Belarus of launching similar efforts, in addition to other cases alleging intimidation by China.



Pete Williams



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