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12/15/2014**Chinese national pleads guilty to conspiring to violate Arms Export Control Act**

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A Chinese national, living in the United States on a student visa, pleaded guilty Tuesday to scheming to illegally export defense articles with military application to China.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents investigated this case.

Wentong Cai, 30, pleaded guilty to count three of a superseding indictment charging him and his cousin, Bo Cai, 29, also a Chinese national, with a scheme to illegally export sensors to China. These sensors are primarily manufactured for sale to the U.S. Department of Defense for use in high-level applications, such as line-of-sight stabilization and precision motion control systems. The Arms Export Control Act and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) both prohibit exporting defense-related materials from the United States without obtaining a license or written approval from the U.S. Department of State.

In his plea agreement, Wentong Cai admitted that from March 2012 to December 2013 he conspired to illegally export sensors from the United States to China without first obtaining the required export license. At the time, Wentong Cai was a graduate student at Iowa State University studying microbiology, and Bo Cai worked at a technology company in China.

According to the plea agreement, Wentong Cai and Bo Cai embarked on an illegal scheme to smuggle sensors to China for one of Bo Cai's customers. They did this despite knowing that the sensors could not be exported without a license, and that the United States did not issue such licenses to export these sensors to China. As part of this scheme, Bo Cai enlisted Wentong Cai to acquire the sensors under the ruse that he planned to use the sensors in his research at Iowa State University.

Court filings indicate that this investigation began in October 2013 when an undercover HSI special agent responded to Wentong Cai's overtures. After negotiations by telephone and email, Bo Cai and Wentong Cai traveled in December 2013 to New Mexico. There they obtained a sensor from undercover HSI agents and developed a plan for smuggling that sensor to China. Bo Cai was arrested Dec. 11, 2013 at an airport in Los Angeles, California, as he prepared to board a flight to China. The sensor was discovered concealed in a computer speaker in his luggage. Wentong Cai was subsequently arrested Jan. 22, 2014 in Ames, Iowa.

Wentong Cai is in federal custody and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Wentong Cai will be sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment. He will be turned over to ICE and placed in removal proceedings after he completes his prison sentence.

Bo Cai pleaded guilty July 23, 2014 to all three counts of the superseding indictment charging him with violating the Arms Export Control Act, smuggling and conspiracy. Bo Cai is in federal custody and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing. He faces a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on the Arms Export Control Act charge, 10 years in prison on the smuggling charge, and five years on the conspiracy charge. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Bo Cai will also be turned over to ICE and placed in removal proceedings after he completes his prison sentence.

The following agencies participated in this investigation: HSI offices in Los Angeles and Iowa, the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the Defense Security Service and the FBI. Iowa State University cooperated with HSI throughout this investigation.

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