

2012 ELECTIONS: Spying documents shredded: source

Written by Taipei Times

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The Ministry of Justice' Investigation Bureau (MJIB) has ordered that all documents related to monitoring President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) opponents in the presidential election must be destroyed after the illegal practice was disclosed by the media, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) said yesterday, citing an anonymous source inside the bureau.

Documents provided by the source seem to confirm the existence of a project, codenamed "An-Ping-Shun Project," to monitor DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and People First Party (PFP) candidate James Soong (宋楚瑜), DPP lawyer Hsu Kuo-yong (許國雄) said at a DPP legislative caucus press conference.

The source also told the DPP that MJIB Director Chang Ji-ping (張其平) had ordered on Friday that all the documents and information related to the project be destroyed by Saturday after the monitoring was reported by the media on Wednesday last week, Hsu said.

Hsu said the whistleblower took photographs of the documents from a computer screen to keep from being identified via electronic means.

The Chinese-language Next Magazine reported on Wednesday that National Security Council (NSC) Secretary-General Hu Wei-chen (胡偉晨) had asked the investigation bureau in May to monitor Tsai and that it had submitted information it gathered, which detailed Tsai's schedules, meetings, contacts and the possible number of votes at stake, to Ma.

Hsu urged Prosecutor-General Huang Shyh-ming (黃世明) to launch an investigation into the case and to secure and recover related -documents as soon as possible.

The source said the investigation bureau used citation points as incentives to motivate 28 agents based in various parts of the country to monitor the two opposition candidates, with reports on Tsai receiving more citation points than those on Soong, Hsu said.

DPP Legislator Tsai Huang-liang (蔡煌良) said Ma had not responded to allegations of whether

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the NSC had gone beyond its authority in ordering the investigation bureau to spy on the candidates and Huang has yet to launch an investigation on the case despite having done so in the Yu Chang Biologics Co (宇昌生物) case involving Tsai.

Meanwhile, eight pro-DPP lawyers established a coalition watchdog to monitor the government for rights abuses and breach of administrative neutrality.

At a press conference held at DPP headquarters, lawyer Wellington Koo (吳文遠) said the monitoring case showed that “the ghost of the authoritarian regime is still with us today when we live under the rule of a political party with an authoritarian nature.”

The case posed a great concern to Taiwan’s democracy, because the intelligence agencies, which are funded by taxpayers, resort to monitoring to influence and change election results, Koo said.

“If they can do that and get away with it, I would say our democracy is fake,” he said.

Lawyer Kao Yung-cheng (高永成) lamented the media and the public’s neglect of the case, adding that it seemed to be a result of a failure of the implementation of transitional justice in Taiwan.

The illegal practice of the intelligence apparatus infringes upon the fundamental framework of the Constitution, he said, and “while the investigation bureau said it has never wiretapped anyone, it dared not say it had never monitored anyone.”

The case showed how difficult it is for a person in power to resist the temptation to abuse power to save his own career, lawyer Huang Ruei-ming (黃睿銘) said.

Taiwan should learn from the Watergate scandal in the US, he said, because only the media and the public — not government agencies themselves — could monitor the government at all

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times.

In a press statement, the MJIB said the bureau had a mission codenamed “An-Ping-Shun Project” or “Ping-Shun Project” that provided security in various elections.

The mission code was used in elections held when the DPP was in power, it said.

The bureau said Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Sun Ta-chien (孫太千) had questioned former minister of justice Chen Ding-nan (陳定南) about the “Ping-Shun Project” in a question-and-answer session at the legislature on Feb. 23, 2004.

Chen said at the time that the “Ping-Shun Project” was the -codename for the bureau’s security efforts in every election, and his remarks were reported by media at the time, the bureau said.

Alleging that the “An-Ping-Shun Project” or “Ping-Shun Project” is an effort to spy on specific candidates is wrong, it said.

In early August last year, the DPP said that the e-mail accounts of senior officials and staff at Tsai’s office had been hacked and that confidential information had been stolen. An investigation had traced the attacks to IP addresses from Xinhua news agency bureaus in Beijing and Malaysia, addresses in Australia, as well as the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission in Taipei, it said at the time.

The attacks reportedly started in March — the same month Tsai Ying-wen officially launched her presidential campaign — and spiked in May, sources told the Taipei Times in September.

The government also denied any involvement in that case.

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