

Four New Party members in spy probe

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New Party spokesman Wang Ping-chung, center, shouts yesterday as Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau agents escort him from his residence in Taipei for questioning about alleged breaches of the National Security Act.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

Prominent news personality Wang Ping-chung (王平昌) and three other New Party youth wing leaders were detained for questioning yesterday, as part of a probe into suspected leaks of classified information in connection with an espionage investigation against Chinese student Zhou Hongxu (周洪旭).

In coordinated actions yesterday morning, Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) officials, backed up by police officers, served summonses and conducted searches at Wang's home in Taipei and at the residences of other New Party youth wing executives Ho Han-ting (何漢庭), Lin Ming-cheng (林明成) and Chen Ssu-chun (陳素純).

The officials had search warrants, summons notifications and arrest warrants for Wang and his New Party colleagues, and the operation was carried out in accordance with legal procedures, they said.

Wang, the New Party spokesman and head of its youth member committee, is known for his outspoken pro-China views and has made frequent trips to China, often appearing as a political commentator on Chinese state media.

Officials dispatched to search Wang's home said they had to call a locksmith to gain entry after Wang stalled them for about an hour by refusing to open the door.

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Wang tried to call his lawyer, as he began filming what was taking place for an online live broadcast.

After gaining entry, officials served summonses and warrants for Wang and his father, and they were taken for questioning at the MJIB headquarters in New Taipei City.

The same was done with Wang's colleagues.

Taipei prosecutor Lin Chun-ting (林俊穎) headed yesterday's investigation, as he is also in charge of the investigation of Zhou, who was convicted in September for trying to obtain classified information and recruit people for a spy network.

The Taipei District Prosecutors' Office later released a statement saying that Wang and other people of interest were being investigated on suspicion of violating the National Security Act (國家安全法) in relation to Zhou's case.

Except for Chen Ssu-chun, the other three had just returned from China on Saturday, as they had accompanied New Party Chairman Yok Mu-ming (楊慕明) and Taipei City Councilor Chen Yen-po (陳延波) on an official visit to China.

Chen Yen-po yesterday confirmed that the New Party delegation held a number of meetings with executives at China's Taiwan Affairs Office, and that they had visited Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and other Chinese cities.

Regarding Zhou's case, the investigation had earlier revealed that Wang had become friends with Zhou when the Chinese student was active in universities and social circles in getting to know more people and government officials prior to his arrest and conviction.

The two had been seen attending the same events.

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It was alleged that Wang had played a key role by introducing Zhou to Taiwanese government officials and acting as an intermediary for Zhou's activities.

Chen Ssu-chun and Lin Ming-cheng were listed as witnesses, and transferred to the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office for further questioning at about 7pm yesterday, while Wang and Ho were still being questioned at MJIB as of press time last night.

Zhou, who is under detention, was also summoned by prosecutors last night, as officials said they might arrange for Zhou and Wang to testify and be cross-examined as part of the investigation into the case.

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