

Aug. 21 is a day to remember. That was the day when the clique around President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and National Security Council Secretary-General King Pu-tung (金溥聰) received a slap in the face from the Taiwan High Prosecutors' Office, the second prosecutorial rebuff in a week.

The rejection came in the form of the case against former Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) deputy minister Chang Hsien-yao (張顯耀), with the Investigation Bureau referring him to the Taiwan High Court Prosecutors' Office for trial on treason charges, but which the office refused, citing a lack of evidence that would bring the case under the office's remit.

This blatant attempt to eliminate Chang backfired.

A little more than a week earlier, the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office ended its investigation into Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平), saying he had not broken the law. A year after Ma and King cooked up the "September strife," it was finally curtains for this ignominious case

Ma once said, in reference to the case against Wang: "If this is not improper influence, then what is?" The Taipei prosecutors' decision was perhaps a lesson to Ma — a man who does not understand his own shortcomings — as it says, in effect: "If this is improper influence, then what isn't?"

So is Chang a spy or not? Did he leak secrets? These are serious accusations that have implications for national security, but they are being drowned out by bickering, slander and mockery. Why? Because the case against Wang was a matter of political infighting, and the same may be true about the case against Chang.

Indeed, the reason Chang is finding support could be that support for Wang is spilling over to him.

Despite that, there are fundamental differences in the allegations against the two men. The

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reason that Ma and King took on Wang is they want the legislature to follow the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) line. Chang, however, is a lowly political appointee, so why would anyone want to get rid of him?

When Chang told a press conference he had no idea why he was fired and that his immediate superior, MAC Minister Wang Yu-chi (王郁琦), was lying, the Presidential Office immediately came out and spoke of Chang's "plea for forgiveness," thus showing that Chang was also part of this "republic of lies."

Chang said he has nothing to hide, so why did he lie? He was originally listed as a party in the case, but the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office has changed that classification to his being a suspect. Is this mere coincidence?

To lie or to be insincere is not the exclusive preserve of diplomats; it is also a specialty of spies. Would it be possible to be a spy and not lie? When Chang meets Ma, that is a meeting between two spies and two liars, but although one is still learning the trade and the other is a master spy, a fight between two spies will always be bad for both.

Small wonder that no one understands what is going on.

But what has Chang really done? There is no evidence of any kind, only "top leaders" leaking information and weaving a confusing spy story. The allegations against Chang is beginning to look like the Chiang Nan (蔣南) case — the writer who wrote a biography on then-president Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) and was assassinated at his home in California in 1984.

All the main ingredients in the Chiang Nan case can be found in the allegations against Chang: spies from three countries, mafia murder, testaments written to prevent being killed, verbal involvement by the US — they are all there. The only difference is that Chang is a licensed spy, while Chiang Nan — the pen name of writer Henry Liu (劉亨利) — was not.

Chang says he is in possession of a lot of internal information and is threatening to put it all in his will, much like the recorded tapes of former Bamboo Union gang leader Chen Chi-li (陳奇立)

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and others of his ilk.

If Chang really does write down all of these secrets, his will would probably be closer to book length rather than just a piece of paper. However, master spies are trained never to give up their secrets even when faced with certain death. That means it is not very professional of Chang to say that he will tell all his secrets in his will.

And this is not all: The media got hold of part of Chang's notes at the press conference because he failed to cover them with his hands, and they were found to mention a meeting between Ma and Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平). One cannot help wondering if a spy who cannot even protect his own notes is capable of protecting anything at all.

Alas, with a spy for president, we get spies for political appointees. Fortunately, the Chiang Nan case blocked the appearance of a third generation of the Chiang family and marked the beginning of democratic Taiwan.

If Chang can help put an end to any hopes of a meeting between Ma and Xi, his achievements would match those of Chiang Nan.

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