

Tracking claim a disservice to Han

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) on Wednesday urged the administration of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to order the intelligence agencies to immediately stop all surveillance efforts that could give her an unfair advantage in the presidential election campaign, doubling down on his claim that the government has been spying on him.

Tsai should act according to her conscience and ask herself whether she spied on him, instead of forcing him to press charges, which would be pointless against the “state apparatus,” Han said the day after the Presidential Office urged him to “immediately press charges” if he believed he was being monitored.

This unfounded accusation led Kaohsiung Information Bureau Director-General Anne Wang (王淑惠) to play damage control later that day, telling a news conference that Han “suspects” that the government had installed a tracking device on his car, but would not press charges.

Han might have enjoyed his time in the limelight when quibbling with Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) about who can sign more paperwork in a day or over his claim that the government had sent people to photograph him playing mahjong in Indonesia over the Lunar New Year holiday, but his accusation that the government is spying on a public official — which would be a felony — is not only serious, but would unravel Tsai’s re-election campaign if proven true.

However, after drawing national attention and sparking an online campaign to search for the supposed tracking device, Han has been unable to provide any evidence to support his allegation.

Given that Han has been plagued by allegations of extramarital affairs, political pundits and netizens have suggested that perhaps it was not the government that installed the alleged tracking device.

Han clearly wanted to knock his opponents down a few notches, but his inability to back up his claims while making repeated contradictions has made himself into a joke.

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It is not the first time that the Han camp has tried to gain an advantage over opponents with unfounded claims.

In November last year, several people began spreading a false claim online that Han's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) mayoral rival, Chen Chi-mai (陳其邁), had worn an earpiece during a televised debate with Han.

The claim was later proven to be false, but is widely believed to have had a negative effect on Chen's campaign.

Earlier this year, the pro-China CtiTV falsely reported that Representative to Singapore Francis Liang (梁鳳儀) had been told by the DPP to shadow Han during his visit to the city-state in February, for which the station was fined NT\$600,000.

The electorate should know better than to be fooled again by such cheap mudslinging.

If the tracking allegation had developed differently, the Presidential Office would probably have had to file a defamation lawsuit against Han to maintain its reputation, but considering the current situation, the office is not likely to take Han seriously.

However, the incident is of grave concern to the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), as it does not seem that any sane person — let alone one who is its presidential candidate — would make such an accusation just to embarrass himself.

The incident could force the KMT to decide whether it is going to remain a sitting duck or if it is going to replace Han with a candidate who its supporters could take seriously.

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