

Imagine that a spy defects to another country and reveals, among other things, that he had been ordered by his superiors to lead an operation to infiltrate the society of a third nation to influence the result of an upcoming presidential election. The goal of the operation was to unseat the incumbent president.

Instead of calling on the government to fully investigate the claims, as would be reasonably expected, the nation’s opposition politicians react to the disturbing news by immediately launching an all-out attack on the defector. They feverishly denounce his testimony as a pack of lies, even hinting that he is part of a global conspiracy.

This might sound far-fetched, but it is exactly what is playing out in Taiwan.

Last week, Australian media reported that self-professed Chinese spy William Wang Liqiang (王立强) had defected and has been providing information to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. The information Wang has reportedly passed on to the spy agency paints a disturbing picture of a Chinese espionage network whose tentacles extend right into the heart of Taiwanese society.

Wang claimed that he started out working for a front company in Hong Kong called China Innovation Investment Ltd led by executive director Xiang Xin (相欣). While in Hong Kong, he was given a new task: help direct a major operation to manipulate Taiwan’s local elections on Nov. 24 last year.

“Our work on Taiwan was the most important — the infiltration into media, temples and grassroots organizations,” Wang told Australia’s *The Age*.

Wang claimed that Xiang has a close relationship with Want Want China Times Group chairman Tsai Eng-meng (蔡英萌), which correlates with multiple reports of Taiwanese media organizations peddling pro-China propaganda.

KMT in a panic over ‘spy’ allegations

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Friday, 29 November 2019 05:23

Want Want China Times Group in July became embroiled in controversy after the *Financial Times*

reported that the

China Times

and CtiTV receive their daily editorial line from China’s Taiwan Affairs Office. CtiTV has also been fined by the National Communications Commission over its coverage of the local elections and Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), the Chinese Nationalist Party’s (KMT) presidential candidate in the Jan. 11 election.

Wang claimed to having helped funnel funds to Han’s mayoral campaign last year and described Han’s election as a “huge win” and a “glorious record.” His next assignment was purportedly to come to Taiwan to work on subverting January’s elections, with the ultimate aim of unseating President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文).

Beijing has paid three Taiwanese news networks to broadcast news designed to negatively affect the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) ahead of the elections, Wang said.

Given the severity of Wang’s claims — and that Australia’s intelligence community appears to be treating them as credible and true — you would expect Taiwan’s main opposition party to demand that the government conduct a thorough investigation.

However, Han and other KMT politicians have done the exact opposite, immediately attempting to cast doubt on Wang and his testimony by parroting Beijing’s line that Wang is a convicted fraudster and a fugitive from the police.

After the commission announced that it had launched an investigation into Wang’s claims, Han on Facebook angrily accused the media regulator of colluding with the DPP. Han’s deputy campaign manager Sun Ta-chien (孫太建) went further, accusing Wang of collaborating with various foreign governments to “intervene in Taiwan’s elections.”

The KMT is clearly in full panic mode: Wang’s explosive allegations threaten to derail the party’s election campaign. Han’s team had no option but to hit back hard with obfuscation and diversionary tactics.

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The million-dollar question is: Will enough voters believe them?

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2019/11/29](#)