

## Chinese security chief's visit kept secret

Written by Taipei Times

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A visit to Taiwan by Chinese Vice Minister of Public Security Chen Zhimin (陳智敏) and his delegation earlier this month was shrouded in secrecy and intentionally unpublicized, even as talks were held with senior government officials, an investigation by the Taipei Times showed yesterday.

Chen, who is believed to be the second-highest-ranking Chinese official to visit the nation in the past 12 years in an official capacity, was in Taipei from Sept. 13 through Sept. 18 and met representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), the Coast Guard Administration (CGA) and the Ministry of Justice.

The *Taipei Times* has learned that the trip's organizers, the National Police Agency (NPA) and Chinese authorities, covered up the visit. It was only made public on Monday afternoon, more than a week after it concluded.

An NPA official, speaking on condition of anonymity, acknowledged that the talks were secretive, adding that the agency had purposefully played down the delegation's trip. The official said specific details of the visit would not be made public.

While the source confirmed that the 17 members of Chen's entourage were above the deputy chief and vice director level, the NPA did not have the authority to release their names.

This could be the first time in the nation's history that a visit by senior Chinese officials was covered up by Taiwan's own government agencies.

The NPA released a short statement on the visit on Monday after the Central News Agency and the Chinese state-run *China News* broke the story.

Hsu Jui-shan (許俊山), chief administrator of the Criminal Investigation Bureau, which organized the delegation's itinerary, said the information was withheld because of Chen's sensitive post, which gave his trip political ramifications.

"We had a tacit understanding with [China] ... we weren't going to release this trip to the media because of the upcoming [November] elections," he said. "The request [for this] came from China, and as the host, we accepted."

According to an official account of the trip, Chen, who is also the vice chairman of the Police Association of China, was visiting to promote cross-strait cooperation between police agencies and explore possibilities for greater judicial collaboration.

The NPA statement said an agreement was reached on six points, including an increase in cross-strait police exchanges, more communication on extradition and additional cooperation on security and anti-terrorism.

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However, the NPA statement did not mention that Chen also met the vice ministers of justice, top CGA staff and a vice chairperson at MAC, Hsu said.

The exact names of Chen's contacts could not be confirmed.

It is understood that unlike Chinese Minister of Culture Cai Wu (蔡武), who visited earlier this month under his unofficial title as honorary chairman of the China Friendship Association of Cultural Circles, Chen was here in his official capacity.

Documents from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security show that Chen plays an important role in Beijing's security apparatus, having held important exchanges with his counterparts in Hong Kong and Macau, a possible reason why he was chosen to lead the delegation to Taiwan.

Last year, he traveled to southern China, where he met with police chiefs from Hong Kong and Macau and promised greater cooperation in training and fighting crime. He has also met previously with the director of MAC's legal department, Wu Mei-hung (吳梅虹).

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmakers told the *Taipei Times* that the legislature had not been informed of Chen's visit and said that as a democracy, the government had an obligation to let the public know the details of its cross-strait negotiations.

DPP Legislator Huang Wei-cher (黃偉哲) said that if evidence of a cover-up were found, it would confirm widespread fears that the government was engaged in secret negotiations with China.

"Our concern is that this will become the norm," he said. "There was no reason why the information could not have been released, and their excuses for covering it up are not good enough."

DPP Legislator Wong Chin-chu (王欣居) said the visit violated public accountability and said the specific nature of Chen's talks should be made public.

"It's a worrying trend ... these new types of secret exchanges are extremely harmful to Taiwan," she said.

In a telephone interview, former MAC chief Joseph Wu (吳敦義) said the more the authorities tried to keep such visits secret, the more suspicious the public would become.

"It's OK if the PSB [Public Security Bureau] is here in Taiwan to discuss joint crime fighting," he said. "In fact, when the DPP was in power, we tried to work with the People's Republic of China on that issue and took pride in those efforts."

"Why hide it from the public, then?" he said, adding that if the discussions between the Chinese delegation and Taiwanese officials turned to such topics as combating "terrorism" — which in certain Chinese circles can be construed as including "separatism" — then such visits

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would be far more alarming.

The Presidential Office and the National Security Council refused to comment for this report, while the MAC described the visit as “nothing special.”

Tsai Ji-ru (蔡紀如), senior specialist in the council's legal department, said such exchanges had become the norm since the two sides signed an agreement on mutual judicial assistance and cross-strait cooperation to fight crime in June last year.

Senior Taiwanese judicial officials have also visited China since the signing of the accord, he said.

Tsai said he did not know whether the two sides had agreed to wait until Chen had returned to China to make public the visit, because the NPA had organized the trip.

Meanwhile, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lawmakers Tsao -Erh-chang (蔡榮昌) and Lo Shu-lei (羅淑蕾) applauded the visit, saying it would facilitate implementation of cross-strait agreements on crime-fighting and judicial cooperation.

Tsao, who was involved in signing the Kinmen Agreement 20 years ago — the first agreement dealing with cross-strait affairs to facilitate the bilateral repatriation of -stowaways and illegal immigrants — said communications between officials from the two sides would help establish mutual trust.

Shrugging off criticism of the secrecy surrounding the visit, Tsao said examining how cross-strait agreements on crime prevention were implemented “was much more important” than whether Chen's activities here were made public.

Lo said contacts between high-level officials from the two sides should not always be held “in the back room,” adding that there should be a certain degree of institutionalized transparency in their interactions.

The Executive Yuan said the main purpose of Chen's visit was to allow senior police officials to exchange ideas on how to reinforce cross-strait cooperation since the Agreement on Jointly Cracking Down on Crime and Mutual Legal Assistance Across the Strait (兩岸共同打擊犯罪及相互法律協助協議) was signed in May last year.

The government was unable to reveal the contents of the meetings because their discussions concerned ongoing investigations, it said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/09/29](#)