

5,000 Chinese spies in Taiwan: source

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Government offices lack credible information security and are vulnerable to Chinese espionage, an official in the national security establishment said.

Taiwan's national security authorities estimate that about 5,000 agents are collecting state secrets in Taiwan on behalf of the Chinese government, and the nation's civilian administration is no less vulnerable or compromised than its military, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Although 80 percent of all detected incidents of Chinese espionage targeted the military, leaving just 20 percent aimed at the civilian government, the disparity was likely due to the military's higher detection rate, as it has counterintelligence capabilities that are absent from the government's administrative offices, the official said.

Taiwanese authorities have uncovered 60 espionage plots since 2002. Eighteen were discovered before August 2009, when mail, commerce and travel channels were opened between Taiwan and China, while 42 have been recorded since then, according to reports.

Detected Chinese espionage operations represent only the tip of the iceberg, the official said.

In addition to military and national security apparatuses, Chinese intelligence operatives have infiltrated the administrative offices of the civilian government, the official said.

Such offices are primary targets, as they are capable of providing sensitive information regarding technological research and development, diplomatic policies and cross-strait affairs, the official said.

The official cited the detention last week of Chinese former student Zhou Hongxu (周洪序) on suspicion of espionage as evidence that Chinese agents have compromised government offices.

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Zhou allegedly attempted to “recruit Taiwanese officials working in ministry or department-level organizations in the central government on a long-term basis,” and confidential information entrusted to multiple governmental agencies and employees of educational institutions has been compromised, the official said, citing knowledge of the investigation.

“The main issue for governmental administrative offices is that civil servants have low awareness [about espionage] and the offices lack their own information security systems to protect them from communist spies, beyond the ‘ethics units’ putting in double shifts. As they have no mechanisms for reporting suspected espionage attempts, the risk of vulnerable civil servants being turned or compromised is substantial,” the official said.

Chinese espionage is not limited to attempts to infiltrate the central government, the official said, adding that Beijing’s agents have exploited cross-strait exchange channels to approach and cultivate specific individuals of Aboriginal descent for recruitment as assets or agents.

The high-profile espionage case of Presidential Office employee Wang Jen-bin (王健斌) in 2009, who was later convicted of espionage, was one of the incidents of Chinese infiltration of the civilian government, the official said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2017/03/13](#)