

CIB detains 10 allegedly helping Chinese enter illegally

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Passersby are reflected in the windows of the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office yesterday.

Photo: Huang Chieh, Taipei Times

The Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) yesterday conducted raids on five locations in Taipei and New Taipei City, detaining 10 alleged members of an operation that took advantage of a legal loophole to enable more than 10,000 “tourists” to enter Taiwan over the past three years, including Chinese government officials and spies.

Prosecutors said that it was the most serious breach of national security in the past several years.

Allegedly running the operation was Hung Ching-lin (洪清林), a retired journalist and former office director of the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) caucus at the then-Taipei County Council, prosecutors said, adding that the other suspects included Hung's wife and daughter, as well as the owners and managers of New Taipei City-based travel agencies.

One bureau investigator said that preliminary findings portend severe repercussions for national security, as the door was opened wide for high-level Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, including some from the United Front Work Department, and intelligence operatives who would otherwise be barred from visiting.

After their statements were taken, the suspects were transferred to the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office for questioning.

They face charges of illegally profiting by aiding Chinese citizens to gain illegal entry into the

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nation and related offenses under the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例), prosecutors said.

Hung registered more than 100 nonprofit organizations and shell companies with the New Taipei City Government, including the New Taipei City Water Resources Economic Development Association and the New Taipei City Industry Exchange Association, which he used to organize purportedly short-term cross-strait exchange programs for people in various professions, they said.

The loophole allowed Chinese to bypass background checks of people associated with the Chinese government, enabling them to visit Taiwan on organized “package tours,” they added.

Hung and his family colluded with about 20 travel agencies, generating revenue estimated at more than NT\$10 million (US\$327,815) from the collection of NT\$1,000 to NT\$2,000 “service fees” per Chinese “tourist,” prosecutors said.

Documents and data seized in the raids indicated that from early 2017 to June, Hung’s operation helped at least 5,000 and likely more than 10,000 Chinese enter Taiwan with documents presented to the National Immigration Agency, including invitations to fake events, exchange program proposals and bogus tour agendas, they said.

Chinese spies might have remained in Taiwan after their supposed “tours,” they added.

A preliminary assessment found that many of those Chinese would not have been permitted to visit Taiwan if proper background checks were conducted by national security authorities, bureau officials said.

Among the CCP officials and suspected operatives of Chinese intelligence agencies were Li Jiexian (李傑先) and Nien Peiguang (倪培光), high-ranking United Front Work Department officials, they said.

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Hung left the Chinese-language *China Times* to take up the office director position in the late 2000s, when he reportedly began registering the organizations.

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