

Colonel accused of allying with China

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The Kaohsiung District Prosecutors' Office yesterday charged army Colonel Hsiang Te-en (向天恩) with corruption, accusing him of pledging allegiance to China and receiving payment from Chinese operatives to work as a spy.

Prosecutors asked a court to sentence Hsiang to 12 years in prison.

Hsiang is head of the Kaohsiung-based Army Infantry Training Command's Operations Research and Development Division.



Army Colonel Hsiang Te-en, right, and retired lieutenant Shao Wei-chiang, whose faces have been digitally obscured, hold a written pledge of allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party in an undated photograph.

Photo: Copied by Huang Chia-lin, Taipei Times

He allegedly signed a “pledge of surrender” and promised to “serve, as best he may, in his office for the benefits of the motherland in the event of war across the [Taiwan] Strait,” the office said.

Hsiang could not be charged with contraventions of Article 2 of the National Security Act (国家安全法) or treason under the Criminal Code, because evidence had been removed from the cellphones of those implicated, it said.

Hsiang, 49, was recruited by Shao Wei-chiang (邵偉昌) to work as a Chinese spy, the indictment said.

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Shao is a retired lieutenant who had until June 2019 worked as a Kinmen regional reporter for China Television. He also claimed to be a director at Want Want China Times Media Group's (旺旺中時) Times International Advertising Co (旺中廣告), president of Kinmen County's Cross-Strait Cultural and Economic Tourism Development Association, and the owner of a travel agency, the indictment said.

Shao learned in 2005 that his travel agency employed a woman named Yu (余), whose then-husband, Hsiang, was in the military and began to make overtures to win Hsiang over, the indictment said.

Yu and Hsiang divorced in June 2018.

Shao treated Hsiang to banquets and gifts, and told Hsiang that he was a distant relative of late Chinese People's Liberation Army general Xiang Shouzhi (向守志), the indictment said.

In January 2020, Hsiang donned his military uniform and made a video, stating: "I, Hsiang Te-en, here do pledge that I support the peaceful unification of both sides of the [Taiwan] Strait. I will serve the motherland and the organization, to the best of my abilities, while remaining in my current position, to ensure the holy and honorable mission of ushering in peaceful reunification as early as possible," the indictment said.

Hsiang received NT\$40,000 a month for working as a spy, totaling NT\$560,000 over 14 months, it said.

When he was being led out of an army base on Sept. 26, Hsiang said that he had signed the pledge after seeing other senior officers making similar pledges, the indictment said.

Hsiang has denied the corruption charges.

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Implicated military personnel are being investigated by the Ministry of National Defense, the office said.

The ministry said that its Political Warfare Bureau is looking into other military officials who might be involved.

The incident highlights the threat that Chinese intelligence operations pose to the military, the ministry said, adding that its preventive measures are effective.

The ministry will continue to bolster counterespionage education for officers, as well as rank-and-file soldiers, it said.

The ministry would also work closely with national security agencies to thwart Chinese intelligence-gathering efforts, it added.

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