

Chinese national jailed for hacking US defense firms (Update)

13 July 2016

A Chinese national was sentenced on Wednesday in Los Angeles to three years and 10 months in prison for hacking American defense contractors to steal trade secrets on Beijing's behalf.

Su Bin, 51, who went by the names Stephen Su and Stephen Subin, was also ordered by a federal judge to pay a \$10,000 fine.

Su in March had admitted in a plea agreement with US authorities to conspiring with two unnamed military officers in China to try to acquire plans for F-22 and F-35 fighter jets and Boeing's C-17 military transport aircraft.

According to court documents, the trio managed to steal sensitive data by hacking into the computer networks of major defense contractors and sent the information to China

Su, who ran a China-based aviation and aerospace company from Canada, was arrested in July 2014 and after waiving extradition was transferred to the United States to face charges.

"Over the course of years, this defendant sought to undermine the national security of the United States by seeking out information that would benefit a foreign government and providing that country with information it had never before seen," prosecutor Eileen Decker said in a statement.

According to court documents, Su travelled to the United States at least 10 times between 2008 and 2014, working with his co-conspirators to steal the data.

He admitted to sending emails to his two accomplices with guidance on which persons, companies and technologies to target.

Once the data was stolen, Su admitted to translating it into English and then seeking to sell it.

His spying activities have been lauded in China where the state-run media has described him as a hero.

"We are willing to show our gratitude and respect for his service to our country", said a March editorial in the Global Times, a nationalistic newspaper with close ties to the ruling Communist Party.

"On the secret battlefield without gunpowder, China needs special agents to gather secrets from the US," it added.

Washington and Beijing have repeatedly clashed over what the US describes as rampant cyberspying by the Chinese government on US industry.

Last year, the US indicted five Chinese military officers on charges of cyberspying.

In the 1990s, Taiwanese-American Wen Ho Lee was accused of spying for the Chinese government, but eventually pleaded guilty to only one minor charge in an embarrassing debacle that ended in an apology from then US president Bill Clinton.

Chinese-born US citizen Chi Mak was jailed for 24 years in 2008 for conspiring to smuggle sensitive US submarine technology to China.

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