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**CHINA'S MINISTRY OF STATE
SECURITY: COMING OF AGE IN THE
INTERNATIONAL ARENA**

Nicholas Eftimiades

**School of LAW
UNIVERSITY
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1
II. Framework for Analysis	2
III. Intelligence Structure	4
IV. Humint Operations	15
V. Conclusion	22
Appendix: Glossary of Terms	24

CHINA'S MINISTRY OF STATE SECURITY: COMING OF AGE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

*Nicholas Eftimiades**

I. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, intelligence services have served their constituents by collecting information against friends and adversaries alike. The history of the practice of intelligence operations is ancient and rich; spying has been described as "the worlds second oldest profession." Current world events show no decrease in the conduct of espionage to support national policy objectives. Even today, after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent reduction in East-West tensions, global intelligence services are increasingly active.

From the end of World War II until recently, the former Soviet Union and its allies were considered the primary military threat to United States global interests. As a result, Eastern Bloc intelligence services were given a great deal of attention by American intelligence and counterintelligence agencies. A significantly less amount of effort was dedicated to identifying and neutralizing the espionage activities of nations that demonstrated no comparable military threat. One such nation is the People's Republic of China (PRC), which although it has the largest armed forces in the world, has never possessed the strategic military capability to invade any nation outside Asia.

The result of this short-sighted policy has been to allow the Chinese intelligence services to operate out of the focus of mainstream U.S. counterintelligence concerns. Only in recent years has the U.S. intelligence community begun to recognize the magnitude of the PRC's collection operations:

If we are talking about violations of U.S. law, the Chinese are surpassing the Russians. We know they are running operations here. We have seen cases where they have encouraged people to apply to the CIA, the FBI, Naval Investigative Service and other Defense Agencies. They

* The author is a graduate of the George Washington University (GWU) with a BA in East Asian Studies and has undertaken graduate work at GWU, University of Maryland, and Defense Intelligence College. The author has spent 10 years in the U.S. Intelligence Community and is currently an intelligence analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency. The view expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the US Government.

have also attempted to recruit people at our (nuclear) research facilities at Los Alamos and at Lawrence Livermore.¹

Like other regional or global powers, the PRC leadership promulgates policies and actions in its own military, political and economic self-interest. Many of those interests involve realizing economic and technological benefits from close ties with advanced industrialized nations. China's intelligence services are playing an increasingly greater role in supporting those national policy objectives by targeting and exploiting the technological, economic, political and military infrastructures of many modern industrialized nations.

Intelligence collection operations and related activities rarely require the proverbial cloak and dagger. However, intelligence collection, and in particular clandestine operations, is far more complicated than simply stealing a government's classified materials. Espionage is an orchestrated all-encompassing attempt to extract information from multiple levels of society. The intelligence collection process identifies hard targets such as government institutions and soft targets such as the industrial and academic sectors. The latter are usually unwitting of intelligence operational methodology and are therefore vulnerable to foreign penetration and exploitation. Information related to high technology is by no means the only objective of China's intelligence apparatus. However, it is of particular importance to Beijing for the development of China's civilian and military industries. Senior U.S. law enforcement officials have agreed publicly that China is "the most active foreign power engaged in the illegal acquisition of American technology."²

The focus of this work is to identify the PRC's national intelligence structure, information objectives and collection operations. The work is limited in scope to the Ministry of State Security (MSS). Select human source intelligence (HUMINT) operations are analyzed to determine hostile operational methodology and appropriate threat levels.

II. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

For the purpose of this study, HUMINT intelligence operations are divided into three broad categories: overt, clandestine and covert action. Overt activities are those collection and analysis functions which can be identified and are attributable to a specific country. For

1. William Overend, "China Seen Using Close U.S. Ties for Espionage," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, part 1, p. 34.

2. *Ibid.*

example, military attaches (Milats) of one country attending another country's military training exercises involve overt activities. The host government expects that the attending Milats will report to their respective governments the event and any relevant information to include unit strengths, military proficiency, equipment, tactics and biographical data on commanders. This form of information gathering, along with information collected through direct observation and contact (e.g., a diplomat reporting the results of discussions with foreign government officials) is generally considered overt collection.

In contrast to open source collection activities, clandestine activities are intelligence collection operations which, even if identified, can not be attributed to a specific nation. These operations usually involve the recruitment of spies (agents) and are designed to hide the existence of the illegal activity and the involvement of the orchestrating nation. For example, if U.S. classified or protected technology was discovered in the hands of a Third World nation that does not have the technical capabilities to produce such technology, then clandestine activities may be involved. The technology can be assumed to have been stolen although the thief and exact method remain unknown.

Covert action operations are not intelligence collection and analysis activities. Instead, they are actions such as economic or military assistance programs designed to manipulate a foreign government to bring about a more favorable situation for the orchestrating nation. Covert action operations can be divided into four general categories: political, economic, paramilitary and disinformation.

All countries have a need to gather various types of information to insure their own national security, and the process for intelligence collection and analysis is basically the same for everyone. While there are substantial differences in national objectives, doctrine, methodology and capabilities, the need to collect and analyze information remains virtually the same for all nations and results in substantial similarities in the structures of global intelligence services. This is not to say that all intelligence services worldwide have the same structural organization. The peculiar and generally clandestine nature of intelligence activities dictates, however, that certain operational and support services be present for an espionage organization to function. The departments providing these essential services logically exist in all organizations performing such a mission.

Governments generally establish an administrative and functional structure with similar departments in each agency to achieve uniformity and to facilitate communication within the system. Like all government bureaucracies, the Chinese intelligence services have a defined

organizational structure to accomplish their respective missions. According to noted Sinologist Doak A. Barnett in his study, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in China*, ministries in the PRC Government have certain standard departments.³ The hierarchical structure of authority in the PRC dictates that the roles and responsibilities of these standard departments be the same in each ministry. Consequently, identifying the administrative and functional bureaus common to all of China's government agencies provides some insight as to the structure of its civilian intelligence service.

Another source of information used to identify the PRC's intelligence structure is public exposure of clandestine operations. Details of China's HUMINT collection operations — from press accounts and U.S. court and Congressional records — highlight espionage methodologies and techniques (tradecraft). In addition, these information sources identify clandestine intelligence activities and specific departments within China's intelligence agencies.

By combining a schematic of the functional bureaus that specifically provide intelligence-related services with a schematic of the standard ministerial structure, and then adding information from open sources publications, one can derive an accurate picture of the structure of the PRC's intelligence apparatus. With the Chinese intelligence structure defined, the next task is to identify specific operations and methodology. This is done by analyzing publicly available information for specific intelligence objectives as well as methodology used in the application of espionage tradecraft.

III. INTELLIGENCE STRUCTURE

The structure of the PRC's intelligence apparatus is significantly different from those of the global powers because of the PRC leadership's unique information requirements. In strictly military terms, the PRC is a regional, not a global, power. Although general military policy in China has been under intense review since the early 1980's, the political leadership still relies primarily on the country's massive size and population as a primary defense against the perceived military threat from the Soviet Union. The PRC's perception of threats dictates the information requirements levied on its intelligence services. It therefore has little to gain from intense intelligence collection and analysis of activities directed at global political-military alliances outside its region of influence. Regarding information requirements

3. Doak A. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 450.

for military intelligence, the PRC benefits more by directing its national intelligence resources to identify potential regional threats such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), India and Vietnam, with which it shares a common border. Also of considerable importance are American, Japanese, South Korean, and Taiwanese military activities along China's eastern seaboard and in the Sea of Japan.

Because the PRC is a regional power it has less of an interest in the global political-military environment than do nations with global military commitments. The PRC continues to focus its intelligence collection activities on issues more directly affecting its own regional security, technological and economic development. PRC policy-makers primarily are concerned with promoting domestic political stability, increasing economic development and modernizing the armed forces. Intelligence collection activities in support of these policy interests are acquiring foreign military and civilian high technology, identifying and influencing foreign policy trends (such as trade issues) regarding China and monitoring dissident groups (democracy advocates and Taiwan). China's preeminent civilian intelligence agency for collecting this information is the Ministry of State Security (MSS).

The MSS was formed in June 1983 by absorbing the espionage, counterespionage and security functions of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the Investigations Department of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Central Committee.⁴ Prior to that time, China's leading intelligence agency was the MPS.⁵

The MSS is headed by the Minister of State Security, Jia Chunwang.⁶ Born in 1938, Jia is a native of Beijing and previously served as Deputy Secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee and Beijing Committee for Discipline Inspection.⁷ The Minister of State Security, assisted by several Deputy Ministers, oversees all bureaus within the Ministry.

When examining those governmental ministries with stated overseas operations, it becomes apparent that each ministry has a Foreign Affairs Bureau and lists separately a Taiwan Affairs Department, and

4. Jeffery T. Richelson, *Foreign Intelligence Organizations*, Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1988, p. 277.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Central Intelligence Agency, *Directory of Chinese Officials and Organizations*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, LDA 89-10270, 1989, p. 42.

7. Committee for Who's Who in China, *Who's Who in China*, Beijing: Beijing Foreign Language Press, 1990, p. 271.

a Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office.⁸ China's primary foreign policy body, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), is further subdivided into six geographical departments: African Affairs; American and Oceanian Affairs; Asian Affairs; Soviet and East European Affairs; West Asian and North African Affairs; and West European Affairs.⁹ Beijing's research institutes affiliated with the foreign affairs apparatus all use the same geographical divisions.¹⁰ It would appear logical that the MSS would follow this pattern as well and have a Foreign Affairs Bureau with geographical subdivisions and separate departments for Taiwan and Hong Kong/Macao.

Geographical divisions allow work units to specialize in a particular area of expertise, but do not permit work to be accomplished by functional expertise. The structure of the MSS must, therefore, be divided not only by geographical considerations but by functional expertise as well. The next question then becomes what functional areas of expertise are necessary for the MSS to conduct espionage and counter-espionage in China and abroad?

First and foremost, the MSS must have qualified personnel. These personnel must be recruited, screened, trained, paid, supplied, transported, fed and occasionally housed. Additional services such as records management, planning, and accounting are all required. Most of the departments that provide these essential services can be found in all or most Chinese ministries.¹¹ The need to compartmentalize information within intelligence agencies makes it necessary that each of these services exists as a separate department in the MSS as well.

Barnett's study emphasizes that each minister is responsible for supervising the work of the entire ministry including subordinate regional counterparts throughout the country.¹² The bureaus and departments which provide standard functions found within virtually all PRC Government ministries are as follows:

A. *Personnel Bureau*. Staffed by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members, this office has tremendous influence in any ministry because of its role in personnel management,

8. Central Intelligence Agency, *Directory of Chinese Officials and Organizations*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, LDA 89-10270, 1989, p. 25-43.

9. *Ibid*, p. 39.

10. Doak A. Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China*, Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1985, p. 121.

11. Doak A. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in China*, *supra*, note 3, p. 450.

12. *Ibid*, p. 12.

and its function as the security control organ.¹³

B. *Planning Bureau*. Responsible for short and long term planning for the ministry and subordinate regional bodies under its supervision, it establishes expected levels of achievement.¹⁴

C. *Finance and Accounting*. Frequently one of the larger administrative (as opposed to functional) bureaus within the ministry, it is responsible for general control and management of finances for the ministry.¹⁵

D. *Training and Education*. Responsible for internal and external training for ministry personnel. Some ministries run schools for specialized training.¹⁶ The MSS's need to conceal their employees and operational methods dictates that the ministry have its own training program. The Beijing College of International Relations founded, in 1965, closed during the Cultural Revolution and reopened in 1978, provides training to MSS personnel.¹⁷ The Beijing College of International Politics, formally under the MPS, also may have ties with the MSS.¹⁸

E. *Research Institute*. Ministries conducting any form of research maintain their own independent research institutes.¹⁹ Analysis of raw information is an integral part of the intelligence process and the Institute of Contemporary International Relations is the analysis bureau for the MSS.²⁰ As of 1985 it had a staff of approximately 300 researches and support personnel. Work is divided by the standard seven geographical divisions plus a division of global affairs. The Institute publishes a journal, *Contemporary International Relations*.²¹

F. *General Affairs*. Responsibilities include overseeing the Supply Section, Printing Section, Library Services, Motor Pool, Housing Management and Food Management

13. *Ibid*, p. 48.

14. *Ibid*, pp. 78-79.

15. *Ibid*, p. 87.

16. *Ibid*, p. 88.

17. Doak A. Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China*, *supra* note 10, p. 90.

18. *Ibid*, p. 91.

19. *Ibid*, p. 90.

20. *Ibid*, p. 121.

21. *Ibid*, p. 121.

Section.²²

G. *Discipline Inspection Commission*. The Commission is the CCP Central Committee's representative body within any ministry. In the authoritarian structure of the Chinese Government, all ministries have Party representation. The Commission insures loyalty by keeping the Central Committee informed on relevant matters. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has a similar representation — the General Political Department (GPD).

With the administrative support structure in place (*see* Fig. 1), the ministry must have a functional or operations department to conduct its mission. Because the MSS operates domestically and abroad, the operations functions and some support functions should be similarly divided. Information provided by Yu Zhenshang, former Chief of the MSS' Foreign Affairs Bureau who defected in 1986, confirms that a structure containing Internal and External Bureaus does indeed exist.²³

Public exposure of PRC intelligence activities in Taiwan, Japan and the United States indicates that the MSS conducts overseas clandestine collection operations. The details of these operations confirms that the MSS has a capability to field Case Officers under diplomatic (Legal) and non-diplomatic (Illegal) cover.

The use of illegal cover is a sophisticated and difficult method of operation because the case officer is not affiliated with his own government. A separate system of control and clandestine communications must be established to instruct the illegal operative and to receive information in return. This process of communication is dangerous to the illegal case officer because he possesses no diplomatic immunity. If this individual is caught, he or she usually faces imprisonment or worse. China's use of illegal networks can be seen in espionage cases prosecuted in the United States (Larry Wu-tai Chin) and Taiwan (Liu Kuang-sheng).

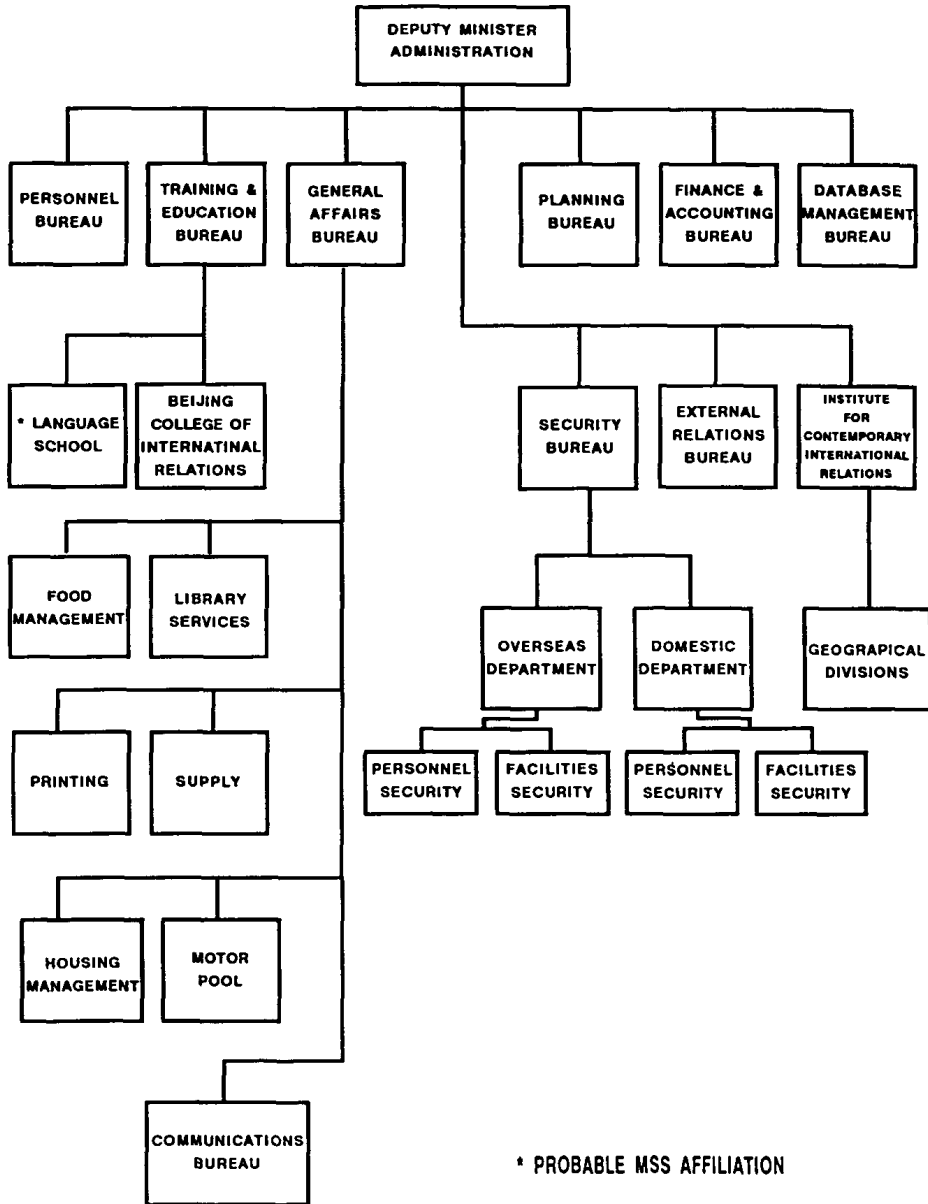
In February 1986, retired Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee Larry Wu-Tai Chin (the Chin case will be analyzed in depth later in this work) was convicted of espionage.²⁴ Some question exists

22. Doak A. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in China*, *supra*, note 3, pp. 96-98.

23. Hong Kong (AFP), "Intelligence Official's Defection Major Blow," extracted from *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, China*, September 2, 1986, p. K 1.

24. U.S. District Court, "U.S. v. CHIN, Larry Wu-Tai" Criminal Docket Number. 85-00263 01, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 1.

Fig. 1



as to whether Chin was a bona fide Illegal Case Officer or simply a recruited asset (agent). However, it is likely that Chin was a Case Officer because trial records identify him as having the rank of Deputy Bureau Chief in the Ministry of Public Security.²⁵ He spent approximately 35 years in the U.S. intelligence community, providing classified information to the PRC.

In June 1988 in Taipei, Taiwan, Liu Kuang-sheng was arrested and charged with sedition and espionage on behalf of the mainland government. Subsequent investigation revealed that Liu had attempted to enter Taiwan in 1986 using a false Thai passport. He successfully entered Taiwan in 1987 using a false Singapore passport. After arriving in the country, he established an overseas trading company. According to Taiwan authorities, Liu was a professional intelligence officer tasked with building a long-term espionage network in Taiwan.²⁶

Analysis of the Liu Kang-sheng affair provides more information relative to the structure of the MSS. Liu was caught having used forged Thai and Singaporean passports. The passports were reportedly forged, not altered originals.²⁷ The reproduction of passports is an expensive process, and in the case of the Thai passport, a difficult one as well. The Thai passport has multiple security features such as lamination, wet seal, dry seal and signature strip. It is logical then to assume that the MSS has a significant artistic and printing capability to provide false documentation (Thai and Singaporean passports) to its intelligence operatives. Additional technical support necessary to the field operatives takes the form of chemicals for secret (invisible) writing, covert communications equipment, encryption and decryption codes, and photographic equipment.

The PRC's detailed knowledge of espionage tradecraft is revealed in public announcements of their counterespionage successes. In numerous press reports, MSS spokesmen have claimed that spies from Taiwan or other foreign powers have been caught by various provincial MSS Offices with the aforementioned equipment.²⁸ Such reports lead to four conclusions: the MSS has the operational knowledge to

25. Jeffery T. Richelson, *Foreign Intelligence Organizations*, *supra* note 4, p. 299.

26. Hong Kong (AFP), "Court Sentences Ex-Mainland Official To Prison," extracted from Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *FBIS Daily Report - China*, March 22, 1988 (FBIS-CHI 88-056), p. 42.

27. *Ibid.*

28. "KMT Special Agent Sentenced To Prison in Wenzhou", *Zhongguo Xinwen She* (Chinese history of Newsbroadcast) (Hong Kong) translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *FBIS Daily Report - China*, October 3, 1988, p. K 8.

have a technical support capability for conducting espionage; the MSS has a public or external affairs office; the national level MSS supervises provincial level offices; and, the MSS has a domestic counterespionage investigative function.

The MSS's structure, since the acquisition of the MPS's formerly held domestic espionage and security functions, is seen in greater clarity against the known operations of the MPS. The MPS Political Security Section conducted counterintelligence operations against foreign nationals and domestic persons. It was also responsible for investigations of Chinese who had traveled overseas or maintained foreign contacts.²⁹ Inasmuch as the MSS inherited the responsibilities for internal counterintelligence operations and investigations, it is likely that the MSS inherited some of the bureaucratic structure of the respective departments as well. Analysis of the PRC's overseas and domestic security and intelligence activities exposes more of the MSS's functional structure. (*see* Fig.2).

A sampling of the world press further identifies China's overseas clandestine espionage operations. Such operations have been discovered (and publicly exposed) in the Sudan in 1964; Malawi in 1965; Kenya in 1965; the Central African Republic in 1966³⁰; Brazil in 1964 and 1977³¹; France in 1983³²; and, the United States in 1985³³ and 1987.³⁴ In each case, the intelligence officer was operating under a cover identity such as New China News Agency (NCNA) journalist, trade office representative, or accredited diplomat. Given that the ability to conduct clandestine operations in foreign countries requires certain support services unique to the intelligence industry, it necessarily follows that China's intelligence apparatus has and uses these support services.

The MSS operates in numerous foreign countries under a variety of covers. Case Officers, whose job is to recruit agents (informants), must have the capability to speak, read and write a variety of foreign languages. In addition, translating foreign language documents must

29. Doak A. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in China*, *supra* note 3, pp. 222-223.

30. David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Espionage Establishment*, New York: Random House Inc., 1967, p. 189.

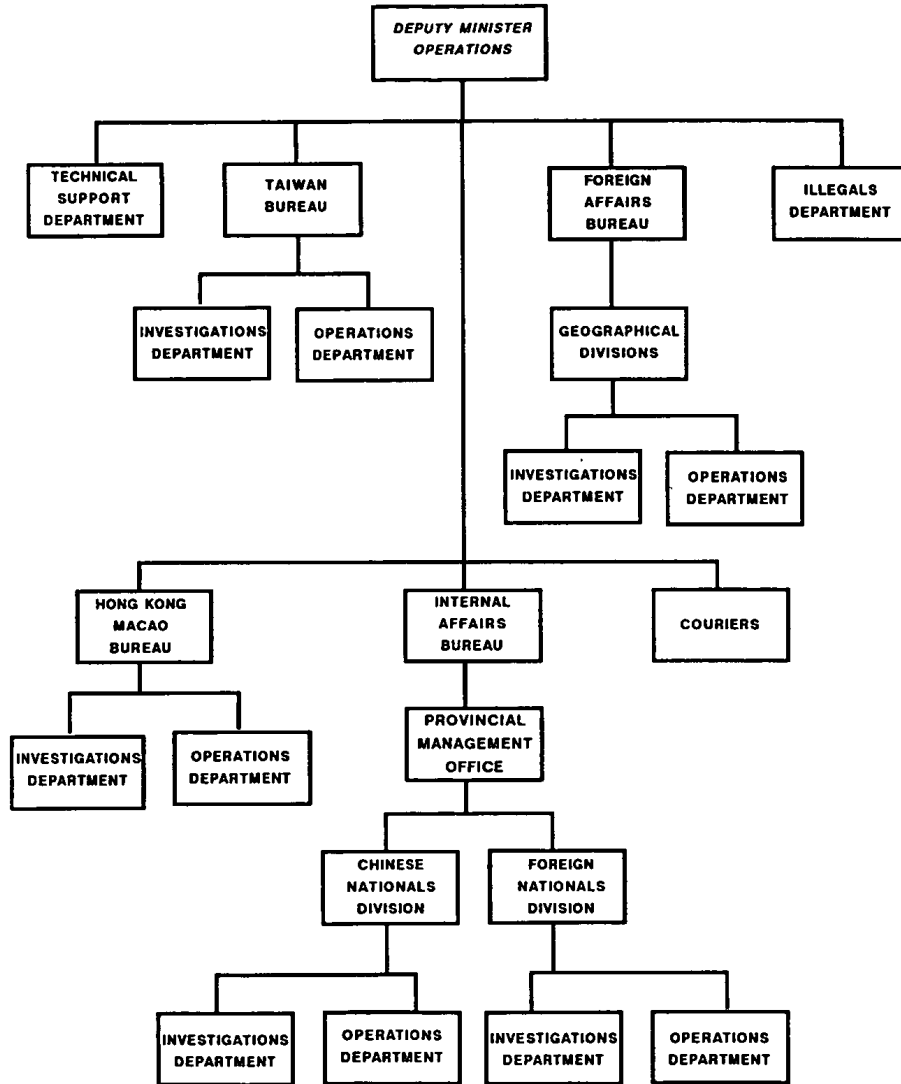
31. Richard Deacon, *The Chinese Secret Service*, London: Grafton Books, 1989, pp. 319-320.

32. Roger Faligot and Remi Kauffer, *Kang Shen and the Chinese Secret Service*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989, p. 402.

33. Jacob V. Lamar, "Spies, Spies Everywhere," *Time*, December 9, 1985, p. 30.

34. Mary Thorton, "China Protests U.S. Expulsion of Two Diplomats," *Washington Post*, January 1, 1988, p. A 20.

Fig. 2



be accomplished. The Chinese foreign affairs apparatus puts tremendous emphasis on the language abilities of its officers.³⁵ It is likely therefore, that the MSS maintains some type of language training program under its Office of Training and Education. Translation services would probably exist as a separate department with close connection to the Institute of Contemporary International Relations. Once an MSS Case Officer acquires information, he must communicate it to Beijing. This can be done via secure communications transmission facilities available at the embassy for which a communications officer would be needed. An alternative form of communicating information, which was used by Larry Chin, would be a courier.³⁶ A courier is used to transport information when contact with an embassy official or other representative of a foreign country (e.g., news agency, commercial office) would generate unwanted interest from the host government's counterintelligence service. In either case (communications officer or courier), a specialized service is needed.

Another characteristic of intelligence organizations is a powerful security department. In a normal PRC Government ministry, the security function is relegated to the General Affairs Department.³⁷ Security operations consist of physical security, access control (badges), and technical and information security programs. The exaggerated need for security in the MSS makes it likely that the security function exists as a separate department. Hostile intelligence services aggressively target other intelligence agencies. Therefore, security operations and procedures play very important roles in any intelligence organization. Requirements are generally more stringent for processing information, building construction and associating with foreign nationals. It is probable that the MSS maintains a large security department based on the security function's degree of importance to the intelligence industry and the fact that the MSS inherited much of the MPS's security role.³⁸ Logically, the MSS has different divisions to fulfill its responsibility for domestic and overseas personnel and facilities security.

The defined structure of the MSS shows that the agency oversees a vast program of administrative and functional operations domestically and abroad. (see Fig.3). One can only speculate about the exist-

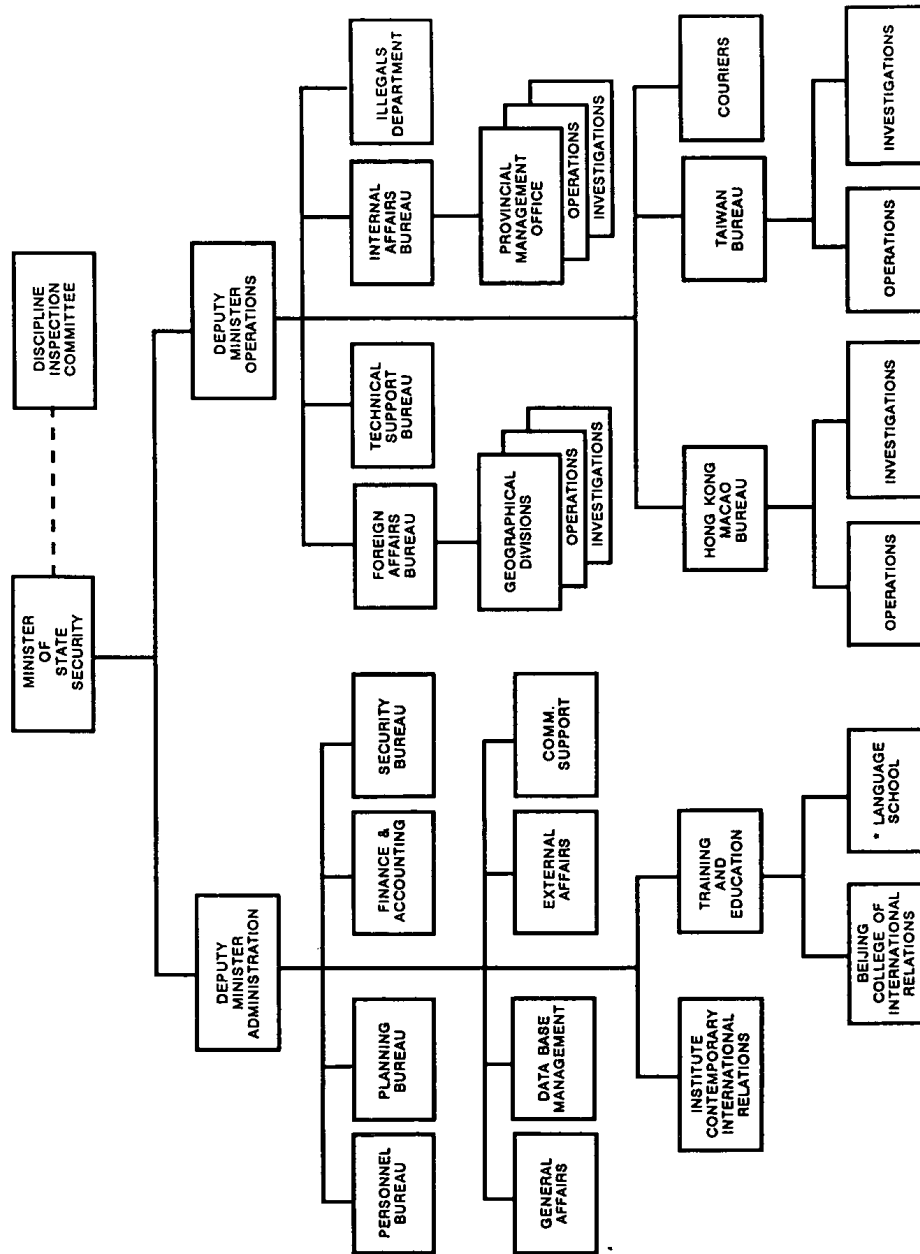
35. Doak A. Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China*, *supra* note 10, p. 90.

36. U.S. District Court, "U.S. v. CHIN, Larry Wu-Tai," Criminal Docket Number. 85-00263 01, 1986, Vol. 4, p. 106.

37. Doak A. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in China*, *supra* note 3, p. 98.

38. Jeffery T. Richelson, *Foreign Intelligence Organizations*, *supra* note 25, p. 282.

Fig. 3



ence of other mission-oriented bureaus within the MSS. It is particularly difficult to identify the exact titles (as opposed to functions) of bureaus and departments because they change cover designations periodically to enhance security.³⁹ Analysis of the structure, however, produces only an assessment of the organization's capabilities. Operational methodology is identified by analysis of clandestine intelligence activities.

IV. HUMINT OPERATIONS

The operational methodology of the Chinese intelligence services is nothing new to espionage. It is, however, uniquely Chinese in its application. The MSS co-opts vast numbers of Chinese citizens living or traveling overseas to collect information. Senior U.S. counterintelligence officials compare the method of operation to classical Soviet espionage techniques, which utilize fewer people collecting more information.⁴⁰ The Chinese approach to conducting espionage poses problems for U.S. law enforcement:

For prosecutive purposes, you are looking at an individual collecting one small part one time, and you don't have the quality of case that our country will take to prosecute as far as espionage.⁴¹

The bulk of Chinese clandestine collection activities are generally not sophisticated operations, but their large numbers make up for this weakness. To conduct espionage in the United States, the MSS draws on the services of the following:

- a. 1,500 Chinese diplomats and commercial representatives.
- b. 70 PRC establishments and offices.
- c. 15,000 Chinese students arriving yearly.
- d. 10,000 representatives arriving in 2,700 delegations each year.
- e. A large ethnic Chinese community.⁴²

The PRC's clandestine collection operations in the U.S. have expanded to the point that approximately 50 percent of almost 900 technology transfer cases annually on the West Coast involve the

39. Fox Butterfield, *China Alive in the Bitter Sea*, New York: Random House Inc., 1990, p. 334.

40. William Overend, "China Seen Using Close U.S. Ties for Espionage," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, part 1, p. 34.

41. *Ibid.*

42. U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Meeting the Espionage Challenge*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 64-268 0, 1986, p. 19.

Chinese.⁴³ Much of China's espionage effort is directed at illegally acquiring mid-level technology not cleared for export. Computer (comparative) analysis of China's exposed technology-related espionage activities in the United States demonstrates three basic operational patterns. The first is recruiting the co-optee in China and having him/her acquire the technology while abroad; the second is actually purchasing American companies with access to the desired level of technology; and the third, the most common operation, is to purchase high technology related equipment through agents running front companies in Hong Kong.

Each year, several thousand Chinese citizens travel to the United States for reasons ranging from participating in trade missions to take part in scientific cooperation programs. China's most productive method of legally acquiring foreign technology is by sending scientists overseas on scholarly exchange programs.⁴⁴ The MSS and military intelligence services co-opt a number of these travelers to collect information. Examples of this form of clandestine collection became public in the United States on September 29, 1988, when for the first time the PRC detonated a neutron bomb. According to an FBI investigation, the technology required to produce the device was not of Chinese origin, but was acquired from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories in California.⁴⁵ During the mid-1980s the security program at the facility has been lax. Numerous delegations composed ostensibly of Chinese scientists visited the facility without the appropriate background checks. The FBI's investigation determined that several of the visiting scientists either had strong ties to the MSS or were in fact intelligence officers.⁴⁶

The process of obtaining intelligence related information through scientific or trade delegations is a common form of low level espionage. But as the Lawrence Livermore case indicates, it can also be quite effective in obtaining otherwise unattainable information. The presence of intelligence officers on scientific exchanges serves three purposes: first, to identify personnel with access who could be of intelligence potential and subject to recruitment; second, to collect infor-

43. William Overend, "China Seen Using Close U.S. Ties for Espionage," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, part 1, p. 34.

44. Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, *China Under the Four Modernizations*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office 87-199 0, 1981, p. 560.

45. "Chinese Stole U.S. Neutron Bomb Plans," *Knight-Ridder News, The Capital*, Annapolis, November 22, 1990, p. A 2.

46. San Jose Memory News, "Chinese Stole Secret For Neutron Bomb," *Chicago Tribune*, News Section: November 23, 1990, p. 38.

mation on facilities and programs, and third, to monitor the activities of the attending scientists for security purposes.

The differences between professional intelligence officers collecting information and co-opted individuals attempting the same feat are often noticeable. The intelligence officer generally has less technical knowledge of the subject matter on which information is being collected. The co-opted individual has less ability at acquiring information in a clandestine manner. In Paris, a Chinese scientific delegation was attending a trade show. French military security investigators monitoring the delegation recorded several delegates discretely dipping their ties in a photographic processing solution of the German firm AGFA.⁴⁷ Presumably, this clumsy act of espionage was intended to obtain specimens of the solution which could then be analyzed.

Technology-related clandestine intelligence activities are by no means limited to exploiting scientific and trade delegations. The PRC has attempted outright purchases of U.S. firms with access to high technology not releasable to foreign countries. In February 1990, the United States, citing national security concerns, ordered the China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corp. (CATIC) to divest itself of Mamco Manufacturing Inc., a Seattle aircraft-parts manufacturer.⁴⁸ The Bush Administration said publicly that CATIC had a "checkered history" and has been seeking technology that would provide the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) with an in-flight refueling capability.⁴⁹ More concerning was the belief that CATIC was using the purchase as a front to penetrate other more promising areas of restricted technology.⁵⁰

On the basis of the public information the purchase of Mamco cannot be definitively linked to a MSS operation. However, intelligence services determine priorities in response to information requirements levied on them. It is therefore inconceivable that a large scale intelligence activity such as the purchasing of a foreign company with access to levels of high technology could occur without MSS approval, although the MSS generally procures technology through more clandestine means.

It appears that the most effective means of stealing foreign tech-

47. Roger Faligot and Remi Kauffer, *Kang Shen and the Chinese Secret Service*, *supra* note 32, p. 425.

48. Micheal Mecham, "Bush Overturns Sale To China of Seattle Parts Supply Firm," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, February 12, 1990, p. 34.

49. Stuart Auerbach, "President Tells China to Sell Seattle Firm," *Washington Post*, Washington, D.C., February 3, 1990, p. A 3.

50. *Ibid.*

nology has been through the use of agents in Hong Kong. Examining several public instances of attempted high technology theft reveals a pattern of operation. The recruited agent establishes a front company. The company may in fact carry on legitimate trading activities in addition to illegally purchasing and shipping technology. A company representative approaches several U.S. firms attempting to purchase unobtainable high technology. The approaches are made in person, by telephone and by facsimile. The latter two methods offer more security to the agent. The agent may use sub-sources within the targeted country to facilitate transactions.

This operational method was used in February 1984 by Hong Kong businessman Da Chuan Zheng while attempting to illegally acquire and transport advanced radar and electronic surveillance technology to the PRC.⁵¹ Da along with his accomplices Kuang Shin Lin, David Tsai, Kwong Allen Yeung and Jing-Li Zhang were arrested by U.S. Customs agents. Da had boasted to undercover officers of having shipped over 25 million dollars worth of high technology equipment to the PRC.⁵² Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew K. Ruotolo Jr. — the federal prosecutor in charge of the case — revealed that Da and his associates had made other contacts in Boston, Virginia and California in attempts to secure similar strategic materials.⁵³

The Da case is not unusual. In recent years, similar high technology espionage cases have been reported in the press. From January 1983 to March 1984, Bernardus J. Smit of the Berkeley based Dual Systems Control Corp. shipped 70 micro computers from the United States through Hong Kong to the PRC in violation of the Export Control Act.⁵⁴ The equipment was shipped by Hong Kong middleman Hon Kwan Yu doing business as Seed H.K. Ltd., both with an address of 7/F Cheung Kong Building, 661 Kings Road, North Point, Hong Kong.⁵⁵ The persistent use of Hong Kong as a transfer point for smuggling technology is significant because it reveals a pattern of operation. The U.S. Department of Commerce has denied exporting privileges to 33 Hong Kong companies for illegally transferring high

51. U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, *Foreign missions Act and Espionage Activities in the United States*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 58-439 0, 1986, p. 98.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. U.S. Department of Commerce/Export Administration, "Action Affecting Export Privileges: Bernardus Johannes Jozef Smit," Docket no. 9101-01, September 22, 1989, p. 6.

55. *Ibid.*

technology to the PRC.⁵⁶ Examination of Commerce's denial orders identifies several instances where Hong Kong-based firms are listed to a single address. Multiple trading companies listed to a single address is one indication that the companies exist in name only and can act as a cover for espionage activities.

While acquiring advanced technology is a high priority for the PRC, it is not the only focus of the MSS's clandestine collection activities. The MSS has demonstrated a great interest in penetrating U.S. government agencies and Chinese dissident organizations. Perhaps the most publicized case of Chinese espionage in the United States is that of former CIA analyst Larry Wu-tai Chin (Jin Wudai).

From 1944 to 1981, Larry Wu-tai Chin worked for the U.S. Government. Thirty of those years were spent as a Chinese linguist and analyst for the CIA. In November 1985, Chin was indicted on six counts of espionage-related charges and 11 counts of income tax evasion.⁵⁷ Chin was recruited by the Chinese intelligence apparatus in 1944 while he was working for the U.S. Army liaison office in Fuzhou, China.⁵⁸ From 1945-1952, he worked as a translator for the U.S. Consulates in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and an interpreter debriefing prisoners of war for the U.S. Army in Korea. After 1952, Chin went to work for the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) in Okinawa (1952-1961); Santa Rosa, California (1961-1971); and Rosslyn, Virginia (1971-1981).⁵⁹

During the course of his near forty year espionage career, Chin provided the PRC with information on U.S. intelligence requirements targeted against the PRC, foreign policy initiatives towards Beijing, and a biographical profile of at least one CIA coworker (Victoria Loo).⁶⁰ As an FBIS analyst, Chin was in a position to communicate to the PRC additional information such as Intelligence Information Reports (IIR) about China, East Asia and Southeast Asia; biographical profiles and assessments of fellow CIA employees; and, names and identities of Agency covert employees, and the general level and area of access of recruited agents.

Certain reasonable assumptions regarding U.S. intelligence activities can be made based on the type of information known to have been

56. U.S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of Export Administration, "Denial Orders Currently Affecting Export Privileges," No. 269, March, 1991, p. 3.

57. U.S. District Court, "U.S. v. CHIN, Larry Wu-Tai," Criminal Docket Number. 85-00263 01, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 1.

58. *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 97.

59. *Ibid*, Vol. 4, p. 12.

60. *Ibid*, Vol. 6, p. 102-106.

passed to the PRC. It is likely that the MSS (before 1983 the MPS) learned exactly how accurate U.S. intelligence assessments were on China's intelligence, political, economic and military infrastructures. In addition, a percentage of U.S. intelligence and counterintelligence activities were compromised, and a number of CIA employees have been targeted for recruitment by the MSS. Finally, American and allied intelligence efforts were not successful at penetrating either the MPS or the MSS at a level high enough to detect Chin's clandestine activities.

Public sources have attributed the exposure of Chin's espionage to the 1985 defection of the MSS's Foreign Affairs Bureau chief, Yu Zhensan. In a November 1985 interview, Chin remarked to FBI Special Agent Mark R. Johnson that the detailed information he had could only have come from a high-level source within the Chinese Government.⁶¹ According to trial transcripts, the FBI initiated its investigation in 1981.⁶² It is probable that either Yu Zhensan was a recruited agent in 1981, or the U.S. or an allied government had a high-level agent (with access) in the PRC intelligence apparatus in 1981.

Analysis of the Chin case reveals much of the PRC's information requirements concerning the United States. Further analysis identifies the MSS's application of espionage tradecraft. Chin passed classified data while in Canada or Hong Kong. The method of operation where an individual passes information and receives instructions through another country is known as third country control. On approximately six occasions, Chin passed undeveloped film to an MSS courier in Toronto, Canada.⁶³ On numerous other occasions Chin was debriefed by case officers in Hong Kong.⁶⁴

Chin determined when to pass information by first sending a letter to an accommodation address in one of two locations: Canton (Guangzhou) or Hong Kong. The letter would cryptically state when and where he was arriving.⁶⁵ This form of espionage tradecraft is more secure than trying to clandestinely meet in the area of operations (in this case the United States). The only telltale sign of intelligence activity is the operative's overseas travel, which is often attributed to vacations.

The Larry Wu-tai Chin case demonstrates the MSS's desire to

61. *Ibid*, Vol. 4, p. 85.

62. *Ibid*, p. 153.

63. *Ibid*, p. 106.

64. *Ibid*, p. 105.

65. *Ibid*.

penetrate the U.S. Government. Other recent publicly exposed espionage cases tend to support this thesis. In December 1987, two Chinese diplomats were expelled from the United States for activities incompatible with their diplomatic status. The two men, Hou Desheng, an assistant military attache, and Zhang Weichu, the Chinese Consul in Chicago, were attempting to purchase what they believed were classified National Security Agency (NSA) documents from an FBI double agent.⁶⁶ And in November 1988, a U.S. Department of State communications officer was withdrawn from his assignment at the American Embassy in Beijing due to a recruitment attempt by the MSS.⁶⁷

Another area of high activity for the MSS is the monitoring Chinese dissident groups that were formed in response to the Tiananmen incident of June 1989. Overseas Chinese students and dissidents in Japan, Europe and the United States have reported being harassed, threatened and subject to surveillance by embassy and consulate officials.⁶⁸ In May 1990, Xu Lin, a third secretary in the education section of the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C. defected.⁶⁹ He cited as his reason an unwillingness to participate in the government's harassment campaign by providing the MSS with unsigned informant letters identifying pro-democracy activists. The letters were an unsophisticated form of clandestine agent-to-handler communications. The education section passed the letters to the intelligence officials responsible for monitoring student activities. Xu said that the intelligence service, which operated from the embassy, aggressively targeted Chinese students.⁷⁰

The MSS's technique of infiltrating student and dissident organizations became public in June 1989, when a delegate to the Chinese Alliance for Democracy convention in California publicly declared himself a spy for the MSS.⁷¹ The agent, Shou Huaqiang, was recruited by provincial level MSS officers prior to his coming to the United States. Shou claimed to have been forced to conduct espionage for the

66. Philip Shenon, "2 Chinese Depart in Espionage Case," *New York Times*, December 31, 1987, p. A-1.

67. "Around the World Chinese Reportedly Tried To Get American To Spy," *Washington Post*, November 2, 1988, p. A-35.

68. Robert Pear, "Chinese in U.S. Report Harassment by Beijing," *New York Times*, September 27, 1989, p. A 7.

69. Don Oberdorfer, "Chinese Envoy Asks Political Asylum," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1990, p. A 9.

70. Bill Gertz, "Chinese Diplomat Denounces Li After Defecting to U.S.," *Washington Times*, May 7, 1990, p. A 5.

71. Elizabeth Lu, "Spying Admission Stuns Chinese Dissident Group," *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1989, part 2, p. 1.

MSS. He was required to sign an agreement and instructed to infiltrate the alliance, disrupt its work and obtain evidence of a financial link with Taiwan.⁷² New Democracy dissidents believe there are many agents within their organization.

V. CONCLUSION

The Ministry of State Security is an aggressive intelligence service that is coming of age in the international arena. The combination of a relatively stagnant economy and an increasingly competitive global economic environment will force China to rely more heavily on the illegal acquisition of high technology for modernization. The theft of high technology via Hong Kong has proven to be a reasonably safe and cost effective operation for the MSS. The MSS can, therefore, be expected to play an active role in China's economic and military modernization program by procuring civilian and military foreign technology in this manner.

China is taking a greater role in regional and world affairs as it attempts to expand its commercial markets. Arms production and sales are increasingly being used to gain hard currency and expand global political influence. The MSS will be required to produce intelligence to support this assertive role in the global commercial and political environments. MSS clandestine collection operations against foreign governments and commercial industries should, therefore, receive increased emphasis.

Western democracies must adjust the focus of their clandestine intelligence and counterintelligence operations if they are to effectively meet the MSS's forward posture. At the policy level, an increased emphasis on protecting commercial intelligence and preventing illegal technology transfer is needed. At the working level, intelligence and law enforcement agencies must allocate the appropriate level of resources to develop specialized analytical and linguistic capabilities.

The MSS is also becoming more active domestically in addition to its expanding overseas requirements. Political repression is not a new phenomenon in the PRC. Since the Tiananmen incident, however, it has been applied with renewed vigor against China's citizenry. In recent years, PRC policy makers have publicly blamed internal dissent on foreign influence. This has been a theme in Chinese politics since the mid-1900s. However, the growing number of Westerners traveling to China combined with Beijing's fear of foreign influence are likely to cause an increase in domestic surveillance operations and intelligence

72. *Ibid.*

recruitment attempts. Recruiting foreign nationals on one's own soil tends to be a secure and cost effective method of conducting espionage.

Whether at home or abroad, the MSS will likely expand its collection operations against the United States and other industrialized nations. Due to the lack of any credible military threat, limited resources, and bureaucratic inertia in its intelligence community, the United States is unlikely to be able to effectively respond to the PRC's hostile intelligence threat. As PRC intelligence services conduct an increasing number of HUMINT collection operations, the level of sophistication of those operations will increase as well.

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. **CASE OFFICER:** individuals who recruit and handle espionage agents.
2. **LEGAL:** intelligence officer under diplomatic cover, usually working from Embassy or Consulate.
3. **ILLEGAL:** trained intelligence officers, often with false identities, who maintain no overt contact with their government.
4. **CO-OPTees:** officials or visitors tasked to conduct a specific activity such as spotting potential recruits or servicing dead drops.
5. **AGENT:** American or third country nationals recruited (usually by a case officer) for operational purposes.
6. **INTELLIGENCE OFFICER:** *see* case officer.
7. **DEAD DROP:** agreed-upon place where messages are left by agents for case officers and vice-versa.
8. **COURIER:** member of an intelligence organization who carries and delivers messages, information and instructions to other members.
9. **CUTOUT:** use of a third party for communications between two entities. Designed to conceal the identity of one of the entities.
10. **ACCOMMODATION ADDRESS:** use of an address in another country to facilitate letters between agents or illegals and foreign governments.
11. **INTELLIGENCE:** raw information which has been compiled and analyzed.
12. **HANDLER:** *see* case officer.
13. **HANDLING:** process of clandestinely directing the actions of an agent.
14. **SOURCE:** *see* agent.
15. **RECRUITED ASSET:** *see* agent.

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