

U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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Response to Information Request Number:	CHN02004.NYC
Date:	August 22, 2002
Subject:	China: Information on The Ministry of National Security's Activities in Hong Kong
From:	INS Resource Information Center
Keywords:	China / Government departments / Intelligence services / National security / Political opposition

Query:

Provide information on the Eighth Department of China's Ministry of National Security, including typical responsibilities of its rank officers and its agents in Hong Kong. Do agents posted to Hong Kong spy on pro-democracy groups?

Response:

SUMMARY

The Eighth Department of China's National Security Ministry is either an international relations think tank or a counterespionage unit, depending on the source contacted. By any account, the ministry, known more commonly as the Ministry for State Security, has units whose agents spy on political bodies, businessmen, and others in Hong Kong and on pro-democracy groups outside of China.

BACKGROUND

A prominent Chinese-born dissident now living in the United States who is also Executive Director of the Washington DC-based Laogai Research Foundation, says that the Eighth Department, or bureau, is responsible for domestic counterespionage. This includes monitoring foreigners or Chinese nationals who work for foreign-owned firms in China or

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have contacts with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. The bureau's agents in the field mainly carry out surveillance, often using basic methods such as trailing people, He noted, however, that every bureau within the ministry has the power to make arrests (Executive director 22 Aug 2002).

At the same time, Jane's Information Group reports that the ministry's Eighth Bureau is a research group tasked mainly with gathering and analyzing publicly available international affairs data. The group, known as the Institute of Contemporary International Relations, collects information on general international affairs issues, global economic matters, and individual countries and regions (Jane's 19 Nov 2002).

Jane's does, however, describe a bureau in the State Security Ministry that carries out espionage in Hong Kong. The Third Bureau sends agents to Hong Kong, as well as Macao and Taiwan, to collect intelligence and tries to recruit Chinese with connections to these places (Jane's 19 Nov 2002).

The Third Bureau also coordinates a "work group" tasked with gathering intelligence in Hong Kong and Macao. Code-named Winter Chrysanthemum, the work group gathers information on the activities of Taiwanese groups and their representatives in Hong Kong and Macao and Taiwanese political and military figures visiting these territories, according to Jane's. It also collects intelligence on the activities of foreign political figures and groups in Hong Kong and the inner workings of the territory's political bodies (Jane's 19 Nov 2002).

While some of the Third Bureau's agents work in professional jobs as covers for their espionage activities, most agents posted to Hong Kong work in Communist Party or state-run organs such as the Xinhua News Agency, Jane's says. Only a few Hong Kong postings are permanent, with the ministry rotating most agents every few years (Jane's 19 Nov 2002).

Jane's also describes a bureau in the State Security Ministry that spies on pro-democracy groups, although it appears that the bureau focuses mainly on Western-based groups run by ethnic Chinese. The Sixth Bureau also carries out counterintelligence activities against Western firms investing in China believed to be trying to foster political and market reforms in the country. The bureau reportedly has spied on pro-democracy groups in the West suspected of sending "investors" to China who were actually working on political or human rights issues (Jane's 19 Nov 2002).

These business-related investigations have been scaled back because of concerns that they could deter foreign investment. The Sixth Bureau continues to spy on pro-democracy groups, however, and also carries out training programs that encourage local officials to report suspicious people and activities, Jane's reports (Jane's 19 Nov 2002).

The Resource Information Center was unable to find information about the typical responsibilities of rank officers in the State Security Ministry.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

References:

Executive Director. Laogai Research Foundation. Telephone interview (Washington DC: 22 Aug 2002).

Jane's Information Group. JANE'S SENTINEL SECURITY ASSESSMENT: CHINA AND NORTHEAST ASIA - 12. "Security and Foreign Forces, China" (updated 19 Nov 2002) www6.janes.com/pmp/indirect.pmp?match=China&doc=http://www4.janes.com/search97/vs.vts%3Faction%3DView%26VdkVgwKey%3D/content1/janesdata/sent/cnasu/chins140.htm%26Collection%3Dcurrent%26ViewTemplate%3Djanes_doc_view.https%26Prod_Name%3DCNAS%26&popup=yes&target=HelpWindow [accessed 1 Apr 2003]

Attachments:

Jane's Information Group. JANE'S SENTINEL SECURITY ASSESSMENT: CHINA AND NORTHEAST ASIA - 12. "Security and Foreign Forces, China" (updated 19 Nov 2002) www6.janes.com/pmp/indirect.pmp?match=China&doc=http://www4.janes.com/search97/vs.vts%3Faction%3DView%26VdkVgwKey%3D/content1/janesdata/sent/cnasu/chins140.htm%26Collection%3Dcurrent%26ViewTemplate%3Djanes_doc_view.https%26Prod_Name%3DCNAS%26&popup=yes&target=HelpWindow [accessed 1 Apr 2003]

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