Twitter Thread by Antonio Regalado



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MIT mechanical engineer prof Gang Chan arrested. DOJ accuses of undisclosed grants, $$, from

COMPLAINT "Since in or about 2013, CHEN's research at MIT has been funded by more than $19 million in grants awarded by .. U.S. Department of Defense ("DOD"), the U.S. Department of Energy ("DOE") and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency ("DARPA").

"investigating CHEN for several violations of federal law, including wire fraud due to his failure to disclose contracts, appointments, and awards from various entities in the People's Republic of China ("PRC") in connection with his receipt of federal grant funding from DOE"

"Since in or about 2012, CHEN has held various PRC contractual appointments designed to promote the PRC's technological and scientific development, including acting as an "overseas expert" for the PRC government at the request of the PRC Consulate Office in New York "

... "CHEN assessed and reviewed grant applications, helped determine which grants the PRC government would fund, and reviewed the results of PRC funded research. Yet, CHEN never disclosed his work for NNSFC when he applied for grants from DOE or even his employer, MIT. "....

Chen was born in China, but is naturalized US citizen.

Split loyalties story, here, it seems

paperwork problems ... "CHEN electronically submitted and caused to be submitted grant applications and other documents to DOE that failed to disclose his substantial affiliations, appointments and contractual obligations with the PRC and its government. "

investigators got access to "CHEN's emails, CHEN's electronic devices, MIT documents, and publicly available information" and based on these believe "CHEN entered into numerous contracts with PRC government agencies ... undisclosed

appointments in the PRC since
at least 2012"

Under the DOJ China initiative, they are cracking down on people double dipping, getting paid both in china and the US, sometimes for the same stuff

getting people on technicalities
"CHEN's electronic devices demonstrat[e] he had at least three accounts at the Bank of China in 2018 ... one ... had a balance greater than $10,000. Therefore, CHEN was required to file an FBAR/FinCEN Form 114 disclosing this account to the IRS"

CHEN is currently the Carl Richard Soderberg Professor of Power Engineering within the Department of Mechanical Engineering at MIT, where he has been employed as a full
professor since 2004.

CHEN also serves as the Director of the MIT Pappalardo Micro/Nano Engineering
Laboratory, and the Director of the Solid-State Solar Thermal Energy Conversion Center
("S3TEC") at MIT.

Previously, DOJ went after and arrested Harvard Chemistry department chair Charles Lieber, who also works in material science/nanotech.

Lieber also arrested for missing disclosures (and lying about same) .
https://t.co/JB84wIdYLg

so people being charged for concealing income and affiliations....but this is really about something not explicitly charged: giving technology to China.

as complaint says: "e-mails, WeChat messages, and documents found on CHEN's electronic devices" show "appointments from various PRC government officials and entities, many of which are expressly intended to further the PRC's scientific and technological goals."

Chen sent emails from his MIT account "to promote the PRC's scientific and economic development"

Don't think that is a crime. Must be here for color. From the complaint, one of those emails.

using his MIT e-mail account. The following is a verbatim list of the items included in CHEN's email:

1. promote chinese collaboration
2. China places innovation (scientific) as key and core not fashion [sic], but because we must do it, from historic trend as well from our stage
3. our economy is no. 2, but from technology (structure of economy) and human resources, we are far from no. 2
4. we are paying big price in environment, not sustainable, as well as from labor cost
5. environment protection and development in same place, environment even higher, clean energy if higher cost, reduce steel, cement. We must count on technology, cannot grow as past
6. communist 18th convention, scientific innovation placed at core. We realize not just independent innovation; but also internationalize to plan for and facilitate. Closed door innovation does not work; innovation as driving force
7. MOST3/government 3 focus; a) basic/fundamental and frontier research; b) difficulty and challenging problems from industry/social, to elevate our industry, c) an ecosystem (law, political, service, culture)
8.for applied: applied basic research, technological innovation, translation to commercialization
9.For basic research, flexibility for scientist
10.Two improvements: natural science and social science intersection (chinese philosophy), we have too much separation between natural and social; ancient china; those who working idealogical [sic] part regarded as role, mechanical lower, 2) for challenging, more valuable topics for research; how to convert impossible into possible; more societal impacts, contribute more for people's well being,

I already learnt [sic] at the beginning
Our emphasize [sic] in policy to combine two factors: how to enterpresizes [sic] into major players in innovation, enterprises have more say and more input in scientific innovation; more incentive how to incentivize [sic] mobilize people to innovate; we are totally differently from chaplin era

China international collaboration platform, national science and technology cooperation program, welcoming your faculty and students

Here's an interesting bit.
Chen detained by customs in Jan 20 on return from China.

Asked what he's doing in China. Says "collaboration." What kind? "A collaboration is a collaboration."

Name drops MIT. Director position.

No dice, all devices seized.

Chen's laptop was encrypted. He was not willing to give the password over. Apparently border protection kept it for two months. Eventually they got a search warrant. Not clear if they ever got in.

Allegedly, Chen did not correctly fill out MIT's annual "Outside Professional Activities" form.

As an MIT employee, I also have to fill out this same exact form every year

Chen allegedly failed to mention his foreign $$ and appointments.

Apparently, MIT prof also forgot to tell Department of Energy (DOE) in his grant updates about his China entanglements.

BUT....he in some cases literally mentioned both the DOE and the China support in his papers. As well as co-authoring them with Chinese pals and thanking DOE for support.

Nowhere in the complaint filed by DOJ is there any suggestion that any of Chen's research is secret, vital to national security, or even important research at all.

In other words. Collaboration or technology espionage?

The strong sense from this charging document is that collaborating with China *is* espionage, in the view of DOJ.

MIT President Rafael Reif statement on arrest of professor Gang Chen for grant fraud.

- Chen is 'scholar, teacher'

- charges 'hard to understand'

- offering 'support' to Chen family

Statement does not mention People's Republic of China

To the members of the MIT community,

We learned early today that Professor Gang Chen, a widely respected scholar, teacher and member of our faculty since 2001, was arrested this morning on allegations of federal grant fraud.

For all of us who know Gang, this news is surprising, deeply distressing and hard to understand. Since learning of the arrest, Evelyn Wang, department head of Mechanical Engineering, has reached out to Gang's family to offer support during this difficult time. She has also been in touch with students and colleagues in the department.

Of course, for our community, any charge of this kind is a matter of great seriousness and concern, and we underscored that in our public statement, which you may read below.

For now, I simply wanted to share this painful news. If you feel you might benefit from personal support at this time, I encourage you to reach out to our resources: for faculty, staff and postdocs and for students.

Sincerely,

L. Rafael Reif

Statement by MIT – January 14, 2021

MIT was deeply distressed by the arrest of Professor Gang Chen this morning. MIT believes the integrity of research is a fundamental responsibility, and we take seriously concerns about improper influence in U.S. research. Prof. Chen is a long-serving and highly respected member of the research community, which makes the government's allegations against him all the more distressing. We are not able to offer any further information related to the government's complaint at this time.

In my first tweet in this thread I misspelled Gang Chen as Gang Chan. Let it stand corrected.