

June 2, 2006

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Chronology of NYT researcher Zhao Yan

July 2004

Zhao Yan writes a four-line note for the New York Times sketching out a reported conflict between President Hu Jintao and ex-President Jiang Zemin over senior military appointments.

September 7, 2004

The New York Times publishes an article predicting that former President Jiang Zemin will step down from his position of head of the military. A reference to political jockeying between Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao is included as background material in one of the final paragraphs of the article.

September 10-12, 2004

Zhao learns that a high level investigation has been launched to find the source(s) of the leak of the Sept. 7 New York Times story and that he is the principal suspect. State Security investigators contact Zhao and invite him to discuss the Times article. Zhao asks for a leave of absence from the New York Times and travels to Shanghai.

September 17, 2004

State Security agents arrest Zhao in Shanghai.

September 19, 2004

Jiang Zemin's resignation from Central Military Commission officially announced.

September 21, 2004

Beijing State Security Bureau issues formal notice to Zhao's family stating that he is in criminal detention under suspicion of "illegally providing state secrets overseas."

September 25, 2004

Zhao's lawyer, Mo Shaoping, is barred from meeting Zhao on the basis that the case involves "state secrets."

September 28, 2004

Government spokesman Kong Quan states that the case “is a Chinese domestic issue, other forces should not interfere with it.”

October 20, 2004

Zhao is formally arrested on suspicion of “illegally providing state secrets overseas.”

First week of April 2005

Chinese security officials inform Mo during the week that Zhao is being investigated for financial fraud.

May 17, 2005

Request from Mo to see his client is turned down for the seventh time.

May 20, 2005

Zhao’s case is secretly turned over to the prosecution (Beijing No. 2 People's Procuratorate) for indictment.

June 2, 2005

A spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry makes public that Zhao’s case was moved to the Beijing No. 2 People's Procuratorate on May 20 for “further investigation and prosecution.” Mo says he has not been informed yet.

July 9, 2005

Prosecutors return the case to State Security agents for another month of investigation.

October 5, 2005

The Washington Post reveals that Zhao’s case relies almost entirely on a copy of an internal New York Times memo obtained by the State Security Ministry, according to a confidential ministry document urging prosecutors to indict the researcher. It is unclear how the agents gained access to the memo, of which a copy is included in an inventory of evidence collected in the case.

October 7, 2005

The Reuters news agency reports that the prosecutors have returned the case to the investigators twice since Zhao was indicted on May 20. The first time was on July 9, 2005; the second date was unclear.

December 8, 2005

Zhao awarded 2005 prize for journalists who have “shown a strong commitment to press freedom” by the organization Reporters Without Borders. Government Spokesman Qin Gang asks whether the objective of the prize is “to encourage and support journalists to go steal state secrets in foreign countries.”

December 23, 2005

Zhao is formally indicted on charges of illegally providing state secrets overseas and on a lesser charge of fraud. Mo states he expects the trial to be held before March 20, 2006.

March 17, 2006

The court grants a request by prosecutors to withdraw at least part of the case against Zhao. The prosecution had petitioned the court to withdraw the lesser fraud charge, citing a need for more investigation, but the court ruling is unclear as to whether the state secret charge is also withdrawn.

Mo states that he expects Zhao to be released because the prosecution will not be able to reinstate the same charges unless they provide fresh evidence.

March 20, 2006

Mo files for request for the release of Zhao on the basis that the prosecution had abandoned the charges. Mo also says that he will file charges of illegal detention unless Zhao is released.

March 23, 2006

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang hints at a regular press briefing that Zhao will not be released. He adds that “foreign media shouldn’t idly gossip and make irresponsible remarks” about the case.

April 17, 2006

Mo is told by prosecution officials that prosecutors have “revived” a six-week period for considering whether to press for trial.

Mo contests the existence of legal or procedural basis for resuming investigation and prosecution.

May 16, 2006

Mo is allowed to visit Zhao in prison.

May 27, 2006

Mo is told that Zhao’s trial will be held on June 8. Mo is unable to review the full file.

June 8, 2006

Zhao's trial is scheduled to open in Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court.

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Press Release, June 1, 2006

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