

## California Navy Sailor Convicted of Espionage for China

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A U.S. Navy sailor based in California has been convicted of espionage for providing sensitive military information to a Chinese intelligence officer in exchange for \$12,000, according to the Department of Justice.

Jinchao Wei, 32, who served as a machinist's mate aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Essex, was found guilty on six charges following a five-day trial and one day of jury

deliberations. He is scheduled for sentencing on December 1.

Wei held a U.S. security clearance, granting him access to classified defense information. Prosecutors stated that he abused this access for over 18 months, sharing details on U.S. naval vessels, weapons capabilities, and ship movements.

Officials described Wei's actions as a serious breach of trust that endangered U.S. service members and national security. "He violated his oath, betrayed his uniform and fellow sailors, and turned his back on his adopted nation for money," said John A. Eisenberg, a senior U.S. security official.

U.S. Attorney Adam Gordon for the Southern District of California emphasized the crime's severity. "By trading military secrets to the People's Republic of China for cash, he jeopardized not only the lives of his fellow sailors but also the security of the entire nation and our allies," Gordon said.

The case highlights ongoing threats from foreign intelligence operations targeting U.S. defense personnel. Assistant Director Roman Rozhavsky of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division noted, "Jinchao Wei swore oaths to become a U.S. Navy sailor and a U.S. citizen. He then committed espionage by sending photographs and videos of Navy vessels, movement data, technical manuals, and weapons capabilities to a Chinese intelligence officer."

Court evidence shows Wei was first contacted in February 2022 via social media by an individual posing as a naval enthusiast, who was later revealed to be a Chinese intelligence officer. Over the next 18 months, Wei provided classified information, including ship photos, detailed manuals, and restricted technical data, in exchange for more than \$12,000 in payments.

Prosecutors presented electronic conversations and document exchanges as evidence. The jury found Wei guilty of espionage, conspiracy to commit espionage, unlawful export of defense data, and conspiracy to violate the Arms Export Control Act, which prohibits the unlicensed transfer of technical data related to defense articles.

The FBI and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) jointly conducted the investigation. National security analysts have stressed that Wei's conviction underscores both the vulnerability of U.S. defense systems to insider threats and the aggressive posture of Chinese intelligence.

Wei faces a potential lengthy prison term at sentencing. Federal officials emphasized that the conviction serves as a warning to those who might consider betraying U.S. national security for personal gain.