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United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

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Active-Duty U.S. Army Sergeant Pleads Guilty in Conspiracy to Gather and Transfer National Defense Information

PORTLAND, Ore. — **Jian Zhao,** 37, an active-duty U.S. Army sergeant stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington, pleaded guilty to conspiring to gather, transmit and transfer national defense information to individuals connected to China, U.S. Attorney Scott E. Bradford announced today.

The charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in federal prison, a $250,000 fine, up to three years of supervised release and a $100 special assessment.

"Members of the United States military are entrusted with protecting some of our nation's most sensitive information and capabilities," said **U.S. Attorney Scott E. Bradford.** "The defendant violated that trust by exploiting his access to military information and equipment for personal profit while knowingly providing materials to individuals linked to China. Protecting our national security depends on holding accountable those who compromise their oath and endanger the security of our armed forces."

"This guilty plea reflects a deliberate betrayal of the oath every Soldier takes to defend our nation and safeguard our fellow service members," said **Brig. Gen. Sean Stinchon, the commanding general of Army Counterintelligence Command**. "By trading access to sensitive military information and government equipment for personal profit, this individual undermined our Army's operational security and put Soldiers at risk. I urge everyone across our ranks to stay vigilant and report any suspicious activity or outreach to Army Counterintelligence."

"The integrity of our national security depends, in part, on the trust placed in individuals granted access to classified information," **said FBI Portland Special Agent in Charge Doug Olson.** "By pleading guilty, Jian Zhao has admitted to betraying that trust and abusing the responsibilities that came with his position and security clearance. Those who choose to compromise sensitive military information for personal gain put our nation's interests at risk, and the FBI, alongside our law enforcement and military partners, remains committed to holding them accountable."

According to court documents, Zhao enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2017 and served as a battery supply sergeant. As part of his duties, Zhao maintained a security clearance and had authorized access to sensitive military information and equipment.

Federal investigators determined that, beginning around November 2021 and continuing through March 2025, Zhao conspired with Ruoyu Duan, a former U.S. Army soldier living in Hillsboro, Oregon, and others to obtain and transfer information and equipment related to the national defense to buyers in China. Duan, who previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transmit national defense information, recruited active-duty U.S. military personnel, including Zhao, to provide defense-related information and facilitated communications and financial transactions with China-based purchasers.

As part of the conspiracy, Zhao provided excerpts from technical manuals related to the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, offered military computers and government hard drives for sale and photographed restricted military presentations and documents concerning U.S. Army operations, communications networks, rocket and missile systems and military exercises.

Zhao also sold military materials he described as sensitive, secret, or top secret and received thousands of dollars in payments from overseas buyers. He also removed government property and military storage devices without authorization and photographed controlled military documents using his personal cell phone.

On March 6, 2025, federal agents arrested Zhao at his residence in Lacey, Washington, where they recovered approximately $30,000 in cash, electronic devices and multiple Army hard drives.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Zhao agreed to forfeit $17,500 as proceeds of the offense and abandon his interest in approximately $30,000 seized during the investigation.

Zhao is scheduled to be sentenced on March 1, 2027.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with assistance from the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Command and other federal partners.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Geoffrey A. Barrow and Katherine Rykken for the District of Oregon and Trial Attorneys Yifei Zheng and Christopher Magnani of the Department of Justice's National Security Division are prosecuting the case.

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