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Report: China Sentences Repatriated Banker

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BEIJING — A Chinese court has sentenced a former banker repatriated from the United States to 12 years in prison for embezzlement, state media reported Monday.

U.S. authorities returned Yu Zhendong, former head of a Bank of China branch in the southern city of Kaiping, to China two years ago after receiving a promise he would not be tortured or given the death penalty.

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The Intermediate People's Court in Jiangmen, a city in southern China's Guangdong province, sentenced Yu on Friday and ordered 1 million yuan (\$125,000) of his assets to be confiscated after finding him guilty of graft and embezzlement of public funds, the state-run newspaper China Business News and other reports said.

Yu was accused of helping to embezzle \$485 million from his state-owned bank. He earlier had pleaded guilty to racketeering charges in a U.S. federal court in Las Vegas, and his plea agreement involved a maximum sentence of 12 years.

Authorities were still working to trace and recover more missing funds, the China Business News said. Yu had not yet said whether he would appeal, it said.

A court in Las Vegas is handling the trial of two other former Bank of China managers, Xu Chaofan and Xu Guojun, and their wives in connection with the case. The three former bankers fled China in 2001, and the two Xus and their wives were arrested last year on charges alleging they entered the United States using false identities and staged fake marriages with naturalized U.S. citizens.

The reports said Yu allegedly collaborated with the two Xus to embezzle \$82.5 million of Bank of China funds, making use of loopholes to have the money remitted to private companies they allegedly established overseas to cover corporate spending, share and foreign exchange dealings and personal and gambling expenses.

The three former bank managers are also accused of illegally taking loans from the Bank of China's

Kaiping branch to fund those companies, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Yu was the first former Chinese official to have been repatriated to China from the United States, although thousands of other officials accused of corruption are thought to be living there. The two countries do not have an extradition treaty.

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