

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

Chinese banker wanted by Beijing released in Canada again

The Associated Press

Thursday, March 1, 2007

VANCOUVER, British Columbia: A former Bank of China official accused by Beijing of embezzlement has again been ordered released by a Canadian court pending the start of immigration proceedings next month.

Gao Shan had been ordered released last week by a Canada Immigration and Refugee Board adjudicator. However, a Canada Border Services official overrode that decision, saying the \$300,000 Canadian (US\$256,000) surety Gao was willing to post was the proceeds of crime.

As such, Gao had to reappear before an adjudicator on Thursday for a detention review.

Now, Gao has been released on the provision of a \$150,000 Canadian (US\$128,000) bond put up by family friends.

China's Ministry of Public Security has asked Canada to extradite Gao for allegedly embezzling US\$128 million from customers' accounts to Canada, the Beijing Daily said last week.

The scandal came to light Jan. 15 when the Shanghai-listed A-share company Northeast Expressway revealed that more than US\$37 million of shareholders' funds deposited with the Bank of China branch in Harbin was missing.

Deposits by other companies, amounting to as much as US\$90 million also reportedly vanished, according to official Chinese media.

Gao, who headed the bank branch in Harbin, in northeast Heilongjiang province, left China in 2005 and turned up in Canada later that year with his wife Li Xue and their teenage daughter. They were granted permanent resident status.

Canadian authorities are now seeking to revoke the permanent resident status on the grounds that Gao and his wife misrepresented themselves when they arrived in Canada. Border Services lawyer Allanah Hatch said the couple failed to declare all the funds they had available.

Gao, his wife and daughter face an immigration hearing on March 6 that will determine whether they can remain in Canada. Gao's lawyer Alex Ning said the proceedings could take a year and a half.

"It's likely Mr. Gao and Mrs. Gao and their daughter are going to be subject to a serious immigration proceeding," Ning said.

Gao was arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on Feb. 16 at a North Vancouver home. Police Staff Sgt. John Ward said the arrest was made on outstanding warrants from China. He said a criminal investigation into Gao's activities is ongoing.

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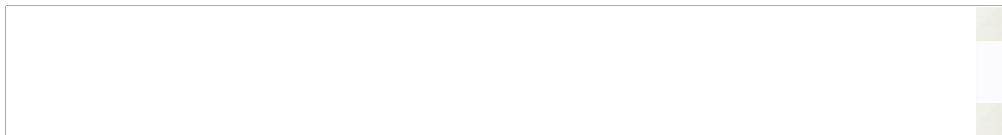
Vancouver is also home to Lai Changxing, a Chinese national who has been battling for five years through the Canadian court system in a series of failed bids to be granted refugee status.

Chinese authorities have accused Lai of being the mastermind behind a Xiamen, China-based network responsible for smuggling as much as US\$10 billion worth of goods into the country with protection from corrupt officials.

Fearing persecution or worse if he were returned to China, Lai has applied for refugee status in Canada.

Canada and China do not have an extradition treaty, primarily due to Canadian concerns about the human rights situation in China, including fears that suspects in crimes will be executed if returned to China. Canada has received a diplomatic note from Beijing that Lai will not be executed if returned.

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