

## 2 Chinese Nationals to Stay in Jail Facing Charge of Smuggling Biological Material

The two defendants said they would not challenge prosecutors' request to keep them in detention while their cases progress.



(Left) Chinese scientist Yunqing Jian. (Right) Chinese scientist Chengxuan Han. Sanilac County Sheriff's Office via AP



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Two Chinese nationals accused of smuggling restricted biological materials into the United States will remain in custody after waiving their right to a hearing in separate court appearances in Detroit on June 13.

Han Chengxuan, a doctoral candidate from China's Huazhong University of Science and Technology in central China's Wuhan city, and Jian Yunqing, a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Michigan, allegedly smuggled the materials for use at the University of Michigan.

On Friday, the two defendants said they would not challenge prosecutors' request to keep them in detention while their cases progress.

"This is a constantly evolving situation involving a large number of factors," Han's attorney, Sara Garber, told a judge. Garber didn't elaborate and later declined to comment.

Jian's attorneys declined to comment Friday.

Han was [arrested](#) upon landing at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport on a flight from China on June 8. She arrived on an exchange visitor visa and planned to spend a year at the University of Michigan for a research project on roundworms.

At the airport, Han allegedly made false statements to customs officials about packages she had sent to individuals at a University of Michigan laboratory. She eventually admitted that the packages contained biological roundworm-related materials.

According to the criminal complaint, the packages did not contain the correct documentation and were not imported under the Department of Agriculture or Customs and Border Protection regulations.

In response to Han's case, FBI Director Kash Patel called out the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in a post on the social media platform X on June 9.

"This case is part of a broader effort from the FBI and our federal partners to heavily crack down on similar pathogeon [sic] smuggling operations, as the CCP works relentlessly to undermine America's research institutions," Patel [wrote](#).

Several Republican lawmakers took to X to echo Patel's concerns in response to Han's case.

"Never forget: the CCP is ACTIVELY trying to undermine the U.S. and DESTROY our country," [wrote](#) Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.), who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Sen. Jon Ernst (R-Iowa) called Han's alleged smuggled items "a potential bioweapon."

"Food security is national security, and I am working to ensure America is safe from the threat posed by Communist China right here in our own backyard," Ernst [wrote](#), who is a member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-Texas), a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said Han's case is an example of the CCP's

“asymmetric warfare.”

“The Chinese colonels who wrote Unrestricted Warfare told us exactly how the CCP would fight: without guns, without warning, and without rules,” Crenshaw [wrote](#). “Smuggling pathogens into U.S. labs isn’t random. It’s strategic.”

Jian, who was arrested on June 2, is [charged](#) with conspiring with her boyfriend, Liu Zunyong, to bring a fungus known as *Fusarium graminearum* into the United States. The fungus [can](#) devastate wheat, barley, maize, and rice and cause health problems in humans and livestock.

Liu was denied admission into the United States at the Detroit airport in July 2024 and sent back to China after authorities found “four clear plastic baggies with small clumps of reddish plant material” inside his backpack, according to a criminal complaint.

The criminal complaint also said that FBI agents found an electronic document in Jian’s cellphone “describing her membership and loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party.”

There have been previous reports stating that Chinese doctoral students were required to sign a loyalty pledge to the CCP as a condition for receiving government-funded scholarships to study abroad.

The University of Michigan has not been accused of misconduct. It said it has not received any money from Beijing related to the work of the three defendants.

In a statement, the university said it strongly condemns any actions that “seek to cause harm, threaten national security or undermine the university’s critical public mission.”

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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