

Chinese National Pleads Guilty to Trade Secret Theft

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A Chinese national, and former scientist for Phillips 66, pled guilty to stealing trade secret information from his former employer related to the development of a product worth more than \$1 billion. Honjin Tan had been charged in December 2018 ([Former Phillips 66 Employee Accused of Trade Secrets Theft](#)). As part of a plea agreement, he admitted to “intentionally copying and downloading research and development materials without authorization from his employer.”

Specifically, he was alleged to have copied hundreds of restricted files to a flash drive before tendering his resignation to accept a job in China. Tan later returned the flash drive to the company claiming he forgot to do so prior to leaving. An examination of the flash drive indicated that five files had been deleted. The missing files were later found on an external hard drive in Tan’s home when it was searched by FBI investigators.

This case is just one of many recent cases brought under the Department of Justice’s “China Initiative” ([U.S. Justice Department Announces China Trade Secret Initiative](#)), which has a stated goal of prioritizing trade secret theft cases in which Chinese nationals have allegedly stolen intellectual property from U.S. companies.

TIP: The DOJ continues to prioritize criminal investigative efforts on prosecuting theft of IP from U.S. companies by Chinese Nationals.

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