
China Accuses Detained Ex-Interpol Chief of Bribery and Other Crimes

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BEIJING) — Chinese authorities said Monday they are investigating the former president of Interpol for bribery and other crimes and indicated that political transgressions may have also landed the Chinese official in trouble.

In a statement posted on a government website, the authorities said Meng Hongwei, China's vice minister for public security, was being investigated due to his own "willfulness and for bringing trouble upon himself."

It elaborated on a terse announcement late Sunday by an agency of the ruling Communist Party that investigates graft and political disloyalty that said that Meng was suspected of unspecified legal violations.

Meng is now the latest high-ranking official, and one with an unusually prominent international standing, to fall victim to a sweeping crackdown by the ruling party.

In a sign of how seriously the authorities regard the case, Zhao Lezhi, the minister for public security chaired a meeting in the early hours of Monday morning with senior officials of the ministry's party committee to discuss it, the statement said.

French judicial officials had said Friday that the 64-year-old Meng was missing. His unexplained disappearance while on a trip home to China late last month had prompted the French government and Interpol to make their concerns known publicly in recent days.

Interpol announced Sunday that Meng had resigned as president of the international police agency, effective immediately, shortly after China announced that Meng was under investigation.

The revelation that China's system of shady and often-arbitrary detentions could ensnare even a senior public security official with international stature has cast a shadow over the image Beijing has sought to cultivate as a modern country with the rule of law.

Monday's statement on the ministry of public security's website provided no details about the bribes Meng allegedly took or the other crimes he's accused of, but suggested that he was also being investigated for political lapses.

It indicated that Meng, a member of the Communist Party, may have somehow been tainted by the former security chief and ex-Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang who is now serving a life sentence for corruption.

"We should resolutely oppose corruption and resolutely eliminate the pernicious influence of Zhou Yongkang," it said.

Meng's various jobs likely put him in close contact with Zhou and other Chinese leaders in the security establishment, a sector long synonymous with corruption, opacity and human rights abuses.

Zhou and other senior figures prosecuted in Xi's anti-corruption crackdown were mostly convicted of corruption but officials have since also said they were accused of "conspiring openly to usurp party leadership."

At Monday's meeting, officials were told that they "must always maintain the political quality of being absolutely loyal to the party," the statement said.
