

## Chinese Nationals Charged With Conspiracy And Smuggling A Dangerous Biological Pathogen Into The U.S. For Their Work At A University Of Michigan Laboratory

Yunqing Jian, 33, and Zunyong Liu, 34, citizens of the People's Republic of China, were charged in a criminal complaint with conspiracy, smuggling goods into the United States, false statements, and visa fraud, announced United States Attorney Jerome F. Gorgon, Jr.

Gorgon was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Cheyvoryea Gibson, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Detroit Division and Marty C. Raybon, Director of Field Operations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The FBI arrested Jian in connection with allegations related to Jian's and Liu's smuggling into America a fungus called *Fusarium graminearum*, which scientific literature classifies as a potential agroterrorism weapon. This noxious fungus causes "head blight," a disease of wheat, barley, maize, and rice, and is responsible for billions of dollars in economic losses worldwide each year. *Fusarium graminearum*'s toxins cause vomiting, liver damage, and reproductive defects in humans and livestock.

According to the complaint, Jian received Chinese government funding for her work on this pathogen in China. The complaint also alleges that Jian's electronics contain information describing her membership in and loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party. It is further alleged that Jian's boyfriend, Liu, works at a Chinese university where he conducts research on the same pathogen and that he first lied but then admitted to smuggling *Fusarium graminearum* into America—through the Detroit Metropolitan Airport—so that he could conduct research on it at the laboratory at the University of Michigan where his girlfriend, Jian, worked.

United States Attorney Gorgon stated: "The alleged actions of these Chinese nationals—including a loyal member of the Chinese Communist Party—are of the gravest national security concerns. These two aliens have been charged with smuggling a fungus that has been described as a 'potential agroterrorism weapon' into the heartland of America, where they apparently intended to use a University of Michigan laboratory to further their scheme."

"The federal charges announced today against Yunqing Jian and Zunyong Liu, both residents of the People's Republic

of China, signify a crucial advancement in our efforts to safeguard our communities and uphold national security," said Cheyvoryea Gibson, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Detroit Field Office. "These individuals exploited their access to laboratory facilities at a local university to engage in the smuggling of biological pathogens, an act that posed an imminent threat to public safety. Thanks to the exceptional investigative efforts of the FBI Detroit Counterintelligence Task Force, in close cooperation with U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office of Field Operations these dangerous activities have been effectively halted. The FBI remains resolutely committed to collaborating with our law enforcement partners to protect the residents of Michigan and defend the United States against such grave threats."

U.S. Custom and Border Protection, Director of Field Operations Marty C. Raybon stated, "Today's criminal charges levied upon Yunqing Jian and Zunyong Liu are indicative of CBP's critical role in protecting the American people from biological threats that could devastate our agricultural economy and cause harm to humans; especially when it involves a researcher from a major university attempting to clandestinely bring potentially harmful biological materials into the United States. This was a complex investigation involving CBP offices from across the country, alongside our federal partners. I'm grateful for their tireless efforts, ensuring our borders remain secure from all types of threats while safeguarding America's national security interests."

Jian will be appearing this afternoon in federal court in Detroit for her initial appearance on the complaint.

A complaint is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Trial cannot be held on felony charges in a complaint. When the investigation is completed, a determination will be made whether to seek a felony indictment.

The FBI and CBP are investigating this case.

## Earned Income Tax Credit: Helping Iowans For 50 Years

For 50 years the Earned Income Tax Credit has been providing a financial boost for U.S. taxpayers with low to moderate income. The EITC reduces their taxes, leaving them with more money to cover basic needs, pay debts, save for emergencies or invest, says Jeannette Mukayisire, a health and human sciences educator with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Tax credit shown on traffic sign by Argus/stock.adobe.com. In 1975 the Tax Reduction Act introduced EITC as a temporary program with a maximum credit of \$400 for working families with children. Through legislative measures over the years, the credit was increased, various requirements were added and the provision became permanent, Mukayisire said.

According to the IRS, in Iowa 81% of tax filers who are eligible for EITC receive the credit. However, 19% of those who are eligible do not take the opportunity to claim EITC they earned.

Through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, ISU Extension and Outreach educators train and support community volunteers who complete IRS certification and then provide free tax preparation to Iowans with low or moderate income.

"Our VITA volunteers help Iowans save money on tax preparation and access the EITC if they qualify," Mukayisire said.

In 2025, ISU Extension and Outreach's VITA volunteers helped 552 Iowans access the EITC. The average EITC refund was approximately \$1,981, totaling \$1.1 million.

"EITC refunds are important because they contribute to family financial security. However, the EITC also improves the local economy as families use their refunds. Every EITC dollar earned and circulated through the

local economy creates a ripple effect that exceeds the size of the original refund. This strengthens communities, assists small businesses and spurs local economic development," Mukayisire said.

VITA provides free and accurate income tax assistance to qualifying low-to-moderate-income individuals and working families, older adults, limited English speakers, and people with disabilities. Certified community volunteers prepare taxes with computer software and help with special tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Credit for the Elderly or Disabled.

"As you plan ahead for filing next year's tax return, keep VITA in mind. This program can make a difference for you, your family and your community," Mukayisire said.

For more information, contact your ISU Extension and Outreach county office.

## Conservation Drainage School To Teach Subsurface Drainage Practices In August

### Three-day program offers resources for in-field and edge-of-field drainage water quality improvement practices

Nutrient loss from tiled fields has prompted the creation of sub-surface drainage designs that include practices to protect downstream water quality. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach will cover the planning, design and installation of drainage water quality improvement practices at the Conservation Drainage School.

The Conservation Drainage School will take place Aug. 26–28 at the Borlaug Learning Center on ISU's Northeast Research and Demonstration Farm near Nashua, Iowa.

"Conservation Drainage School provides educational opportunities for all interested in drainage, whether they are contractors, farmers, consulting engineers, watershed coordinators, county officials or others," said Matt Helmers, professor and agricultural engineering specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach. "The school focuses on the fundamentals of planning and design of oxbows, saturated buffers, controlled drainage, wetlands, alternative

intakes, drainage water recycling, woodchip bioreactors and two-stage ditches, including ACPF and Batch and Build programs."

The three-day school features classroom lectures and discussions combined with team problem-solving and field exercises. Student teams will plan and design drainage practices using concepts learned during classroom discussions. By attending this school, participants will be able to plan and lay out water quality improvement practices. Farm visits to sites where some of these practices have been installed, along with panel discussions with contractors already involved in constructing such practices, are planned.

Water quality improvement practices also provide opportunities for additional drainage work during times when regular tiling work may not be feasible. Drainage contractors, professional engineers and consultants, NRCS professionals, watershed coordinators, county administrators, landowners, drainage district officials and anyone interested in subsurface drainage water quality improvement practices are invited to attend and learn new practices.

Woodchip bioreactor installationThe cost to register is \$475 per person before midnight, Aug. 11. Late registration is \$525 and must be received by midnight, Aug. 18. Class size is limited, and pre-registration is required. Registration includes meals indicated on the agenda, refreshments, a course notebook and reference materials.

Professional Development Hours and Certified Crop Advisor continuing education units are available for this school.

Additional program information and online registration is available on the Conservation Drainage School website. For registration assistance, contact Registration Services at 515-294-6222 or [registrations@iastate.edu](mailto:registrations@iastate.edu).

For more information, visit the Conservation Drainage School website.



### PUBLIC NOTICE

The City of Onawa will be spraying the entire city for mosquito control. The spraying will begin half an hour before dusk.

Anyone wishing more information on request, as per Community Right-to-Know, may contact the city during regular business hours

Director of Public Works/Utilities

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