

Chinese Employer Of Ford Backstabber Concerned

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SHANGHAI (AP) — Beijing Autos, one of two Chinese companies that employed a former Ford Motor engineer arrested in the U.S. for allegedly stealing trade secrets, said Tuesday it is watching the case, but relies on its own designs and technology.

The statement issued by Beijing Automotive was the first official comment from China on the Oct. 14 arrest of Yu Xiangdong, also known as Mike Yu, on allegations he copied thousands of electronic documents and stole trade secrets before quitting Ford Motor Co. in early 2007.

"Beijing Automotive Holding Co. has always respected and sought to protect intellectual property rights. In its independent research and development process, it has always stressed the cultivation of its own innovation capabilities and is committed to research and development of its own brand autos," it said.

The company, one of China's biggest state-run auto manufacturers and a partner with Hyundai Motor Co. and Daimler AG, said it was concerned and was closely monitoring Yu's case.

Chinese auto manufacturers have grown by leaps and bounds, parlaying tie-ups with foreign automakers to build up their own brand names and models. But they still lag their global rivals in technology and design.

An indictment in Detroit charges Yu, 47, with theft and attempted theft of trade secrets and unauthorized access to a computer. The maximum penalty on the theft charges is 10 years in prison.

It alleges Yu copied design details on doors, mirrors, steering wheel assemblies, power systems, wipers and other vehicle components in December 2006, mostly less than a month before quitting Ford to work for a company in Shenzhen, China.

That company, Foxconn PCE Industry Inc., is an electronics manufacturer. According to the indictment, Yu allegedly used some of the information from Ford while hunting for another job in China.

But the indictment does not accuse Foxconn PCE or Beijing Autos of wrongdoing.

The Beijing Autos statement said Yu had requested a brief leave of absence when he traveled back to the U.S. He was arrested in Chicago. Yu worked for Beijing Autos for about 11 months after leaving Foxconn.

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