Ex-Ford Engineer Stole Secrets, Ran To China

Ed White, Associated Press Writer

DETROIT (AP) — An engineer copied thousands of electronic documents and stole trade secrets before quitting Ford Motor Co. for a new job in China, authorities said Thursday in announcing criminal charges.>

Xiang Dong Yu, also known as Mike Yu, was arrested Wednesday in Chicago after traveling from China, the U.S. attorney's office said.>

An indictment here 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-related charges is 10 years in prison.>

"Employees and employers should be aware that stealing proprietary trade secrets to gain an economic advantage is a serious federal offense that will be prosecuted aggressively," U.S. Attorney Terrence Berg said.>

The indictment says Yu copied design details on doors, mirrors, steering wheel assemblies, power systems, wipers and other vehicle components. He's accused of doing much of the work in December 2006, less than a month before quitting Ford to work for a company in Shenzhen, China.>

By spring 2008, Yu used some of the Ford information while hunting for another job in China, according to the indictment. The government says he now works for a Ford competitor there.>

Yu is in custody in Chicago awaiting a detention hearing Tuesday. A message seeking comment was left with his lawyer, Piyush Chandra.>

FBI spokeswoman Sandra Berchtold said the case began with a referral from Ford.>

Ford spokeswoman Marcey Evans said the Dearborn, Mich.-based company is aware of the case and is cooperating with authorities. She declined further comment.>

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