Stealth Bomber Engineer Gets 32 Years For Selling Secrets

Audrey McAvoy, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A former B-2 stealth bomber engineer was sentenced to 32 years in prison Monday for selling military secrets to China in the latest of several high-profile cases of Chinese espionage in the U.S.

Chief U.S. District Judge Susan Oki Mollway said Noshir Gowadia, 66, would likely be in his late 80s by the time he is released if he gets credit for good behavior in prison.

"He broke his oath of loyalty to this country," Mollway said. "He was found guilty of marketing valuable technology to foreign countries for personal gain."

Gowadia was convicted in August on 14 counts, including communicating national defense information to aid a foreign nation and violating the arms export control act.

Prosecutors said Gowadia helped China design a stealth cruise missile to get money to pay the $15,000-a-month mortgage on his luxurious multimillion dollar home overlooking the ocean on Maui. They say he pocketed at least $110,000 by selling military secrets.

The defense argued Gowadia only provided unclassified information to China and was innocent.

His son, Ashton Gowadia, told reporters the jury wasn't able to see documents that would absolve his father of the crimes because they were deemed classified. He said his father's defense team would present these during an appeal.

"My father would never, ever do anything to intentionally to hurt this country," Ashton Gowadia said. "We hope the convictions will be overturned and he'll be able to go home."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ken Sorenson, the lead prosecutor, had asked Mollway to sentence Gowadia to life in prison. But he said 32 years was a stiff and appropriate sentence given Gowadia's age.

"We're confident the message is sent that when you compromise U.S. national security, when you disclose national defense secrets, when you profit by U.S. national defense information, that you will be punished, you will be pursued, you will be convicted," Sorenson told reporters.

A federal jury in Honolulu found Gowadia helped China design a cruise missile

exhaust nozzle that would give off less heat, allowing the missile to evade infrared radar detection and U.S. heat-seeking missiles.

The jury, after hearing 39 days of evidence over nearly four months, also found Gowadia guilty of attempting to sell classified stealth technology to the Swiss government and businesses in Israel and Germany.

The case follows other high-profile convictions of people accused of providing secrets to China.

Last March, Chinese-born engineer Dongfan "Greg" Chung was sentenced to more than 15 years in prison after he was convicted of six counts of economic espionage and other federal charges.

A defense contractor engineer, Chi Mak, was sentenced in 2008 to 24 years in prison after being convicted of conspiracy to export U.S. defense technology to China.

Gowadia's sentencing came just weeks after China conducted a flight test of its new J-20 stealth fighter during a visit to Beijing by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

The Jan. 11 flight was held at an airfield in Chengdu, where prosecutors said Gowadia delivered an oral presentation on classified stealth technology in 2003.

Chengdu is a center for Chinese fighter aircraft and cruise missile research and development.

The judge sentenced Gowadia to 32 years for each of two counts of communicating national defense information to aid a foreign nation.

She also gave him 20 years for each of four counts of violating the arms export control act, and 10 years for each of five lesser counts including money laundering. He received five years for one count of conspiracy and three years for two counts of filing a false tax return.

But Mollway ordered the sentences to run together.

Gowadia has already spent more than five years at Honolulu's federal detention center after he was ordered held without bail following his 2005 arrest.

The engineer helped design the propulsion system for the B-2 bomber when he worked at Northrop Corp., now known as Northrop Grumman Corp., between 1968 and 1986.

Born in India, Gowadia moved to the U.S. for postgraduate work in the 1960s and became a U.S. citizen about a decade later. He moved to Maui in 1999.

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