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Burglary reveals 'sister state' center

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OREGON CITY — A mail mix-up and Chinese self-reliance apparently led the government of Fujian province in China to establish a "sister state" cultural mission in Oregon City this summer without notifying local officials.

The China Arts & Cultural Center opened in July at 1015 Seventh St. Its existence came to official notice last week when its director told Oregon City police that burglars had stolen hundreds of artworks, including what he said were priceless Chinese "national treasures," from the center.

Kafung F. Yap, the director, was in China on business when the burglary occurred between Oct. 5 and 26.

Police and the FBI are investigating the theft. Local, state and federal officials said they were unaware of the center until the burglary was reported.

Yap said Tuesday that before he arrived in Oregon City he wrote to Portland Mayor Frank Ivancie about the mission. But Yap addressed the letter to Sa [redacted] instead of Portland.

Ivancie's office has not responded to efforts to learn if the letter ever reached the mayor.

"Probably that was a mistake," Yap said.

He added that officials in Fujian instructed him to seek a minimum of help from public officials in Oregon for his cultural, educational and trade mission.

"For too long we have depended on others. Now we wish to stand on our own feet," Yap said.

Douglas V. Frengle, manager of the International Trade Division of the Oregon Department of Economic Development, Tuesday became the first public official in Oregon — other than police and the FBI — to visit the center.

"We're very pleased that you're here and very sorry about what happened," Frengle told Yap.

Frengle said he would like to help Yap arrange for safe storage and a museum exhibit of the remaining Chinese art and of additional art works Yap has arranged to have shipped to Oregon City.

Yap thanked Frengle for his offer, but he probably should not accept such [redacted] without authorization from Fujian authorities.

"If I do so, they will think I'm a dictator," Yap said.

Yap said he had wide latitude in

how to conduct of his mission but that Fujian officials insisted he set it up in Oregon City "because Oregon City used to be the main city and the capital of Oregon."

"I personally have suggested that Portland or Salem would be more suitable," he said, but added that such decisions were reached in committees in Fujian and took a long time.

Yap said he was seeking help from the Chinese consulate in San Francisco and from the Chinese embassy in Wash-

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ington, D.C., to persuade Fujian authorities to allow him to move the center.

He said he wanted to establish an effective mission for Fujian because "we have a competition with Taiwan."

The Oregon Legislature recognizes Fujian as a sister state, but Gov. Vic Atiyeh in June proclaimed a sister state relationship with Taiwan. Fujian is on the Chinese coast near Taiwan.

Yap said Fujian is interested in importing Oregon timber and in providing the labor to convert raw materials from Oregon into manufactured goods.

"In China, for instance, labor is very cheap — much cheaper than Korea, Taiwan or Hong Kong," he said. "There we would compete (with Taiwan). You supply the parts and materials, we supply labor and skill."

Frengle said both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan were sources and markets for trade with Oregon and that disputes between the governments of the two countries do not affect his work to stimulate more trade.

"We think both are very important," he said.

Frengle said that in 1982 Taiwan imported \$163 million worth of Pacific Northwest products — mostly wheat and barley — from the U.S. Customs Oregon District. Taiwan that year exported \$100 million worth of shoes, television sets, hardwood veneer plywood and other manufactured goods to the Northwest through the district, he said.

China during 1982 imported \$87 million worth of Northwest products, primarily wood, and exported to the Northwest \$42 million worth of titanium and baskets and other handicrafts, Frengle said.