



## LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MEDIA RELATIONS DIVISION

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### **Phony Army commander pleads guilty, sentenced**

**POMONA** – The self-appointed “Supreme Commander” of a phony Army unit who outfitted more than 200 recruits with uniforms and provided them bogus documents for a fee pleaded guilty today and was sentenced to prison, the District Attorney’s office announced.

Yupeng Deng, a 51-year-old Chinese national from El Monte, pleaded guilty to three felony counts -- theft by false pretenses, manufacturing deceptive government documents and counterfeit of an official government seal, said Deputy District Attorney Lalit Kundani.

In a separate case, Deng also pleaded guilty to one count of possession of child pornography stemming from a search warrant executed at his home.

Deng, who also goes by David Deng, was immediately sentenced by Judge Jack Hunt to three years in state prison and ordered to pay restitution. The amount will be determined later, although Kundani said estimates are around \$200,000. In exchange for his plea, the remaining 10 counts were dismissed, Kundani said.

Special Agents with the FBI and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service jointly investigated the case and presented it to the D.A.’s office. Several agencies assisted during the investigation, including the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, United States Customs and Immigration Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the United States Army.

Deng created a fake unit he called the U.S. Army/Military Special Forces Reserve unit (“MSFR”) in October 2008. He recruited more than 200 Chinese nationals around the country and charged them initiation fees ranging from \$300 to \$450 with renewal fees set at \$120 each year. Recruits could increase their rank in the “MSFR” by making cash donations to the defendant, prosecutors said.

Recruits, who received fraudulent military ID cards in addition to Army uniforms, were told that belonging to the bogus unit was a path to U.S. citizenship.

Deng decorated his Temple City office to look like an official U.S. military recruiting center. He used the office to conduct military training and indoctrination, authorities said. He also had MSFR offices in Oakland and Atlanta, Ga.

"Yupeng Deng made a hobby of lying about himself," Kundani said. "He called himself the "Supreme Commander" when, in reality, he was the "Supreme Con Artist. He wanted to wear the king's robe, ride on the king's horse and wear the king's crown but he didn't have the courage to walk a day in the king's shoes. It was easy for him to put on his uniform to get an airline discount, but he certainly wasn't willing to put on a uniform to jump out of fighter plane. This was his idea of patriotism."

Steven Martinez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office said, "FBI and DCIS agents who investigated the immigrant fraud scheme, as well as the child pornography found in Deng's residence should be commended for the collaborative effort that led to the successful prosecution by the District Attorney's Office.

"In addition to his crime against children, Mr. Deng dishonored the brave men and women of the United States military and defrauded a vulnerable immigrant population, many of whom legitimately hoped and believed they were on a path to American citizenship," Martinez said.

Chris Hendrickson, Special Agent in Charge of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Western Field Office, said, "Deng's greed and corrupt practices victimized innocent immigrants and compromised our national security.

"The Defense Criminal Investigative Service places a special focus on protecting our Warfighters both in theater and at home. Deng compromised the safety of our men and women serving in the U.S. military by creating and selling bogus military identification cards, which falsely represented the bearers as members of the U.S. Armed Services. Deng also exploited for profit and power well intentioned immigrants who were conned by Deng into believing they were members of the U.S. Armed Forces and that their service would lead to U.S. citizenship. Finally, Deng's possession of child pornography is reprehensible. This investigation should serve as a warning for those intent on defrauding the U.S. military and harming innocent victims that the DCIS and our law enforcement partners will pursue these crimes relentlessly."