

## China frees Hong Kong 'spy' reporter

by UPI

BEIJING -- A Hong Kong journalist imprisoned in China after being convicted of spying for Taiwan was given early release Tuesday, Hong Kong officials said. Ching Cheong, 58, was sentenced to five years in jail in August 2006. China's Xinhua state news agency said Ching was given early release because he had allegedly confessed to further espionage China wasn't aware of at the time of his arrest. Ching worked for Singapore's The Straits Times newspaper when he was arrested in April 2005 during a visit to the city of Guangzhou, a New York Times correspondent in Beijing reported. Ching was imprisoned for six months before a closed, one-day trial in Beijing, prompting an international campaign for his release by international rights and journalism groups. He was convicted of selling state secrets to a Taiwan foundation China claims was a front for intelligence-gathering. Law Yuk-kai, director of the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, told the Times the trial wasn't valid by international standards.

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