



by Christoph Giesen, Philipp Gröll, Frederik Obermaier, Bastian Obermayer
Kiepenheuer & Witsch
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Non-Fiction

We are delighted that this book has now been published in English translation.

The Chinese Phantom. The World's Most Dangerous Arms Dealer, or The Powerlessness of the West.

Die Jagd auf das chinesische Phantom. Der gefährlichste Waffenhändler der Welt oder Die Ohnmacht des Westens

review

This gripping piece of investigative journalism follows its authors' attempts to uncover the truth about one of the world's most dangerous men and his involvement in Iran's ballistic missile programme. The authors come thrillingly close to tracking down the mysterious Chinese businessman, but Karl Lee, also known as Li Fangwei, remains on the FBI's most wanted list with a five-million-dollar bounty on his head – a bounty equal to that once offered for information leading to the capture of Osama bin Laden.

The book consists of twenty-eight short chapters focusing on the authors' pursuit of Lee and the trail of clues they glean from their sources. The authors – Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Frederik Obermaier and Bastian Obermayer, and distinguished reporters Christoph Giesen and Philipp Gröll – travel all over the world in search of the 'Chinese phantom', following up leads and interviewing contacts. Their journey from the USA to China takes them through Austria, the United Kingdom and Israel, affording them insights into

the balance of power in contemporary international relations.

Lee's influence is based on his capacity to reliably supply governments with the electronic components required for their weapons programmes, in ways that bypass Western sanctions. The addresses used by Lee for his multiple companies frequently lead to private residences with uncommunicative tenants, although the journalists do locate a graphite factory he owns – graphite being an important component in missile production. The closest they get to Karl Lee himself is to his lawyer and his brother. At the end of their research, they are faced with the possibility that Lee is in prison, although even that remains uncertain.

Lee is a pivotal figure in the power struggle between China and the United States, and the authors conclude that Lee must have protection at the highest level in China. It is suggested that China has an interest in maintaining tensions in the Middle East, which divert American attention away from the Indo-Pacific region. They also suspect that the authorities in the USA and Israel hold back because they do not want to alienate China completely. They finally admit that although – like the Western intelligence agencies who have been in pursuit of Lee for decades – they have come close, they have not fulfilled their aims.

The Chinese Phantom invokes a parallel world of deceit and lies, in which actors like Lee continuously change their identities, remaining several steps ahead of those in power. This is a thrilling and eloquent read which will appeal to a wide audience.

Rights sold: Netherlands, Alfabet.

Read more here:

<https://www.kiwi-verlag.de/verlag/rights/book/bastian-obermayer-fred-erik-obermaier-die-jagd-auf-das-chinesische-phantom-9783462001396>

press quotes

A fast-moving account about people and events which one day could rapidly lead to an even more dangerous world.

Stuart Parkes, NBG Reader

A thrilling and globe-spanning account of the search for the world's most wanted man. The authors delve into the murky worlds of arms smuggling, sanctions-busting and espionage. In their hunt for the Chinese phantom, they encounter suspicious police, atomic experts, and former spies, as well as a perplexing wall of silence from the Israeli and US governments. The book delves into international rivalries, and explores a shifting game of realpolitik featuring Beijing and Washington, Tehran and Moscow, London and Munich. Lucid, compelling, and vividly written.

Luke Harding, #1 New York Times bestselling author

about the author

Frederik Obermaier is an author and Pulitzer-Prize-winning investigative reporter. Together with Bastian Obermayer, he published the Panama Papers. He has received numerous honours for his work. In 2016, he was voted Germany's Journalist of the Year.

Bastian Obermayer is a Pulitzer-Prize winning investigative reporter. He and his colleague Frederik Obermaier were the recipients of the ground breaking Panama Papers leak from an anonymous source. He is the recipient of the German Reporter Award and the George Polk Award, among other honours.

Philipp Grüll is an investigative reporter, weapons expert and editor at Germany's leading public broadcaster ARD.

Christoph Giesen is the China Correspondent of the German magazine Der Spiegel.

Other works: *Panama Papers*, Kiepenheuer & Witsch (2016); *Die Ibiza Affäre*, Kiepenheuer & Witsch (2019); *Schweizer Geheimnisse*,

Kiepenheuer & Witsch (2022)

rights information

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