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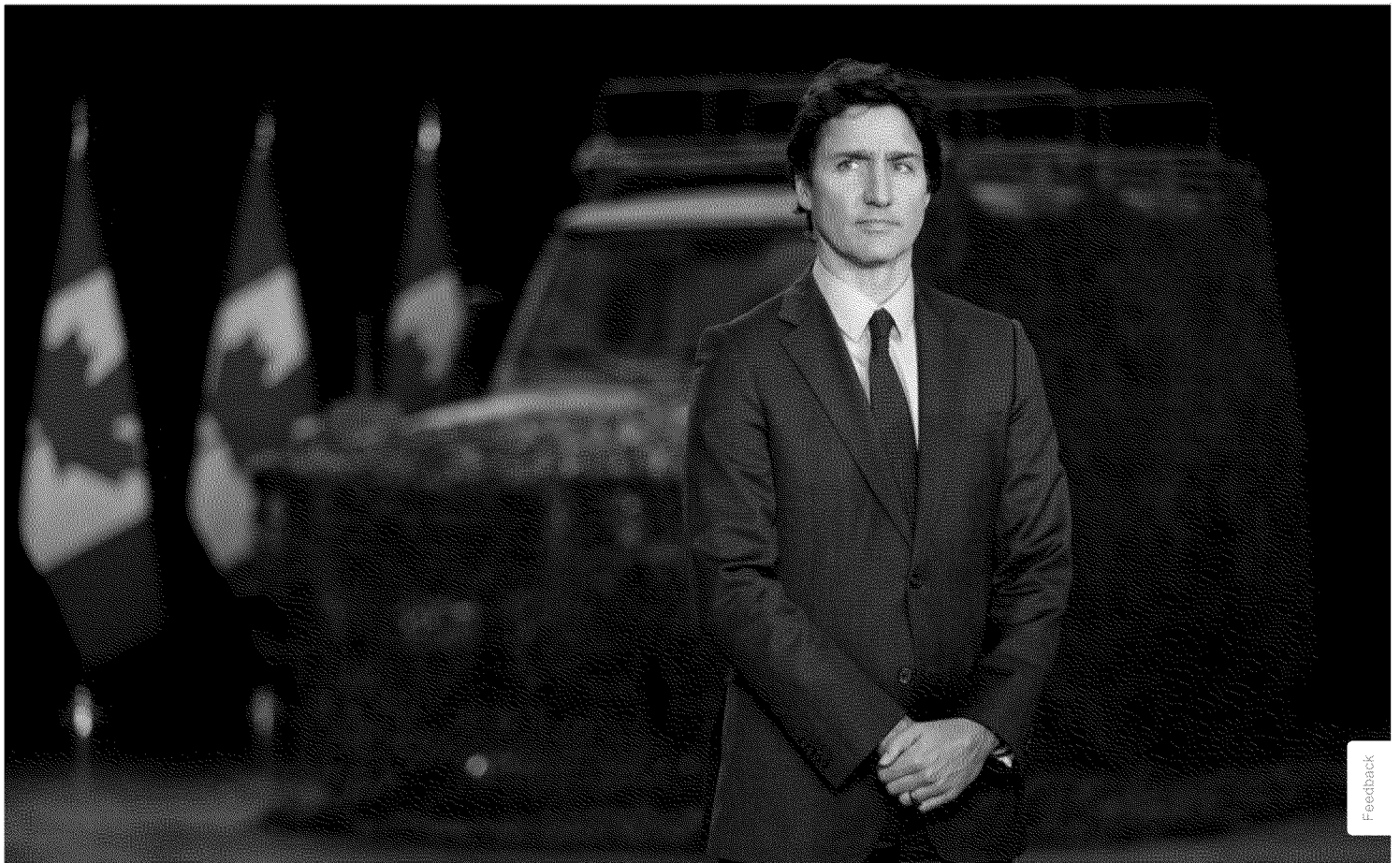
By Steve Scherer



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OTTAWA, Feb 27 (Reuters) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday denied a media report from last week saying his office had been warned by Canada's spy agency to drop a Liberal candidate, who is now a member of parliament, because he had Beijing's support.

The Chinese government preferred Han Dong, a Chinese Canadian, over another Chinese Canadian Liberal, who was passed over in favor of Han, said Global News, a national broadcaster, citing anonymous security sources in a story posted online.

The article said the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) urged Trudeau's "team" to rescind Han's candidacy. Instead he went on to win a seat in the House of Commons in a Toronto riding in 2019, and was re-elected in 2021.

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"Dong is an outstanding member of our team and suggestions that he is somehow not loyal to Canada should not be entertained," Trudeau told a news conference in Mississauga.

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"Suggestions we've seen in the media, that CSIS would somehow say, 'No, this person can't run or that person can't run,' is not just false, it's actually damaging to people's confidence in our democratic and political institutions."

The Global report follows a Globe and Mail story published earlier this month, also citing anonymous security sources, saying that Chinese diplomats and their proxies worked to defeat Conservative politicians considered more hostile to Beijing in the 2021 election.

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Trudeau has said China has attempted to meddle in Canada's elections, but he insists that two reports by an intelligence task force set up to study foreign influence in elections have said the outcome of both the 2019 and 2021 elections were not altered.

"That doesn't mean that we are not faced on an ongoing basis by attempts at interference in our democracies, both during and before and after" an election, Trudeau said.

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In a written statement, Han said he would support efforts from parliamentarians to investigate alleged interference.

"I strongly reject the insinuations in media reporting that allege I have played a role in offshore interference in these processes and will defend myself vigorously against such inaccurate and irresponsible claims that come from an unverified and anonymous source," Han wrote.

The Chinese embassy in Ottawa did not immediately respond to a request to comment on the Global report.

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Han was raised and educated in Toronto after his parents immigrated to Canada from Shanghai in the early 1990s, and worked in his parent's 24-hour coffee shop while growing up, the Liberal Party Web site says.

Reporting by Steve Scherer; Editing by Alistair Bell and Stephen Coates

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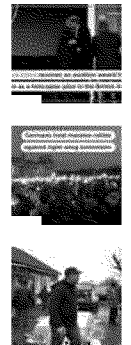


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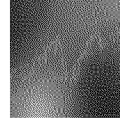
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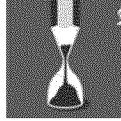


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