



US Olympic gold medalist Alysa Liu was once targeted by Chinese spies – here's what she has to say about it

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American figure skater Alysa Liu is America's first Olympic gold medalist in women's figure skating since 2022.

It came during a trip to the World Stage that was anything but certain after finishing 6th at the Beijing Winter Games, as she only just came out of retirement in 2024.

She went into a temporary retirement shortly after her first Olympic appearance in Beijing. What preceded that was an experience facing the fear of geopolitical espionage.

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Alysa Liu competes during the Winter Olympics at Milano Ice Skating Arena on Feb. 17, 2026. (Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images)

Just prior to her appearance in the 2022 Beijing games, she and her father were the targets of a spying operation by the Chinese government.

Her father, Arthur, fled China as a refugee decades earlier. But his past followed him, as his past involvement in the 1989 [Tiananmen Square protests](#) made him and his daughter the targets of spies in 2022.

Liu called the experience "a little bit freaky and exciting."

"You know what I mean? It's so... unbelievable. You know what I mean like, that's crazy," Liu previously told Fox News Digital at a roundtable interview at the USOPC Media Summit in October.

ILIA MALININ HINTS AT INTENSE OLYMPIC PRESSURE DAYS AFTER UNEXPECTED RESULT



Alysa Liu performs her routine during the Winter Olympic Games on Feb. 17th, 2026 in Milan, Italy. (Tim Clayton/Getty Images)

"Like, imagine finding that out at such a young age, I mean, like in a weird way, I was like, 'Am I like in some prank show?' Like, is this world real like I must be some movie character. But, I mean, it was like it made sense to me, you know, from like everything my dad did back in his activist days."

One of the five men who were charged Wednesday with spying on Chinese dissidents living in the U.S., Matthew Ziburis, allegedly

contacted Arthur in November 2021, impersonating a USOPC official and asking for his and Liu's passport numbers, The Associated Press reported at the time.

Ziburis allegedly traveled to California's Bay Area, where the Liu family lived, to surveil them and try to coax private information from the family that he could then supply to the Chinese government.

Her father told The Associated Press at the time, "They are probably just trying to intimidate us, to... in a way threaten us not to say anything, to cause trouble to them and say anything political or related to human rights violations in China... I had concerns about her safety. The U.S. government did a good job protecting her."

The U.S. Department of Justice and FBI came to Liu's aid.

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She first spoke with the FBI agent who would protect her family at length at a local Japanese restaurant.

"I went like to eat dinner with her a couple times I mostly talk, because like, I'm also like, really interested in what she does, like guys like, that's so cool to me like, I don't know, just like meeting with an FBI agent like that's crazy work," she said.

"You know, and I mean, like not many people can do that. So I, you know, I have so many questions and like I've met with, like a psychologist there, not for me like because, I was like, so curious about like what she does."

Liu added the FBI made her feel "safe," throughout the situation.

The spy operation didn't scare Liu off from competing in Beijing. But she had heightened security assurances from the U.S. State Department and USOPC, as at least two people escorted her at all times when she was there.

She hasn't ruled out seeing her life, and experience in an international spying incident, adapted into a movie.

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Alysa Liu poses for a photo following the Milan Olympics figure skating team announcement show at Enterprise Center on Jan. 11, 2026. (Jeff Curry/Imagn Images)

Still, she has some preferences if her story makes it onto the big screen.

"They gotta make me look like super cool hero or something. And just, I can't just be the kid that got spied on and did nothing about it," she said. "But honestly, I would just have the main focus be like my dad's story, because like his story is so cool and like also just like everything that only happened because of what he did, so, like I feel like we got to start with the roots."

Liu bolstered her case for being the subject of a movie after her historic gold medal on Thursday in the women's freeski final.

It ended a lengthy Olympic medal and gold medal drought for Team USA in women's figure skating.

The last American woman to win a singles figure skating medal at the Olympics was Sasha Cohen at the 2006 Turin Games. And the last American woman to win a gold medal in singles figure skating was Sarah Hughes, who pulled off that accomplishment in 2002 when the Winter Games were held in Salt Lake City.

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