

Backlash grows against Gore's Cox Report hoax

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Johnny Foster and Harold Agnew, who directed the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory at the time that the labs developed the W70 and W88 nuclear warheads, told the *Washington Post's* Walter Pincus recently that the "information allegedly stolen by China through espionage was not as valuable as portrayed by a House select committee that published a report on security lapses last week."

Foster and Agnew's remarks are but the latest evidence that the Cox Commission, formally known as the House Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China, has produced a piece of willful scientific fraud, aimed at fueling a new "Yellow Peril" Cold War with China, at precisely the moment that President Clinton needs to urgently expand his ongoing commitments to forge a strategic partnership with both China and Russia. Such a partnership is required to deal with the looming threat of a global financial catastrophe, and to defeat British schemes to provoke a string of regional wars which could easily trigger a global conflagration.

Signalling that he has no intention of kowtowing to the China-bashers, on June 3, President Clinton sent a formal letter to the U.S. Congress, renewing China's Most Favored Nation status for another year. Both Houses of Congress have 90 days in which to vote, by a two-thirds majority, to reject the President's MFN authorization.

Gore's treachery

While the President has shown, in many ways, that he intends to stand by his commitment to pursue the "strategic partnership" with China, the same cannot be said for his Vice President, Al Gore. Indeed, it was Gore's personal House Whip, and the chairman of his Washington State Presidential campaign committee, Rep. Norman Dicks (D-Wash.), who

was the driving force behind the Cox Commission hoax (see *EIR*, June 4, 1999, "The Cox Reports Is a Gore, Inc. Pack of Lies").

According to Dicks's own account, in October 1998, he learned from Department of Energy intelligence officer Notra Trulock, about information obtained from a "Chinese intelligence officer," indicating that China had stolen secrets on U.S. missile designs from several national weapons laboratories. At the time of the Trulock "revelation," the Cox probe of leaks of U.S. missile technology by two defense firms, Loral and Hughes, and the probe of Chinese government covert funding of the Democrats in the 1996 elections, had run out of steam.

It was, by all accounts, Dicks, who then seized on the "spy" revelations and breathed new life into the "Get Clinton" China-bashing effort, first begun by then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich in July 1998.

The Gore-Dicks perfidy was ostensibly sparked by the revelations about a Chinese "intelligence walk-in" to a U.S. embassy in the mid-1990s, with incriminating documents that had been heisted from U.S. weapons labs. Since the declassified version of the Cox report was released to the public on May 25, there has been a great deal of media speculation and confusion on the subject of the "walk-in." Why would the Chinese military have sent one of its own agents to alert the United States to the fact that China had sent spies into the heart of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex?

EIR has learned from several well-placed administration and intelligence officials, that the whole "walk-in" story was a hoax from beginning to end. In fact, the United States has been spying on the Chinese military-industrial complex, just as China—like every other industrialized nation, from Britain, to France, to India, to Israel—has been spying on the United States.

But what would it have done for the China-bashing venom of the Cox Commission, if the only so-called “smoking gun” revelation had to be acknowledged as the fruit of *American* espionage against *China*?

The ‘grand old men’ speak out

Dr. Harold Agnew, who headed the Los Alamos Scientific Lab from 1970-79, made precisely that point in a letter to the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*, published on May 17—one week prior to the release of the declassified version of the Cox report.

Under the headline “Looking for Spies in Nuclear Kitchen,” Dr. Agnew wrote, “In regard to the alleged spying and security violations of Los Alamos (‘Senate Panel Approves Two Measures to Fight Espionage in Nuclear Labs,’ May 4): In my opinion, those who are screaming the loudest in Washington have little knowledge or understanding with regard to the issues at hand. The Chinese nuclear establishment, most of whom have studied in the West, are extremely competent. They may indeed be curious as to what the U.S. has developed with its technology, but we also have been curious as to what *they* have developed and fielded. From time to time they have been in our kitchen looking for recipes and we have poked around in theirs. Our general public has no knowledge as to how successful we have been, and their population is also in the dark with regard to their successes.”

To make matters even worse, for Gore, Cox, Dicks, and company, almost every living former director of an American national laboratory has come out with a stinging denunciation of the quackery underlying the report: Namely, the Cox Commission asserted that access to computer “legacy codes” and other schematics was the equivalent of accessing all the secrets needed to build nuclear weapons based on American designs.

Foster, who headed the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in 1952-65, and served as a defense science adviser to Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Bush, and Clinton, in a phone interview with the *Washington Post*, downplayed the significance of information about the W70 and W88 warheads, allegedly obtained by China. “We showed them what’s possible, and they probably learned that some time ago when the size and shape of the reentry vehicle [which carries the nuclear warhead] and its [explosive] yield [were first made] public.” Foster added that the Chinese have shown “they are smart,” when it comes to the designing of nuclear weapons, but that the real challenges involve the fabrication of the nuclear material metals and the purity of the plutonium, which are far more difficult.

Agnew made similar remarks to the *Washington Post*’s Walter Pincus. Pincus reported that “Agnew said that much of the information alleged to have been stolen by China was made public decades ago, although still considered classified within government. He said he attended a public lecture a year ago given by the Natural Resources Defense Council, which first published its *U.S. Nuclear Forces and Capabilities*

handbook in 1984. The speaker was so detailed with what was still considered classified, Agnew told him it ‘would be appropriate for all new hires at Los Alamos.’ ”

Pincus reported that he had interviewed two other former national laboratory directors who had joined with Foster and Agnew in criticizing the hype of the Cox report. “Because the former directors have had to deal with Congress on their budgets,” Pincus wrote, “they all respect the fact that legislators ‘are trained to simplify,’ as one put it. In this case, however, ‘politicians with little knowledge have had a knee-jerk reaction on what should be done,’ the former director said.”

The Chinese respond

The Chinese government well understands that the motives behind the Cox hoax are far more dangerous than a Congressional impulse to “simplify.”

Wang Fei, a nuclear scientist with the Chinese Defense Scientific and Technical Information Center, said on June 3, in Beijing, that the accusations of the Cox report are not only “ridiculous, but an intentional insult designed to show contempt for Chinese scientists.”

According to the Chinese news agency Xinhua, Wang stated that U.S. nuclear threats and blackmail in the early 1950s had forced China to development the atom bomb, and the H-bomb, and to launch its own satellites long before establishing diplomatic relations with the United States. “The strict blockade at the time made it impossible for China to acquire the nuclear technology from the United States,” Wang explained, “and we relied solely on our own strength to develop limited self-defense nuclear power.” He stated that China has many excellent missile experts and nuclear researchers, and that China has never in the past, nor will it in the future, base its development of nuclear weapons on foreign technology.

Wang described the Cox report as containing outrageous fabrications, and he repeated that the information on the performance of the nuclear warheads in question was available in published form in the United States, so that theft was both impossible and unnecessary.

Capping a week of reactions to the Cox report insanity, the Chinese State Council, the nation’s cabinet, on May 31, publicly demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of data that China has been accused of stealing, is available on the Internet. In front of a gathering of reporters, Fang Nan, of the China Internet Information Center, a government agency, used a Compaq Presario computer and Microsoft Internet Explorer software, to churn out a mountain of data on U.S. nuclear warheads—from a series of open web sites, including the sites of the Federation of American Scientists and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Zhao Qizheng, a spokesman for the State Council, told reporters, “In recent years, performance data about various types of nuclear warheads . . . can easily be found on the Internet. They are no longer secrets, so there is nothing to steal.”