

Senators critical of China embassy bombing

by Suzanne Rose

On May 27, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs held a hearing to examine the effects on U.S. China relations of the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 8. The news that a NATO bomber had dropped three precision-guided bombs on the embassy, killing three journalists, severely damaged U.S. relations with China. The Chinese government has suspended cooperation with the United States on most joint projects until the matter is fully investigated and the culprits punished.

The Chinese are not buying the explanation from U.S. spokesmen, that the bombing was an accident which occurred because of U.S. pilots had outdated maps. Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji said: "Claims of a so-called 'mistake' cannot convince the Chinese people, and foreign public opinion doesn't believe them either. We demand a complete and thorough investigation, followed by full publication of the results, and severe punishment of the schemers and troublemakers who engineered the attack." Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., issued a statement immediately after the attack, demanding a thorough and rapid public investigation, and the initiation of court-martial proceedings against all of the NATO and U.S. military command personnel involved. He warned that there would be grave consequences for the Clinton administration, and for the future of the Eurasian region, without such a response.

The Senate hearing, which featured testimony from Stanley Roth, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Asian Affairs, and Frank Kramer, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security, was held amid U.S. media coverage highlighting only the angry demonstrations in China over the bombing, rather than the legitimate questions the incident raises. The hearing also occurred two days after the release of the fraudulent Cox report, May 25, which has further angered the Chinese (see previous article, and *EIR*, June 4, 1999).

Senators Gordon Smith, (R-Ore.), Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.), and John Kerry (D-Mass.) questioned the witnesses. Kramer outlined the actions which the Chinese have taken since the bombing, including refusal to allow U.S. Navy ships to dock in Hong Kong, cancellation of military contracts, cancellation of all military-to-military activities planned for June, closing of visa offices, postponement of non-proliferation talks, and cancellation of the latest trip planned

by Defense Secretary William Cohen to the country. Roth said the Chinese are intently focussed on the investigation, waiting to get briefed on the results. The Chinese want punishment of those responsible, he said, and until this happens, these activities will remain suspended.

Senator Kerry made a lengthy opening statement, which was in part a reponse to the Cox report. The bombing was a terrible accident, he said, but he dismissed as absurd the idea that it could have been deliberate. Correctly stating that the incident has unleashed anti-Americanism in China, Kerry nonetheless gave credence to the cynical media spin that the Chinese leadership is exploiting the bombing for its own purposes.

In reality, however, the pro-U.S. Chinese leadership, far from benefitting from the incident, is undermined when its pro-U.S. policy is threatened. The only beneficiaries are those in the British-American-Commonwealth financier oligarchy who would destroy U.S.-China relations, in their insane pursuit of new imperialistic world order, policed by NATO.

Kerry also stated that some people in the United States are exploiting the Cox report for political gain. The U.S. has spies, so no one should be surprised if others do, too. However, he said, much of the exchange of technology with China has been through a traditional process, through universities, and so on. Emotional responses to these events on both sides are dangerous, he concluded. "We don't want this [the spying charges] to cause China to become our enemy."

'We owe them an apology'

Interestingly, Smith, who is a self-described conservative Republican, spoke from his experience of having just returned from China, which he had visited along with subcommittee chairman Craig Thomas. He said he had met with students there, and he was surprised at the level of hostility they expressed about the embassy bombing. It was tragic and stupid, he said. The necessary maps would have been available in most bookstores. "We owe them an apology, and whoever did this should be disciplined."

Secretary Kramer told the Senators that we are "kidding ourselves," if we think the reaction to the bombing in China was all orchestrated. He said he had met with Chinese academics, who are outside of the government, and they are thoroughly enraged about the embassy bombing. "They clearly don't think it was an accident," he stressed. These responses elicited a further remark from Kerry: "I think we are owed a thorough explanation. There has to be accountability. It was a huge mistake with major consequences."

When Kramer was asked whether the currency crisis is over in Asia, he responded with another dose of reality. The financial crisis is over, he said, but not the economic crisis, and he stressed the great social and development implications from what has happened—the severe unemployment conditions in Korea and Thailand (complicated further by the fact that unemployment insurance will soon end).