

National News

Holbrooke Calls for War Crimes Tribunal

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke called on the UN to impose a war crimes tribunal on Indonesia's role in East Timor, *The Nation* of Bangkok reported on Sept. 18. UN Security Council Resolution 1319, passed on Sept. 8, only called for those responsible for the Sept. 16 killings of three UN relief workers to be "brought to justice." But Holbrooke, in a neo-colonialist diatribe, charged that "the Indonesian military are directly or indirectly responsible," and that they want to "drive out of West Timor the international relief community so that they can return part of that island to the terror that it underwent from 1975 until 1999 and then spread that terror east." He then called for an international tribunal.

Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, in response to this outburst, said: "Our international friends demand us to do this and that, but they don't give us the necessary tools to operate. . . . I hope that our international friends will be ready to bear the cost of relocating refugees from West Timor to other parts of Indonesia."

Secret Service Breach During Vajpayee Visit

The U.S. Secret Service allowed an unauthorized person to get to the bedroom of visiting Indian Prime Minister B.J. Vajpayee in the official guesthouse, Blair House, in Washington on Sept. 16.

The incident was only revealed by the U.S. Secret Service on Sept. 19.

Blair House is located across from the White House, and access to the House was controlled by the Secret Service. But, an Indian-American asked to enter, claiming he had an appointment with the Prime Minister, and the Secret Service agent on duty, in violation of all regulations, allowed him to enter, and go to the bedroom of Vajpayee, who

was at a reception at the time. There, the intruder was stopped by Indian security. They apprehended him, and turned him over to the Secret Service, who, after the Indian security protest, had to admit to a "security lapse." It was then learned that the intruder had a female accomplice, who was waiting for him outside.

U.S. Secret Service spokesman Mark Connolly said that an intruder, identified as Dipal Pandya, had been arrested for unlawful entry. Connolly attempted to play down the incident, claiming, "The Prime Minister was not in the Blair House at the time and was not in any danger."

During official visits by foreign leaders to Blair House, security is supposedly increased, with barricades restricting pedestrian traffic set up around the house.

This event should be seen in the light of the series of U.S. provocations against foreign leaders, including the rough treatment given to German Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping at the U.S. Defense Department (his car was smashed by a security barrier as he entered the main gate at the Pentagon), and the insulting treatment of North Korea's head of state, who was ordered to submit to a strip-search by American Airlines officials at Frankfurt Airport.

Rep. Weldon May Probe Sinking of the Kursk

Saying that he is not completely convinced by Pentagon denials of any U.S. involvement in the sinking of the Russian submarine *Kursk*, Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.) says that he may begin an official inquiry, or hold hearings.

In a Sept. 13 interview with *Inside the Navy*, Weldon said that the Clinton Administration had not yet shown him enough evidence to convince him of the accuracy of Defense Department denials of Russian charges that the submarine sank on Aug. 12 as the result of a collision with a foreign vessel. "I'm a little bit less concerned now," he said, "but I'm not convinced it didn't occur, and that's going to be a question I'll be asking if and when I get contacted by the Ad-

ministration on my letter."

"I'll believe it when I'm given the appropriate data," Weldon said. "I hate to say this, but sometimes I have to question my own government and sometimes my own military. I've seen enough evidence certainly in this administration of tampering with facts."

Weldon added that he thinks the United States knew about the loss of the *Kursk* as soon as it happened. "I think we knew exactly when it went down," he said. "I think we knew based on intelligence when it happened. We may not want to reveal it, but my hunch is we knew immediately.

"We have capabilities that we could have and should have used to save lives," Weldon declared.

Weldon has long been active in joint meetings and exchanges between the U.S. Congress and the Russian State Duma. He and Boris Gryzlov, a leader of the Unity faction in the Duma, are appealing to Presidents Clinton and Putin to develop a protocol to handle emergencies aboard U.S. and Russian military and research vessels.

Cox Issues Partisan Blast on Russia Policy

The House Speaker's Advisory Group on Russia, chaired by Rep. Chris Cox (R-Calif.), on Sept. 18 released its report on the Clinton Administration's policy toward Russia. Titled "Russia's Road to Corruption," it is largely a political document that lays the blame for the crisis in U.S.-Russia relations, and in the Russian economy, at the door of President Clinton and Vice President Gore, ignoring the role of the previous George Bush Administration.

The first chapter of the report covers the events of 1991, including the coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov, but it doesn't even mention the name of Robert Strauss, the Democratic Party kingmaker whom Bush sent to Moscow as Ambassador during the coup. As Lyndon LaRouche said at the time, Bush had sent "the Prince of Thieves" to Moscow "to teach the Russians how to steal." Instead, the report praises Bush for "supporting Yeltsin and the Rus-

sian people.”

Democrats noted sarcastically that the report was released just weeks before the Presidential election. Five ranking Democrats on the Armed Services, Banking, Appropriations, Intelligence, and International Relations Committees sent a letter, on Sept. 18, to House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), complaining that they were not invited to any of the advisory groups’ meetings and had yet to see the report, even though it had been leaked to the press. “This is a political hatchet job,” said Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.). “They wrote this report trying to distort the Administration’s record on Russia.”

On Sept. 20, Condoleezza Rice, the foreign policy adviser for George W. Bush, came out in support of the Cox Report. She proposed that the United States deal with Russia as a decentralized entity, promoting links with businesses and setting up student exchange programs, rather than dealing with the Kremlin. “You don’t have to make a bet with the Kremlin and a bet with the central Russian government in order to play an active and positive role in Russia’s future,” she said, “There is no reason to believe that everything has to go through the Kremlin.” On the other hand, she wants the United States to hit Russia with sanctions, if the Kremlin violates arms agreements.

Law on Felons’ Voting Rights Is Struck Down

A Pennsylvania law that prohibits convicted felons from voting for five years after their release from jail has been declared unconstitutional, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on Sept. 20. In a ruling filed Sept. 18, Judge Joseph T. Doyle wrote that there was “no rational basis” for the voting ban on felons, which was made into law with no debate whatsoever. The Pennsylvania court upheld the ban while felons are still in prison. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which brought the suit, will appeal the upholding of the ban for prisoners.

NAACP attorney Earl Trent said the rul-

ing could mean that thousands of former inmates now barred from voting might be able to participate in the Nov. 7 elections, if there is no appeal. The NAACP is taking this fight to other states as well. Thirty-five states prohibit former inmates from voting for various lengths of time, 14 of them for life. The group is also suing in Federal court.

Crackdown at Labs Hurt U.S. National Security

A report by former Republican Sen. Howard Baker (Tenn.) and former Democratic Rep. Lee Hamilton (Ind.) concludes that the “security” measures implemented by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson in the nation’s weapons laboratories over the past year, due to the fake nuclear spy scandal, are themselves a threat to national security, the *Washington Post* reported on Sept. 25.

In the wake of the firing of nuclear physicist Wen Ho Lee from Los Alamos National Laboratory last year, Richardson threatened to polygraph every scientist with access to classified information. Protests from the labs and the general scientific community forced him to scale back this effort, but the distrust that was generated between the scientists and the “intelligence” forces will be long lasting.

Baker and Hamilton were appointed by Secretary Richardson in June to investigate the disappearance, and reappearance, of two computer hard drives containing classified data, which the FBI is still investigating. According to the *Post*’s report, the study did not shed any light about who took the drives, or why, or what they did with them, but instead concluded, after a two-day visit to Los Alamos, that the episode, and the way it was handled, has had a “highly negative effect on the ability of [Los Alamos] and the other national laboratories to continue to do their work, while attracting and maintaining the talented personnel who are the lifeblood of the cutting-edge work of the laboratory.” Similar fears have been voiced by the National Academy of Sciences and other scientific organizations.

INDIANAPOLIS became the first city in the nation to restrict access to violent video-games in public places to youth under the age of 18, unless accompanied by an adult. Mayor Bart Peterson told CBS News that these games “are about gruesome murders.” The new law is now being tested in the courts; it is expected that the legal challenge, from the video “industry,” will go to the Supreme Court eventually.

REP. BOB FILNER (D-Calif.) introduced a bill to Congress mandating the government to act to bring down electricity prices. Speaking on the House floor, Filner said that prices in San Diego, which is in his district, have tripled over the past two to three months, because of manipulation of the market by a few hungry power merchants. San Diego was the first city in California to fully deregulate its power production.

MAINE State Sen. Chellie Pingree (D) has passed through the State Senate a bill which orders a 30% decrease in drug prices by pharmaceutical companies in drugs they sell in Maine. Companies which refuse to lower prices are subject to stiff fines. Pharmaceutical companies are furious. Senator Pingree is campaigning to get similar provisions adopted by state legislatures around the country.

MARK RICHARD, the Deputy Assistant Attorney General and a leading member of the task force that railroaded Lyndon LaRouche to prison, has been implicated in security violations, in a report prepared by the Justice Department’s Inspector General. The violations, some of which could have compromised top-secret material, were allegedly committed by officials in the Criminal Division’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program and the Office of Prosecutorial Development and Training.