China's Espionage Proves We Need a Missile Defense

March 17, 1999

Google Ads are provided by Google and are not selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

Editor's Note: After President Clinton dropped his long-standing threat to veto it, the Senate passed S.257 on March 17 by a vote of 97-3. On March 18, the House passed a similar bill, H.R. 4, by a vote of 317-105.

We heard a lot of posturing this year about Senators fulfilling their obligation to obey the Constitution. The Senate has no more important obligation than to fulfill its constitutional duty to "provide for the common defense" by voting for the National Missile Defense Act (S.257), which is scheduled to come to the floor within the next few days.

This bill declares it to be U.S. policy "to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate)." Twice last year, a Democratic filibuster prevented this same bill from coming to a vote, but a new front-page scoop in the New York Times should shame the anti-defense Democrats into changing their votes.

The Times exposé describes how Communist China, using an espionage operation at our Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico, stole the strategic know-how to miniaturize its nuclear bombs and launch them at multiple targets from a single missile. The espionage probably started in the mid-1980s, but U.S. intelligence didn't discover it until 1995 when an analysis of Chinese tests revealed that China has miniature warheads like our most advanced warhead, the W-88.

Multiple nuclear warheads that can be launched from long-range missiles, mobile missiles, and submarines are the main elements of a modern nuclear force. They can be used on China's thirteen intercontinental ballistic missiles that are already targeted on U.S. cities.

As Yogi Berra would say, it sounds like déjà vu all over again because this is an espionage success story that ranks with the Soviets' theft of our atomic secrets by Klaus Fuchs and the Rosenbergs. It's more

damaging than the betrayal of our secrets by convicted spy Aldrich Ames.

Another parallel between the Chinese and the Soviet espionage of the 1940s is the coverup by the Administration. The Times' investigation shows that the Clinton Administration's response to the 1995 discovery of this daring and dramatic theft of our most vital technology was "delays, inaction and skepticism," plus shockingly lax security at Los Alamos.

Of course, the Clinton Administration didn't want its China policy to be upset by messy revelations that our trading "partner" was stealing our technology and using it to target weapons of mass destruction on U.S. cities. The centerpiece of Clinton's China policy was to allow a billion-dollar-a-week trade deficit with China, which provides the U.S. dollars China needs to build an up-to-date, aggressive war machine.

Clinton's China policy also included okaying increased exports of satellites and other militarily useful items, looser controls over sales of supercomputers, and trying to work out a deal to allow U.S. companies to sell commercial nuclear reactors. After all, these sales were of major commercial importance to the biggest contributors to the Democratic Party's campaign coffers.

It was in 1995 when the whistle-blower in the Energy Department, intelligence official Notra Trulock, first sounded the alarm about Chinese Communist penetration at Los Alamos. But making a fuss with the Chinese would have interfered with those millions of dollars still to be raised from the Chinese for Clinton's 1996 reelection.

So, the Clinton White House and its National Security staff feigned "skepticism," denied that China's extraordinary and inexplicable leap forward in nuclear technology could have come from theft of American secrets, and downplayed the significance. It was just so much more important for Clinton to have a friendly meeting with China's President Jiang Zemin and let photo-ops mislead the world with the illusion that China was moving toward "democracy" and "capitalism."

The attitude of Clinton's National Security staff is ominously reminiscent of the way the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations stonewalled evidence about (in Harry Truman's words) "good old Joe" Stalin's espionage, pretending to believe Secretary of War Henry Stimson's famous words that "gentlemen don't read other gentlemen's mail." But Joseph Stalin was no gentleman, and neither are the perpetrators of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Trulock encountered one roadblock after another in trying to present his evidence of China's espionage to

Clinton's National Security staff, the FBI, the CIA, and his own boss, Energy Secretary Federico Pena. The FBI opened a criminal investigation in 1996 and identified five suspects, but no one has yet been arrested.

Trulock finally became a major witness before the Cox Committee last year, even though senior Administration officials had ordered him not to tell Congress about his findings, and demoted him after he testified. Meanwhile, the principal suspect at Los Alamos has twice failed a lie detector.

The Cox Committee reached unanimous, bipartisan agreement in a 700-page report that China's theft has severely hurt U.S. national security. Any Senator who now votes against building an anti-missile defense should be held personally responsible for leaving all Americans like sitting ducks, vulnerable to a Chinese missile attack or threat.