



U.S. Rep. Christopher Cox, R-Calif., was selected to head a congressional investigative committee on Chinese espionage.

Key representative uncovers communist espionage

REP. CHRISTOPHER COX, R-CALIF., entered the 105th Congress unaware that he would soon be immersed in a national security nightmare: The Chinese had been stealing vital U.S. nuclear information. Rather than getting embroiled in finger pointing, Cox led a special committee in an effort to get to the bottom of the scandal. He subsequently presented the Cox Report, a document that swiftly found its name on the lips of the American public while putting a chill in their hearts.

Though a member of the Republican congressional leadership in the House, Cox has attracted considerable attention for his bipartisan approach to critical issues. As chairman of the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China, he cut through the political controversy and assembled a unanimous vote in favor of his committee recommendations to

tighten security at U.S. nuclear weapons labs. The committee, created in June 1998, issued the declassified version of its report in May 1999. Freelance writer and Washington Watch columnist Cliff Kincaid interviewed Cox for *The American Legion Magazine*.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE: What is your reaction to the indictment of former Los Alamos scientist Wen Ho Lee on charges of mishandling nuclear weapons secrets?

CHRISTOPHER COX: I have been briefed about the significance of the nuclear codes that were transferred. In light of that, this indictment is not surprising.

Q: Your report identified security problems spanning several decades at nuclear labs under the supervision of the Department of Energy. Have they been fixed?

A: Prior to our investigation, the serious problems at the labs had gotten worse over a period of many years. The Department of Energy proved incapable of reversing that trend. Following our report, the president's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board described the Department of Energy as incapable of

reforming itself. They also described the situation at the weapons labs as "security at its worst." During 1999, the Congress enacted 28 separate committee recommendations into law and President Clinton signed them. As a result, real change is underway.

Q: What was the most important recommendation?

A: That Congress reconsider whether the Department of Energy is capable of the mission. As a result, Congress created the National Nuclear Security Administration. This is the most significant overhaul of a cabinet department in two decades. The NNSA is an independent agency within DOE. It has a single focus on nuclear weapons security.

Q: The FBI says Chinese intelligence targets Chinese citizens in the United States, a demographic that makes up the largest number of foreigners earning Ph.D.s here. Should something be done about that?

A: The PRC uses the unconscionable practice of racial profiling in its espionage. But the United States in response cannot rely upon that offensive technique. Nor is it useful, because

espionage threats against the United States come from many quarters. Much more sophisticated methods of counter-intelligence are necessary.

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Q Your report says that in June 1995, a Chinese official provided the CIA a secret Chinese government document containing U.S. nuclear warhead design information. But the CIA concluded the official was a Chinese agent. Why would they provide such information to the CIA?

A: Walk-ins are not unknown in modern intelligence operations. The United States uses them, as do other countries. In this case, the PRC directed a walk-in to U.S. intelligence, either to package solid information with disinformation or to distract attention from the actual intelligence operatives then deployed against the United States or, as some have suggested, to step up its campaign to deter U.S. support for Taiwan.

Q There's a report that Taiwan might go nuclear to defend itself against the PRC. Does that mean we

should be prepared to go to war?

A: The PRC's escalation of threats and belligerence is unfortunately a direct result of the so-called strategic ambiguity of current U.S. policy. A policy of clarity is required. Ambiguity risks being misunderstood as weak.

There should be no question in the minds of the People's Liberation Army generals that the United States would join Taiwan if the PRC were to mount an attack.

Q The Chinese are developing a ballistic missile submarine that will render the entire United States vulnerable. Will it contain U.S. warhead and missile technology?

A: The warheads mated with the PRC's new long-range missiles, including the JL2 Julant submarine-launched ballistic missile, are expected to reflect the influence of stolen U.S. designs. While the JL2 will be able to hit the United States, so will the land-based missiles that the PRC is deploying. And so can the ICBMs currently in silos that have been targeted on the United States. Presently, the PRC can hit Los Angeles, New York and everything in between.

Q How many missiles do they have capable of hitting the United States now?

A: Approximately 20 are deployed. They are city busters. Their only pur-



An intercontinental ballistic missile is launched by China's People's Liberation Army. According to Cox, China has 20 such missiles targeted at U.S. cities.

CHRISTOPHER COX – Dossier of a Counterintelligence Expert

1952: Born in St. Paul, Minn.

1973: Graduated from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

1976: Graduated simultaneously from Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School.

1977: Served as law clerk to U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Herbert Choy in San Francisco and Honolulu.

1978: Named partner in the international law firm of Latham and Watkins in Newport Beach, Calif.

1986: Appointed Senior Associate Counsel to President Reagan.

1988: Elected to U.S. Congress for the 47th District of California.

1992: Married Rebecca Gernhardt. They have three children: Charles, Katie and Kevin.

1995: Wrote Securities Litigation Reform Act enacted in 1995 over President Clinton's veto, barring frivolous lawsuits against companies with falling stock.

1998: Penned Internet Tax Freedom Act enacted in 1998, which prevents taxation of Internet commerce.

1998: Appointed chairman of the special committee on technology transfers to China.



pose is to take out entire cities. This distinguishes them from highly accurate nuclear weapons directed against a country's hard target offensive nuclear capabilities.

Q What more can we do?

A: We must renew our attention to counterintelligence. The Russian espionage directed against our State Department shows that the end of the Cold War ought not to be reason for America to abandon its counterintelligence efforts. Second, American policy makers should be more careful about transferring U.S. military technology to the PRC. We would be foolish to be unprepared for at least a potential challenge. □

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