MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2330

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I send a bill to the desk and ask that it be read a first time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2330) to improve the access and choice of patients to quality affordable health care.

Mr. LOTT. I now ask for a second reading, and I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON TAIWAN

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, last week the Senate made an important statement that we support Taiwan by passing S. Con. Resolution 107. And that we are committed to her people, to her government and to her democratic way of life.

While we have made countless statements in this body before concerning Taiwan, the circumstances which led to S. Con. Res. 107 were different—markedly different—from those in the past. During the President's trip to China last month, President Clinton ''clarified'' his policy toward Taiwan. He indicated while in Beijing—that the United States, in agreeing to the One China policy, had agreed with China that reunification would be peaceful. Further, while in Shanghai, he went a step further and, for the first time, uttered that the United States supports the ''Three Noes'' long advocated by the government of the People's Republic of China. That is: the United States does not support one-Taiwan, one China; the United States does not support Taiwan independence; and the United States does not support Taiwan's membership in nation-state based international organizations.

To understand why this concerns me, Mr. President, one needs to understand the nuances of our federal law and policy toward Taiwan. It is in the Taiwan Relations Act, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President in 1979—back when the United States officially broke off relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan in favor of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Section 2(b)(3) states that ''. . . the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means.'' We have also signed Three Joint Communiques with the PRC which address the Taiwan question. While they all speak to the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question, none goes so far to speak to the question of reunification.

Up to now, the saving grace of American policy toward China and Taiwan, if there were any grace to it, was the ambiguity. China did not know what the United States would do if Taiwan declared independence; or if China attacked. They thought they found out in 1996, when the President rightly sent two aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Straits to show our strength and resolve—while the Chinese conducted missile tests aimed at influencing the national presidential elections in Taiwan. But we have a whole new ballgame, now Mr. President. What a difference a day makes.

Incredible, Mr. President. The Administration then feigns innocence and insists that the President's remarks did not constitute a policy change and that our policy on Taiwan has not changed since 1979—that it is the same now as it was then. I'm sorry, but I have to expose this for what it is—a world of make believe. If you repeat something enough times, eventually people will take it as the gospel. Well not this time.

This is a policy change; and a serious one at that. Considered collectively, which I know the Chinese government is doing, it appears to be a major concession by the United States on the issue of Taiwan. As I said last Tuesday, I know the Chinese; and understand full well that they will use it to their utmost advantage. They will tell Taiwan and the Taiwanese people that if they declare independence, even if by democratic referendum (one person, one vote), that the United States will not support them. Case in point, the Washington Post article last Friday, ''China Tells Taiwan to 'Face Reality' Reunification Talks Urged.'' Although I brought this to the Senate's attention last week, I think the point needs to be reiterated so that people are on notice. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of this article appear in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, so ordered.

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. MURKOWSKI. This article points out that ''Chinese officials have said they plan to use the remarks as a lever to force Taiwan into political talks on reunification.'' So let me make sure I understand this—the leader of the greatest democratic society in the history of mankind, has tacitly agreed to a policy which, in itself, undermines democracy. How and why is this possible? Because political expediency took the place of sound policy and support for one of our strongest allies in an increasingly unstable Asian Theater. Well, Mr. President, I am afraid that these developments may have simply added to the Asian uncertainty, rather than clarified it.

In agreeing to the ''Three Noes'', President Clinton has effectively stated that the United States will not support Taiwan independence even if Beijing agrees to it. Is this the message that was intended to be delivered? Think about it—the United States used to maintain the line that peaceful resolution was all that mattered because this in itself protected the rights of the 21 million people in Taiwan. If they could cut a deal with Beijing that allowed the two to go their separate ways, presumably our earlier policy would be fine with that. Personally, as the PRC becomes more open, I wouldn't rule out the possibility that an agreement could be reached. But President Clinton's remarks have ruled this possibility out—because the United States will not support an independent Taiwan. President Clinton just told the Chinese that they don't need to negotiate with Taiwan because so far as we are concerned an independent Taiwan is not an option.

Although most of my colleagues are not aware of this, there is a terrible contagion going through Taiwan right now—it is very similar to polio. Estimates are that up to one million people may be carrying this bug in some form or another, but it doesn't impact adults. Only the children. In fact, a number of children in Taiwan have died from this disease which, as I understand it, is exacerbated by the heat.

Well, Mr. President, Taiwan has applied for membership in the World Health Organization (WHO)—it is a national priority. But, even this application cannot proceed because membership in the WHO requires statehood. And that huge island off the coast of China, which we recognized officially from 1949 to 1979, doesn't have it. This is ridiculous, and it is about to get a lot worse. So, Taiwan is suffering from an epidemic which is killing children, and it can't get access from WHO specialists who might be able to help because Taiwan is not a sovereign government? Although the PRC has never controlled Taiwan, and despite the fact that Taiwan has developed a strong democracy and thriving, stable free market economy, it cannot particpate in the World Health Organization. Well, Mr. President, this seems yet another time when the facts somehow lose out to the politics.

Mr. President, we have made statements reiterating our support for Taiwan, but it is time for us to back them up. The Senate should pass S. Con. Resolution 30 calling on the Administration to support Taiwan's bid to take part in international organizations; and we should expand it to include the World Health Organization. We should take every opportunity in this body to force the issue, so that our commitment to Taiwan does not ring hollow as Beijing's steps up the pressure.

EXHIBIT 1

CHINA TELLS TAIWAN TO FACE REALITY—REUNIFICATION TALKS URGED

(By John Pomfret)

BEIJING, July 9—China urged Taiwan today to ''face reality'' and agree to talks on eventual reunification with China following comments by President Clinton that the United States will not support an independent Taiwan.

Taiwan, meanwhile, announced it had agreed to a visit by a senior Beijing negotiator to prepare for resumption of high-level dialogue between the two rivals, separated by the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait.

The developments indicate that after a three-year freeze, talks could begin as early as this fall between the two sides. They also underscore the important role the United States has played in forcing Taiwan to the bargaining table. Clinton's statement, during his recent nine-day trip to China, was taken as a significant defeat in Taiwan even though U.S. officials contended it was simply a reiteration of U.S. policy.

Clinton's June 30 remarks in Shanghai made clear the United States would not support any formal independence bid by the island of 21 million people, or a policy backing ''one China, one Taiwan,'' or ''two Chinas.'' Clinton also said the United States will oppose any Taiwanese bid to join international bodies that accept only sovereign states as members.

Although the policy was first enunciated in October, Clinton himself had never said it publicly before. Thus, it was taken as a major defeat in Taiwan, which relies on the United States for most of its political support and weapons. In Washington, Clinton's statement has drawn some criticism. On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) called Clinton's remarks counterproductive, and he threatened unspecified congressional action.

The Beijing government, which views Taiwan as a renegade Chinese province, has said it is satisfied with Clinton's remarks, even though it had tried to have Clinton commit them to writing. Chinese officials have said they plan to use the remarks as a lever to force Taiwan into political talks on reunification. Taiwanese officials say they want to limit any new talks to specific issues, such as immigration, cross-border crime, fishing rights and protection of investments. China rejects this limited approach and insists a broader discussion of reunification is necessary for improved ties.

Taiwan and China ostensibly have been separated since 1895, when Japan occupied the island following its victory over Imperial China in the Sino-Japanese War. In 1949, Nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan from the mainland after his forces lost a civil war to Chinese Communist forces led by Mao Zedong. Since then, the two sides have moved further away from each other—in both economic and political development.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Tang Guoqiang said Clinton's statement has ''positive implications for the resolution of the Taiwan question,'' and he added: ''We hope that Taiwan authorities will get a clear understanding of the situation, face reality and place importance on the national interest.

''Similarly, the official China Daily quoted one of Beijing's top negotiators with Taiwan as saying that Clinton's remarks had helped China. ''This has provided favorable conditions for the development of cross-strait relations,'' said Tang Shubei, vice president of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait. ''But cross-strait issues will ultimately be solved by the Chinese people.'' Meanwhile, that group's Taiwanese counterpart, the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation, informed the Chinese association that its deputy secretary general, Li Yafei, could visit Taiwan July 24–31. Li's visit is to be followed by a reciprocal trip to China by the leader of the Taiwan foundation, Koo Chen-fu. In June, Beijing invited Koo to visit China sometime in September or October, and Koo said later he plans to go in mid-September.

In 1993, Koo and Chinese association leader Wang Daohan met in Singapore in a landmark gathering that signaled warming ties between the old rivals. But after two years of improving relations, the ties collapsed in 1995 when Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui obtained a visa to visit the United States for the 25th reunion of his Cornell University class.

China launched a series of military exercises off the Taiwanese coast in 1995 and 1996, lobbing cruise missiles into the area. In 1996, the United States dispatched two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region as a warning to China not to contemplate a military solution.

RUTH E. CROXTON

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have on my right an obituary. This obituary is very meaningful to the people of a small village in Alaska called King Cove.

Ruth E. Croxton, 29, was killed July 15, 1981, when her twin-engine plane crashed and burned on a hillside. The plane was on approach to the King Cove, Alaska airstrip—in what was called ''typical Aleutian weather.'' Five other people died in the accident, including the pilot, Ernest D. Fife.

Ms. Croxton was an anthropologist, a pilot, and a 1974 graduate of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. Born in Salem, Ore., her family moved to Alaska when she was six years old. She was graduated from Juneau-Douglas High School in 1969.

Ms. Croxton and her pilot were bringing four cannery workers into King Cove but would have been evacuating a medical case once they reached the Aleutian village.

She is survived by Mr. and Mrs. Loren Croxton of Petersburg; a sister, Mary, of Barrow; and her maternal grandfather, William Older of Livermore, Calif.

Ms. Croxton died along with her passengers because there is no road between King Cove and Cold Bay.

How many more people must die before we do something about it?

I yield the floor.

(Mr. GRAMS assumed the Chair.)

DISPOSAL OF WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, Senator ROD GRAMS and Senator FRED THOMPSON and I traveled to Russia, preceded by 3 days in France. Senator GRAMS accompanied me to France; Senator THOMPSON, on the Russian part of the trip. We went to France and Russia to do very distinct things. In France, we wanted to talk about nuclear power and the nuclear fuel cycle, and if I have time this afternoon I will address that. If not, I will do that on another day. I would like to proceed with what we went to Russia for and what we determined and what recommendations and thoughts I have that come from that trip.

Our primary goal when we went to Russia was to explore and develop options for the rapid disposition of Russian weapons-surplus plutonium. These materials represent a potential clear and present danger to the security of the United States and the world. The 50 tons that Russia has declared as surplus to their weapons program represents enough nuclear material for well over 5,000 nuclear weapons. Diversion of even small quantities of this material could fuel the nuclear weapons ambitions of many rogue nations and many nations in general.

During our visit, we discovered that there was a very critical window of opportunity during which the United States can address the proliferation risks of this stock of weapons-surplus plutonium. We have urged that the administration, our President and our Vice President, seize on this opportunity. No one can reliably predict how long this window will stay open. We must act while it is open.

Unclassified sources estimate that the United States and Russia currently have about 260 tons of plutonium—100 tons here and 160 tons in Russia. Much of this material is in classified weapons components which could be readily built into weapons.

While we saw significant ongoing progress on control of nuclear weapons in Russia, much of which was with the assistance of the United States of America through our national laboratories, our visit confirmed the dire economic conditions in their closed cities, the cities that they used to provide ample resources on a high priority because they were the source of their nuclear strength. These conditions fuel concerns of serious magnitude.

The United States has an immediate interest in ensuring that all Russian weapons-grade plutonium, as well as ours, as well as highly enriched uranium that is theirs and that is ours, is secure. Furthermore, Mr. President, as soon as possible, that material must be converted into unclassified forms that cannot be quickly reassembled into nuclear weapons. Then the materials must be placed in safeguarded storage.

These actions, plus a reduction in Russia's large nuclear weapons remanufacturing capability, are necessary precursors to future arms control limits on nuclear warhead numbers.

The United States and Russia have declared 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium as surplus. Current administration plans have asked in the budget for Congress to proceed with a program to use 3 tons per year of our surplus as mixed oxide, generally referred to as MOX fuel, for commercial nuclear reactors, while the Russians are focused on a program that would not use much of their plutonium as MOX. The process that is going on of negotiating between America and Russia is that Russia would have only 1.3 tons converted.

So to summarize the concerns with the efforts thus far, I state the following with very grave concerns. No bilateral agreement is in place to control