

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 land-

mark 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