BURMA MILITARY PURCHASES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the illegitimate regime in Rangoon has once again shown its true colors. On this Memorial Day, I want to draw the attention of my colleagues to gathering storm clouds in Southeast Asia.

According to Jane’s Defence Weekly, Burma’s State Peace and Development Council, SPDC, has signed a contract to purchase 10 MIG-29 fighter aircraft from the Russian Aircraft-building Corporation. These fighters were built in the early 1980s and are being stored at the Lakhovitsy machine-building plant. The total cost of the 10 MIGs to the SPDC is $130 million, 30 percent of which will be paid up front and the balance settled over the next decade.

This purchase is troubling for several reasons. First, it is clear that the junta has not made the welfare of the people of Burma a priority. From an economic perspective, the acquisition of MiG fighters adds costs. The international community has made it clear that Burma is the leading violator of human rights and dignity. This purchase serves as evidence that the junta is neither committed to peace nor the development of Burma.

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RACISM

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today I rise to call attention to racism in our society.

There are certain moments when we are reminded that it exists, and that it is a very ugly thing. Recently, the Committee of 100, a group of prominent Chinese-Americans, published a survey that measured attitudes toward Asian-Americans, especially those of Chinese descent. It was the first such comprehensive survey—the group wanted to establish a baseline that could be compared to future studies so that we can determine whether racist attitudes against Chinese-Americans are rising or falling.

The result of this first survey was distressing. Apparently, one-quarter of Americans hold “very negative attitudes” toward Chinese-Americans, and one-third think that Chinese-Americans are more likely to be loyal to China than to the United States. Stop and think about that: a charge of disloyalty is a sensational accusation when it is leveled by one American against another. This survey suggests that 90 million people in this country accuse millions of their fellow Americans of disloyalty.

The same poll also tested attitudes toward Asian-Americans in general, with similar results. Twenty-four percent of Americans would be upset if someone in their family married an Asian-American; 23 percent would be uncomfortable voting for an Asian-American president; and 17 percent would be disappointed if an Asian-American moved into their neighborhood.

Prejudice toward Chinese-Americans, and toward Asian-Americans in general, is not unique. Immigrants from all parts of the world have been stereotyped and reviled at some point in our history, and many groups continue to face these attitudes today. I chose to focus on Chinese-Americans today only because the survey so surprised and concerned me.

Chinese immigrants began entering the country in large numbers in the 1850’s. They were initially welcomed in the mining town of Butte, but by the 1880’s, they faced discrimination and hate attacks. Ads in newspapers appeared with the slogan “Chinese need not apply.” Anti-peddling ordinances were enacted against Chinese grocers. In fact, the town’s fourth mayor rode to victory on the slogan “The Chinese must go.”

There is no single description of a Chinese-American. Some Chinese-Americans were already wealthy and well-educated when they arrived here. Others arrived in penury and followed the American path to education and success. Some Chinese-Americans continue to celebrate their Chinese origin. Others deny, or have forgotten completely, the cultural heritage of their ancestors. Yet all are Americans.

Cruz Reynoso, the first Mexican-American to serve on California’s Supreme Court, put it this way:

Amricans are not now, and never have been, one people linguistically or ethnically. America is a political union—not a cultural, linguistic, religious, or racial union. It is acceptance of our constitutional ideas of democracy, equality, and freedom which acts as a unifier for us as Americans.

Political scientist Carl Friedrich made a similar point when he wrote in 1933: “To be an American is an ideal, while to be a Frenchman is a fact.” An American is an American because she embraces the founding political ideals of our Nation.

It is the responsibility of all of us, as the elected representatives of the state to view the sale in a positive light.