

National News

Perry sees danger in U.S.-China relations

"I am more pessimistic about China-U.S. relations than I have been in several decades," stated former U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry, in a speech at the Asia Society in Hong Kong, the *South China Morning Post* reported on April 12.

Concerning the Taiwan Strait, Perry said, "I fear the situation could lead to a crisis more dangerous than any of the other crises," alluding to 1996, when he sent two U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups to the Strait.

Perry said that a series of incidents had set back U.S. engagement of China. These were the failure of Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji to get U.S. agreement to having China enter the World Trade Organization, when he visited the United States during the spring; the U.S. bombing of China's Belgrade Embassy; and Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's asserting "state-to-state" relations between China and Taiwan, Perry said.

Perry said he considered that the threat to U.S.-China relations arose from China's missile deployment on the Fujian coast, rather than from Taiwan wanting to join a U.S. Theater Missile Defense system.

Clinton: 'We saved the Constitution'

President Bill Clinton, speaking to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 13, affirmed that his actions during his impeachment trial "saved the Constitution."

With regard to the impeachment, he said, "I have a slightly different take on it than many of you do—or at least than the Washington media does." The President acknowledged that he had made "a terrible personal mistake" and that he has paid for it. Referring to the manner in which he was entrapped during the Paula Jones case, he said that "I gave away half of my life's savings to settle a lawsuit I had won, because I wanted to go back to work being President. And we now know that the questions asked were asked in bad faith, because they knew the answer and they knew it had nothing to do with the lawsuit—something hardly anybody ever points out."

"But on the impeachment, let me tell you, I am proud of what we did there, because I think we saved the Constitution of the United States. I had to defeat the Republican revolution in 1994, when they shut down the government, and we beat back the Contract on America. Then we had to beat it in the impeachment issue.

"I'm not ashamed of the fact that they impeached me," Clinton said defiantly. "That was their decision, not mine. And it was wrong. As a matter of law, the Constitution, and history, it was wrong. And I am glad I didn't quit, and I'm glad we fought it. And the American people stuck with me, and I am profoundly grateful."

Clinton said that he considers the impeachment to be "one of the major chapters in my defeat of the revolution Mr. Gingrich led, that would have taken this country in a very different direction than it's going today, and also would have changed the Constitution forever, in a way that would have been very destructive to the American people."

Report finds no problem with agro-biotechnology

A report issued on April 13 by the Congressional Committee on Science's Subcommittee on Basic Research concludes that there is no significant difference between plant varieties created using agricultural biotechnology and similar plants created using traditional crossbreeding. The report, "Seeds of Opportunity," summarizes a series of hearings held by the committee, and was prepared by Rep. Nick Smith (R-Mich.), who chairs the Subcommittee on Basic Research. It recommends that the regulations at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the proposed regulations at the Environmental Protection Agency be changed to focus on the characteristics of a plant, and not the process used to develop it.

According to Smith's news release, the report addresses many of the concerns surrounding agricultural biotechnology, and "concludes that plants and foods produced using agricultural biotechnology pose risks no greater than those for plants and foods developed using traditional methods."

Smith comments that "the real value of this report is that it has let the voice of the scientific community come through unfiltered to address these contentious issues. In

the case of agricultural biotechnology, the scientific community is as united as I have ever seen it on any major issue."

S.C. Senate votes to remove Confederate flag

The South Carolina Senate voted on April 12, by 36-7, to remove the Confederate flag from the top of the capitol, where it has flown next to the state and U.S. flags. Those who voted against were all Republicans.

The compromise legislation calls for the flag to be placed on a 20 foot flagpole on the state capitol grounds behind a monument to Confederate soldiers that is higher. "This is one more hurdle that has been overcome," said Democratic Gov. Jim Hodges, who supports the flag removal.

The South Carolina NAACP has issued a statement saying that it rejects the compromise legislation, and it will maintain the tourism boycott. Its board voted unanimously to reject the compromise, because the flag will still be on "sovereign ground."

The bill must now also be passed by the South Carolina House, which is dominated by Republicans.

Army seeks French aid in restructuring plan

The French Army is advising the U.S. Army on how to create "light intervention brigades," according to defense correspondent Jacques Isnard, writing in the daily *Le Monde* on April 12.

According to the report, U.S. Gen. Paul Kern has been assigned to conceptualize the "new organization" by Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki. Shinseki recently said that heavy divisions are a remnant of the Cold War, and now the United States requires capacities for rapid response, "forces that are deployable, agile, multi-directional, and susceptible of surviving and lasting" on the ground, and capable of responding to the totality of operations that will be required in the new century.

According to Isnard, the Kosovo war was a driving force in this re-thinking, because the American army was criticized there for its slowness.