

U.S.-China Relations: Mid-Air Collision Cripples Sino-U.S. Relations

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As expected, U.S.-China relations were strained in the second quarter of 2001 as a result of U.S. approval of a robust arms package for Taiwan, a three-day transit visit to New York by Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian, and Bush administration fervor for developing missile defense systems. What took the two countries by surprise, however, was the April 1 accidental collision of a Chinese fighter with a U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane approximately 60 miles from China's coastline. The handling of the incident by the Chinese and U.S. governments created negative feelings and stoked nationalist sentiment in both countries. Its impact on the bilateral relationship still lingers. The plane collision stalled progress in the bilateral relationship for several months, except in the economic realm. In fact, the only bright spot in relations was the resolution of the remaining issues holding up China's entry to the World Trade Organization, reviving hopes that China's membership in the global trade club can be completed before the end of this year.

Chinese Fighter Collides with U.S. Surveillance Plane over South China Sea

Early in the morning on April 1, a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane with a crew of 24 onboard was intercepted by two F-8 Chinese fighter aircraft as it was conducting a routine flight over the South China Sea, gathering signals intelligence from various radio and telecommunication sources in China. One of the Chinese fighters collided with the EP-3, causing the F-8 and its pilot to crash into the sea, and damaging the U.S. plane's propeller and nose cone, forcing it to land at the closest airport, Lingshui Airforce Base on Hainan Island. Both Beijing and Washington agreed that the incident occurred over international waters, but they disputed who was at fault in the collision. The pilot of the EP-3 claimed that the turboprop was flying "straight and steady, holding altitude, heading away from Hainan Island on auto-pilot when the accident occurred." After two attempts to "buzz" the U.S. aircraft – pass under the EP-3 and then make near-vertical climbs in front of it – the F-8 pilot made a judgment error and bumped into the U.S. plane. According to the Chinese account, the EP-3 made a sudden left bank and turn, flying his plane into the F-8.

China held the EP-3 crew for 11 days while it negotiated the terms of their release with the U.S. State Department and the U.S. embassy in Beijing. Although China initially demanded that the U.S. provide an official apology, bear full responsibility for the

incident, and agree to cease conducting aerial reconnaissance operations against China, Chinese leaders settled for less. They accepted a letter signed by then-Ambassador Joseph Prueher in which he conveyed the U.S. government's "sincere regret" over the death of the Chinese pilot and also said we were "very sorry" that the crippled U.S. aircraft had entered Chinese airspace and landed in China without permission. Throughout the ordeal, President Bush kept a generally low profile, opting to not contact Chinese President Jiang Zemin directly via the hotline, which had been set up in 1998 to provide a direct communications link between the White House and Zhongnanhai. Following return of the EP-3 crew, however, senior U.S. officials wasted little time in distancing themselves from expressions of sorrow and regret, with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld presenting videotape to a Pentagon press conference showing how aggressive Chinese flying tactics had repeatedly endangered the lives of U.S. crews.

Almost two months after the plane collision, U.S. and Chinese negotiators finally agreed on a plan to remove the damaged EP-3 surveillance aircraft and return it to the United States. Beijing refused to allow the U.S. to repair the plane and fly it out, claiming that such a solution would be a grave insult to the Chinese people since the plane had been spying on China and illegally landed on Chinese territory. The U.S. balked at Beijing's proposal that the plane be cut up into pieces and shipped out in crates. Instead, the two sides agreed that the plane would be dismantled and flown out of China in two AN-124 cargo planes, which the U.S. subsequently hired from Russia. The process is expected to take approximately one month, with the plane removed from Chinese soil by mid-July.

In both China and the U.S., the plane collision strengthened the positions of hardliners and virulent nationalists, and generally created negative feelings. Chinese internet "chat rooms" were filled with anti-U.S. invective while American talk shows lambasted Beijing for concocting an incredulous version of the accident that pinned blame on the U.S. pilot. Congress introduced a number of resolutions demanding that the U.S. take action against China, including opposition to Beijing's bid to hold the 2008 Olympics and even to deny the continuation of normal trade status for China. (Recently, President Bush announced that the U.S. government would remain neutral China's Olympic bid.)

Once both sides approved the agreement on the return of the American plane, Beijing expressed its hope that Sino-U.S. relations could return to a "normal track." American officials reaffirmed U.S. interests in a constructive relationship with China, but reminded Beijing that Washington would not conduct business as usual after American servicemen and women had been needlessly detained for 11 days in China. In testimony presented to the Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific of the House International Relations Committee on June 12, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly observed that "Recent events have called into question where we stand in our relationship with China and where we want to go."

A Robust Arms Package Approved for Taiwan

On April 23, President Bush approved the largest package of arms sales to Taiwan since the first George Bush sold F-16 fighters to the island nearly a decade ago. The robust \$5

billion package included four Kidd-class destroyers, 12 P-3C Orion antisubmarine aircraft, eight diesel submarines, Harpoon anti-ship missiles, advanced torpedoes, and minesweeping helicopters. Taipei had also sought to purchase advanced Arleigh Burke-class destroyers equipped with Aegis air defense radar, but the president opted to defer that decision, in part to avoid another rift with Beijing in the first few months of his administration. China viewed the Aegis-equipped destroyers as a potential component of a future missile defense system as well as a harbinger of closer U.S.-Taiwan defense cooperation and therefore vociferously opposed the sale. Beijing issued a strong protest after the arms package was announced, claiming that the sale constituted an “open provocation to China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” China further warned that the Bush administration’s action would “seriously impact bilateral cooperation in the nonproliferation field” and would have a “destructive” effect on Sino-U.S. relations.

Privately, however, Chinese officials were relieved that the Aegis system had not been approved and viewed the deferral as confirmation that President Bush seeks a constructive relationship with China. They also remained hopeful that Taiwan would be unable to acquire the submarines. The U.S. has not built diesel-powered subs in more than 40 years. The two principal sub manufacturers today are Germany and the Netherlands, and they may not be willing to put their relations with China at risk by selling the subs to Taiwan. Some Chinese even suggest that the decision to approve the submarines for Taiwan was a stroke of genius on the part of the Bush administration because it sent a reassuring signal to Taipei that the United States would maintain its commitment to the island’s defense, but would never be consummated and thus would not provoke Beijing’s ire.

Following the announcement of the arms sales decision, President Bush stated that his administration would end the policy in effect for nearly 20 years of annually reviewing Taiwan’s defense needs and instead would approve Taiwan’s weapons on an as-needed basis. This decision provoked worries from both sides of the Strait. Taipei lamented the loss of the politically symbolic annual arms-sales talks and Beijing worried that the new policy would result in the sale of more weapons to the island, including the Aegis system, which could now be approved any time.

Bush’s Doctrine for Taiwan’s Defense

On the occasion of President Bush’s first 100 days in office, he astounded long-time observers of U.S. policy toward China by telling an interviewer on *Good Morning, America* that the United States would do “whatever it took” to help Taiwan defend itself, including deploying U.S. military forces to defend Taiwan. This statement charted a new direction for U.S. policy because the Taiwan Relations Act, passed by Congress in 1979 to enable preservation of unofficial relations with Taiwan, makes no promise of U.S. intervention in defense of Taiwan. It stipulates only that the U.S. will provide to Taiwan defense articles “in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.” Although the Act states that any military action against Taiwan would be a matter of “grave concern” to the United States, it only requires the president to consult with Congress should such military action take place.

During the presidential campaign, Bush had criticized the 29-year policy of “strategic ambiguity” of the U.S. role in a possible cross-Strait conflict and his remark suggested that the United States was ready to abandon this policy in favor of a policy of “strategic clarity.” Later that day, Bush appeared on CNN to clarify his earlier remarks and put them in the context of his administration’s broader policy toward China and Taiwan. He reaffirmed that the U.S. “will help Taiwan defend itself,” but also reiterated his administration’s support for “one China” and noted that the U.S. expects the dispute between Taipei and Beijing “to be resolved peacefully.” Moreover, Bush publicly stated for the first time that a declaration of independence by Taiwan “is not part of the one China policy.” At the State Department, spokesman Phillip Reeker said there had been no change in policy. “Our policy hasn’t changed today. It didn’t change yesterday. It didn’t change last year. It hasn’t changed, in terms of what we have followed since 1979 with the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act,” Reeker maintained.

In Beijing, President Bush’s statements likely confirmed the opinion that U.S. intervention on behalf of Taiwan would follow a Chinese attack on the island. That judgment was not new, however. It had been reached in the aftermath of the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, when the U.S. sent two aircraft carrier battle groups off the coast of Taiwan in response to Chinese missile firings across the Strait. The impact of Bush’s remarks on Beijing’s assessment of U.S. intentions toward China was nevertheless significant. The president’s insistence that the U.S. would do whatever is necessary to defend Taiwan increased Chinese skepticism that the United States would ever countenance the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. It also intensified Beijing’s fears that in the short term, Sino-U.S. relations would remain tense and unstable, and in the long term, a military confrontation over Taiwan might be unavoidable. Meanwhile, the government in Taipei warmly embraced the Bush administration’s increased clarity, stating that the president’s statement made the U.S. commitment to stability in the region “more convincing.”

Military Contacts Reviewed on a Case-by-Case Basis

U.S.-China military ties virtually ground to a halt following the forced landing of the EP-3 reconnaissance plane on Hainan Island and China’s apparent unwillingness to release the crew. In a mid-April meeting between President Bush and his national security team, a decision was reached to review all proposed contacts between the U.S. and Chinese militaries on a case-by-case basis. There was confusion at the Pentagon, however, when Chris Williams, a senior aide, allegedly misinterpreted Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s instructions and signed a directive on April 30 that suspended all military-to-military contacts with China. The White House spokesman’s office intervened after reading about the suspension because it considered a blanket suspension to be inconsistent with the defense secretary’s policy.

No direct bilateral contact between U.S. and Chinese military officers was authorized in April or May. A trip to China by Vice Adm. Paul Gaffney, the president of the U.S. National Defense University, which had been scheduled to occur in late May, was

canceled. U.S. officers attending a multinational seminar on relief operations to which Chinese officers were also invited were instructed by Rumsfeld to “minimize contact” with their Chinese counterparts. According to Pentagon officials, the new policy directive was not solely a result of the April 1 mid-air collision, but rather stemmed from the judgment that the military relationship has been imbalanced in the past, with the Chinese side obtaining greater access to U.S. military facilities and information than the U.S. was able to achieve. The Bush administration seeks to strike a more balanced relationship with the Chinese military and will insist on greater Chinese transparency and reciprocity.

President Bush endorsed the policy of case-by-case review, saying that “we’re going to review all opportunities to interface with the Chinese. And if it enhances our relationship, it might make sense. If it’s a useless exercise and it doesn’t make the relationship any better, then we won’t do that.” Some Capitol Hill officials instead backed a ban on the postponement of all military contacts and insisted that the Williams memo accurately represented the administration’s policy as conveyed to them in extensive briefings that portrayed the suspension of military ties as part of an administration move to take a harder line with China. Nevertheless, in early June, following the agreement between China and the United States to return the surveillance plane to the U.S., Secretary Rumsfeld signaled that military exchanges with China would slowly resume, although they would continue to be subject to case-by-case review. In an interview with reporters traveling with him to Europe, the defense secretary said, “Now, some [exchanges] are down the road,” noting that it sometimes takes weeks or longer to arrange for contacts such as visits by military officers and warship exchanges.

In response to the collision between the U.S. reconnaissance plane and the Chinese fighter jet, Beijing selectively denied Washington’s requests for ship visits and military plane landings in Hong Kong. On April 17, a U.S. Navy Lockheed P-3C Orion submarine-hunting plane was refused permission to land in Hong Kong on a routine training session. In mid-May, China denied a request for the USS Inchon, a mine countermeasures command and control ship, to make a routine ship visit in Hong Kong scheduled for the following month. Two other visits were approved, however – one by a military passenger jet carrying U.S. congress members and another by the research and training vessel Golden Bear, operated by California State University.

The military relationship was dealt yet another blow when the U.S. Army determined in the first week of May that “U.S. troops shall not wear berets made in China or berets made with Chinese content.” The berets had been obtained under a contract with a British firm that, unbeknownst to the Pentagon, was making them in China. Roughly 600,000 berets had been contracted for, and about half of those had been delivered. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz noted in a public statement that the Army and the Defense Logistics Agency had been directed “to recall previously distributed berets and dispose of the stock.”

Deep Divisions over Missile Defense

President Bush dispatched Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs James Kelly to Beijing in mid-May to make the case for building and deploying missile defense systems. Beijing was upset that Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage opted to exclude China from his itinerary, choosing to stop in Japan, South Korea, and India, but it nevertheless agreed to cordially welcome Kelly and exchange views on missile defense. Kelly held one day of talks with Foreign Ministry officials and had a discussion over dinner with three Chinese scholars with expertise in arms control. Both sides considered the consultations valuable and they agreed to conduct further discussion on missile defense in the future, but their differences were not narrowed.

In a statement issued prior to his departure from Beijing, Kelly noted that he had stressed with his Chinese counterparts that U.S. plans for a missile defense system were aimed at defending against threats or attacks from rogue states as well as from accidental or unauthorized launches. U.S. missile defenses would not pose a threat to China, Kelly maintained. He characterized the consultations as “a good beginning to what both sides agreed would be a continuing dialogue.” In addition to missile defense, the two sides discussed other bilateral issues, including differences over Taiwan and human rights, as well as the overall situation in the Asia Pacific region. Kelly observed in his departure statement, “It was clear from these talks that we have many areas of shared interest.”

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman stridently criticized U.S. missile defense plans, saying that the proposed defenses would undermine global strategic stability, would be detrimental to the mutual trust and cooperation among the major powers, would obstruct international efforts to promote disarmament and curb proliferation, and would trigger a new arms race. “China holds that the plan is harmful to other nations and brings no benefit to the United States itself,” the spokesman asserted. If the United States pursues the plan, he said, it will “lift a stone only to drop it on its own feet.” The spokesman indicated that China hoped to persuade Washington to abandon the missile defense plan by diplomatic means, but he also warned that Beijing “would not sit idly by and watch its national interests suffer harm.”

Chinese efforts to rally opposition to U.S. missile defense plans continued in early June at the 66-nation Conference on Disarmament where Chinese Ambassador Hu Xiaodi proposed a treaty to ban weapons in outer space. Hu submitted a working paper to the Plenary of the CD entitled “Possible Elements of the Future International Legal Instrument on the Prevention of the Weaponization of Outer Space.” Beijing also joined with the foreign ministers of the countries of the “Shanghai Five” – the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of Tajikistan – in late April in condemning any attempt to undermine the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. And in a mid-June summit meeting in Shanghai, Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated their commonly held opposition to missile defense.

Other Irritants: Tibet, Transits, and Detention of U.S. Citizens

Over Chinese objections, the Bush administration issued a visa to Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian and permitted him to transit the United States twice, bracketing a 10-day trip to five countries in Central America. In May, Chen spent two nights in New York City where he met with New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and had private meetings with about 20 members of Congress who flew to New York on a plane provided by the Defense Department. In contrast to the Clinton administration, which had actively discouraged lawmakers from meeting with Chen when he passed through Los Angeles last year, the Bush administration approved the requests on the grounds that any meetings between members of Congress and foreign leaders “advance our interests.” Chen was also permitted to tour the New York Stock Exchange and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, activities that would have likely been disallowed in the past. On President Chen’s return from Central America, he spent one night in Houston, where he was greeted by Mayor Lee P. Brown and accompanied by senior Republican House member Tom DeLay to an Astros baseball game.

President Bush also invited Beijing’s ire when he met the Dalai Lama at the end of his nine-city tour of the United States. In a clear departure from his predecessor, Bill Clinton, who arranged to “drop by” a scheduled meeting between the Dalai Lama and Vice President Al Gore, Bush held a planned session with the Tibetan spiritual leader in the Yellow Oval Room of the White House residence. It did not go unnoticed in Beijing that the meeting took place on the day that the Chinese government marks the 50th anniversary of what it calls the “peaceful liberation” of Tibet. After the meeting, the White House spokesman issued a statement noting that President Bush had reiterated the strong commitment of the United States to support the preservation of Tibet’s unique religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and the protection of the human rights of all Tibetans. The president promised to seek ways to encourage dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama and expressed his hope that the Chinese government would respond favorably. The Dalai Lama also met with Secretary of State Colin Powell and Paula Dobriansky, who was designated as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues a week prior to the Dalai Lama’s arrival in Washington, D.C. The selection of Dobriansky, concomitantly under secretary for global affairs, to fill the position mandated by Congress in 1997 marked an upgrade from the Clinton administration when an assistant secretary of state held the post.

The arrest and detention of U.S. citizens born in China is increasingly becoming a major irritant in Sino-U.S. relations. Since late last year, six U.S. citizens – none of them prominent critics of China – have been questioned and detained for varying lengths of time by China’s Ministry of State Security. In May, Li Shaomin, a U.S citizen and Chinese American business professor at City University of Hong Kong was formally charged with spying for Taiwan. Another U.S. citizen, Wu Jianmin, a freelance journalist, remains in custody, also on suspicion of espionage. A number of Chinese citizens with permanent residency status in the United States are also being detained on espionage charges, including Gao Zhan, a green card holder who is a sociologist affiliated with American University. In April, the State Department issued a travel advisory urging U.S. citizens and green card holders originally born in China “to

carefully evaluate their risk of being detained," even if they have traveled to China many times before without being harassed.

U.S. concern about the imprisonment of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents and China's crackdown on religious groups were among the topics of discussion when Assistant Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong visited Washington, D.C. in late June. As the two sides begin preparations for the October visit by President Bush to the APEC meeting in Shanghai followed by a presidential summit in Beijing, U.S. officials urged the Chinese to pave the way for an improvement in Sino-U.S. relations by releasing those unjustly detained. A stop in the Chinese capital by Secretary of State Powell during his planned regional tour in July was discussed, but no date was set. In a potentially important step forward for Sino-U.S. relations, an agreement was reached to hold bilateral policy planning talks on July 1-2, which will provide an opportunity for U.S. and Chinese officials to conduct a *tour d'horizon* in which they can explore the extent to which their interests coincide or diverge around the globe.

One Step Closer to WTO Accession

Sharp policy disagreements between the U.S. and China on arms sales to Taiwan, missile defense, Beijing's detention of several Chinese American academics on spying charges, and the mid-air collision over the South China Sea did not preclude progress on trade and economic issues. Both governments recognized their common interests in economic cooperation and sought to separate trade and economic matters from other contentious issues in the relationship. This approach produced dividends in early June when U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Zoellick and China's Foreign Trade Minister Shi Guangsheng resolved the outstanding issues holding up Beijing entry to the World Trade Organization. In bilateral talks held on June 4-8 on the sidelines of an APEC trade ministers meeting in Shanghai, consensus was reached on a range of issues, including domestic support for agriculture and the rights of U.S. businesses in such fields as insurance, distribution, and retail operations. The agreement revived hopes that China can join the global trade club within months and take part in rule-setting negotiations by the group's members slated for November in Qatar.

Efforts to draft a document stating the terms of China's membership foundered early this year on differences between Washington and Beijing over the degree to which China will be allowed to use subsidies to support its farmers. China had wanted the freedom to offer its farmers subsidies worth up to 10 percent of the value of their output, the level set by the trade organization for developing economies. The United States had wanted to limit that to a maximum of 5 percent, the same restriction it operates under as a developed economy. The U.S. position derived from concern that Beijing would permit significant subsidies for specialty crops such as honey, garlic, and apples that could affect U.S. producers. In a compromise, China's subsidies will be capped at 8.5 percent, both for general support and for each specific product. The breakthrough was enabled in part by Beijing's willingness to not invoke the WTO provision that allows a country to describe itself as a "developing country," but instead to go along with the U.S. position of discussing each issue on a "pragmatic case-by-case basis."

In the area of insurance, the two sides agreed that China would eliminate over a five-year period a 20-percent cession on policy premiums to a state-owned monopoly, which the U.S. contended undercut the 1999 market access accord. An agreement was also reached in the area of large-scale commercial insurance risk that lowered the level below which U.S. companies could be barred from the Chinese domestic market from \$120,000 to \$50,000 over a three-year period.

The next step in Beijing's quest for WTO membership is a working party meeting in Geneva scheduled to be held June 28 to July 4, where the various agreements China has negotiated bilaterally with various trading partners will be "multilateralized" to create a document outlining China's obligations as part of its accession agreement to the WTO. Negotiating this accession protocol is expected to take three to six months, leaving a narrow window of opportunity for entry this year. A press release on the Shanghai talks issued by the Office of the United States Trade Representative declared the understanding a "win-win" result for China and the United States. USTR maintained that the agreements would "propel China further along the path of economic reform, the rule of law, and toward a commercially viable WTO agreement." It also described the deal as a "victory for American farmers and ranchers, Americans with export-related jobs, and American businesses with operations in China."

The Road Ahead

China's relatively muted response to the string of objectionable actions by the Bush administration in the second quarter of 2001, including the decision to authorize a robust package of arms sales to Taiwan, the very public "transit" visit in New York by Taiwan's president, and President Bush's meeting with the exiled Dalai Lama, masks intensifying concern in the Chinese leadership about the future of Sino-U.S. relations. Beijing is worried that the Bush administration views China as an adversary and is planning to redirect U.S. military power to better enable the U.S. to counter and defend against threats from China in the future. Reports that the U.S. is planning to assign a larger number of its strategic warheads to targets in China and develop new long-range weapons to counter China's military power have exacerbated Chinese fears.

Safeguarding China's peaceful international environment, which, above all means preserving good relations with Washington, remains a prerequisite for Beijing to achieve its preeminent long-term goal of economic development. In the short run, the Chinese are determined to join the WTO, win the bid for the 2008 Olympics, and host a successful APEC summit meeting. With these goals in mind, Chinese leaders have opted to not retaliate against Bush administration moves that they judge to be breaches of Sino-U.S. agreements and infringements of Chinese sovereignty. Beijing correctly calculates that a tough Chinese response to early administration actions would provide ammunition to "anti-China hardliners" in Washington and possibly lock the U.S. and China in a pattern of confrontation. Chinese leaders are instead sending signals to the United States that they wish to put the EP-3 incident in the past and get the bilateral relationship on the right track. In mid-June, for example, President Jiang's interest in restoring U.S.-China

relations was conveyed to President Bush by President Putin when the two met in Slovenia.

Six months into the Bush administration, U.S. policy toward China is still in the painfully slow process of formulation. President Bush and his senior aides have asserted that the U.S. wants a productive and fruitful relationship with China. There are signs, however, that conflicting impulses within the administration could complicate policy making toward Beijing. There is yet no clear vision of Bush's priorities and goals toward China, or toward East Asia in general for that matter. Hopefully, the administration will seize the opportunities presented in the coming quarter and beyond to fashion as well as publicly articulate a clear policy that embeds China in its broader regional and global context.

As the Bush-Jiang summit approaches, the onus is on both Washington and Beijing to seek ways to stabilize bilateral relations by developing convergent interests between the two countries while narrowing and managing persisting differences.

Chronology of U.S.-China Relations **April – June 2001**

Apr. 1, 2001: (Beijing time): A U.S. Navy maritime patrol aircraft on a routine surveillance mission in international airspace over the South China Sea collides with one of two Chinese fighters that were shadowing the plane. The Chinese aircraft and its pilot are lost at sea. The U.S. EP-3 plane makes an emergency landing at an airfield on China's Hainan Island.

Apr. 8, 2001: Wu Jianmin, a Chinese American author, is detained in Shenzhen on suspicion of spying for Taiwan.

Apr. 11, 2001: Beijing turns down a U.S. request for a U.S. Navy Lockheed P-3C Orion submarine-hunting plane to visit Hong Kong on a routine training session on April 17.

Apr. 12, 2001: The Chinese government releases the 24-person U.S. crew that had been held for 11 days on Hainan Island after President Bush approves compromise language saying the United States was "very sorry" for the loss of a Chinese pilot.

Apr. 13, 2001: The Chinese government arrests 79-year old Catholic Bishop Shi Enxiang on Good Friday.

Apr. 19, 2001: The Department of State issues a public travel advisory recommending that U.S. citizens and permanent residents of Chinese descent carefully consider travel to China if they have been publicly critical of the Chinese government policies or have close connections to Taiwan or the Taiwan media.

Apr. 24, 2001: The Bush administration approves the largest package of arms sales to Taiwan in nearly a decade, including four Kidd-class destroyers, a dozen antisubmarine planes known as P-3 Orions, as well as eight diesel submarines, and a number of minesweeping helicopters, amphibious assault vehicles, and submarine- and surface-launched torpedoes.

Apr. 25, 2001: In an interview with the *Washington Post*, President Bush declares that he will scrap the annual review of arms sales to Taiwan and instead use an as-needed basis.

Apr. 25, 2001: In a taped ABC-TV morning show, President Bush says he would do “whatever it took” to help Taiwan defend itself from an attack by China.

Apr. 29, 2001: China offers to let U.S. officials inspect the damaged Navy plane on Hainan Island.

Apr. 30, 2001: President Bush announces his intention to nominate Clark T. Randt, Jr. to be U.S. ambassador to China.

Apr. 30, 2001: Pentagon memorandum signed by a senior defense adviser directs U.S. armed forces to suspend contacts with their Chinese counterparts until further notice. The order is reversed on May 2, several hours after it is reported by CNN.

May 1, 2001: Six House Reps. introduce resolution that calls a U.S. review of its relations with the PRC in light of China’s human rights record, Beijing’s actions following the collision between a U.S. Navy EP-3 aircraft and a Chinese fighter plane, and Chinese threats against Taiwan.

May 1, 2001: A team of U.S. technicians from Lockheed Martin arrives on Hainan Island to figure out how to get a damaged Navy spy plane back to the United States.

May 1, 2001: The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom issues its annual report on China.

May 2, 2001: The Army chief of staff determines that U.S. troops shall not wear berets made in China or berets made with Chinese content.

May 3, 2001: President Bush, condemns “the intensifying attacks on religious freedom in China” in an address to the American Jewish Committee in Washington.

May 3, 2001: The U.S., for the first time since 1947, fails to win re-election to the Geneva-based Human Rights Commission.

May 9, 2001: U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Representative Tom Lantos (D-San Mateo) introduce the Tibetan Policy Act of 2001, legislation designed to safeguard the cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic identity of the Tibetan people and

to encourage dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Chinese officials about the future of Tibet.

May 14, 2001: Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly arrives in Beijing for two days of talks on missile defense.

May 15, 2001: China rejects a U.S. request for a ship visit to Hong Kong by the USS Inchon, June 28 - July 3.

May 15, 2001: By a 415-0 vote, the House of Representatives sends H.R. 428 to the president's desk for signature. The bill requires the U.S. to initiate a plan to "endorse and obtain" observer status for Taiwan at the upcoming summit of the World Health Organization.

May 15, 2001: Mike Parmly, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor, tells members of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus that "overall, the prognosis for religious freedom in China is very poor in the short-term and may even get worse."

May 17, 2001: Secretary of State Colin L. Powell designates Paula J. Dobriansky as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

May 21, 2001: Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian arrives in New York for a historic transit stop en route to Central America for a five-country diplomatic journey.

May 23, 2001: President Bush meets the Dalai Lama in the White House residence and pledges support for his efforts to open a dialogue with the Chinese government.

May 29, 2001: The U.S. Embassy in Beijing announces that U.S. and Chinese officials "agreed in principle" that the damaged EP-3 surveillance plane would be partly dismantled and removed from Hainan on a giant Russian-designed cargo plane.

June 1, 2001: President Bush extends China's "normal" trading privileges for another year.

June 5, 2001: USTR Robert B. Zoellick visits Shanghai for a gathering of trade ministers from APEC, meets with Chinese MOFTEC Minister Shi Guangsheng.

June 6, 2001: At the 44th session of the UN Peaceful Use of Outer Space Committee, PRC delegation leader Huang Huikang calls for negotiation to conclude an international agreement on preventing arms race in outer space.

June 6, 2001: The U.S. and China agree on technical arrangements to disassemble and transport the EP-3 back to the United States.

June 7, 2001: Citing imminent danger from U.S. missile defense plans, Chinese Ambassador Hu Xiaodi China proposes a treaty to ban weapons in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament.

June 9, 2001: After four days of talks, the U.S. and China reach consensus on issues holding up Beijing's entry to the WTO and say they will work toward bringing China into the global trade body by year-end.

June 13, 2001: China participates as an observer in a multilateral mine clearing and diving exercise with sailors from 16 Pacific nations.

June 14, 2001: The U.S.-China Security Review Commission holds a hearing on "China Trade/Sectoral and WTO Issues."

June 20, 2001: Assistant Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong arrives in Washington, D.C. for two days of talks with U.S. officials.

June 26, 2001: Chinese Foreign Ministry official Li Baodong holds talks in Washington on human rights issues with Assistant Secretary Lorne Kramer.

June 28, 2001: Working party meeting in Geneva to discuss China's accession to the WTO.

June 26, 2001: Chinese Foreign Ministry official Li Baodong holds talks in Washington on Iraqi sanctions and human rights.

June 26-28, 2001: Former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui visits Cornell University.