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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

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House Intelligence Committee Announces Hearing On Chinese Embassy Bombing

June 7, 1999
Contact: (202) 225-4121

Chairman Porter J. Goss (R-FL) announced today that the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has scheduled an open hearing on the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade for Thursday, June 17, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. "This is a very serious matter, and it obviously had extraordinary consequences. When there is an intelligence failure of this significance we must get to the bottom of it. We need to know if this was a one-time problem or part of a systemic weakness. Moreover, since we can do some of this without compromising sensitive sources and methods, maybe we can help the American public better understand what went wrong and why."

The Committee had previously scheduled the hearing for June 10. It was rescheduled at the request of the Administration. The Administration is uneasy about discussing this issue in a public forum next week and asked that the Committee delay. The one-week delay will also allow the Intelligence Community and Department of Defense to finalize their examinations of the incident and give the Committee more time to review their findings in advance of the hearing.

Committee Ranking Democrat Julian C. Dixon (D-CA) reiterated his support for an open hearing. "The American people have a right to know as much as possible about the reasons why the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was misidentified. Whether this was a failure of intelligence, a failure in the target selection process, or reflective of problems in both intelligence and operational areas, the Committee has a responsibility to make sure that whatever mistakes were made are corrected."

Goss also noted the need for a senior Department of Defense official to explain the processes that led to the bombing decision. He explained that the ultimate responsibility for targeting is left specifically to the Joint Staff and the appropriate commander. Decisions to target a facility go beyond the intelligence input, although intelligence data is a key component. "If the users of intelligence have a problem with the input, they should come and tell us. Unfortunately, thus far, the Department of Defense has not supplied a senior level witness who can meet the Committee's expectations. I presume by extending the hearing date, the Administration will have ample opportunity to supply a senior Department of Defense witness who can authoritatively and knowledgeably address this matter."

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