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CRRG SALT

U.S. Denies Offering Spying Gear to China

By Henry S. Bradsher
Washington Star Staff Writer

The administration says it has no plans to try to station equipment in China for spying on Soviet missile activities as a check of compliance with SALT terms.

Its statement was made yesterday after Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-DeL., asked Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-ping) if China would permit the United States to station intelligence monitoring equipment there. Biden is part of a senatorial delegation visiting Peking.

Deng's answer was interpreted by observers in Washington as an indirect rejection of the idea.

He said that, if the United States wanted to give the equipment to China and train its personnel, they would operate it and share the data. But the United States could not maintain its own stations on Chinese soil, Deng said.

He added that in the 1950s the Soviet Union had proposed a joint naval fleet using Chinese ports, but that was rejected, too. Deng's visitors got the impression that Chinese sovereignty would not permit such deals.

THE EQUIPMENT USED for gathering data about Soviet missile tests at long range is very complex. It involves secret technology. The United States has always kept it under its own control at monitoring sites in places like Iran — now lost — and Turkey.

Despite Deng's cool and discouraging response, The Washington Post headlined his response to Biden as "China offers to monitor SALT data." Officials reacted with some distress over what they regarded as a distortion.

The Washington Star reported last week that the White House had rejected earlier suggestions of seeking monitoring sites in China.

After the shah's fall caused the loss of the Iranian sites, some intelligence officials here began to think aloud about the desirability of monitoring from western China. The White House stopped such thinking because of the complications it might cause for U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and with China.

THE STAR REPORT appeared shortly before several congressional delegations left for China. Apparently inspired by it, a congressman asked Deng about possible monitoring. Deng's response indicated that he did not know what the congressman was talking about.

Then a delegation led by the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Frank Church, D-Idaho, met with Deng Thursday. Biden asked three questions, including one about monitoring. This time Deng was prepared for it.

State Department Spokesman W. Hodding Carter III said yesterday none of the senators — he was unaware of the congressman — had been asked by the administration to raise monitoring. "We have not indicated any plans for it, and it doesn't reflect any policy position of the administration," Carter said.

"We had no hand" in Biden's raising the question, he added.

Deng criticized recent congressional action on Taiwan. President Carter signed last week a law expressing continued U.S. interest in a peaceful solution of China's claim to Taiwan and providing for future U.S. arms sales to the Nationalist regime there.

CONGRESS CREATED an American Institute in Taiwan to look after U.S. interests on the island after the break of diplomatic relations in order to establish relations with Peking. The institute will handle most of the old U.S. embassy's functions, such as facilitating trade, travel and other business.

The chairman of the institute's board, retired diplomat David Dean, announced yesterday that another retired diplomat, Charles T. Cross, will head the office in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan.

Cross, 56, who was born in China of missionary parents, has been ambassador to Singapore and the head of the large U.S. China-watching consulate in Hong Kong. He served in Taipei three decades ago when the Nationalist regime fled there from Communist armies on the mainland.