

From the Archives Congress Steps Up Pressure for China Sanctions

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WASHINGTON -- The Bush Administration came under strong pressure from congressional leaders Sunday to back up its verbal condemnations of the Chinese government's violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators by imposing tough sanctions--including a halt to arms sales and the export of high technology.

"We have to make it clear that the United States will not continue to conduct business as usual with a government which engages in the wanton slaughter of its own people," said Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House panel that oversees U.S. Chinese affairs.

Helms, Cranston Join in Call

Joining in the call for stepped-up action were Sen. [Jesse Helms](#) of North Carolina, the ranking Republican on the [Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#), Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), who heads the [Senate](#) panel concerned with China, and Rep. Mickey Edwards of Oklahoma, chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee.

The calls for sanctions underline the pull-and-tug on the American government over the current crisis in China: For 16 years, as it sought to cultivate Beijing as a counter weight to Moscow, Washington has virtually ignored human rights violations and other problems within [China's](#) borders.

Now, while still anxious to avoid a rupture, the Bush Administration is also under pressure not to appear too complacent about senior Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's violent repression of freedoms that lie at the core of American values. And the pressures here come from an unusual alliance: liberal [Democrats](#) and conservative [Republicans](#).

[President Bush](#), returning to Washington from his weekend retreat in Kennebunkport, Me., kept silent Sunday about the turmoil in China, offering no statement to update his previous denunciation of the use of force there.

An Administration official said the [White House](#) and the [State Department](#) were paying "a great deal of attention" to the prospect of employing sanctions against China but would not reach a "definitive decision" until today.

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The insistent demands that the Administration punish the Chinese government for its resort to violence also raised anew the vexing question of how much the United States could influence internal affairs in a nation as powerful and as self-reliant as China.

While the advocates of stern action argued that sanctions against China were necessary if only for their symbolic value, others urged caution, saying that precipitous steps would at least be inconsequential, and could at worst be self-defeating.

"Before we all get into a tizzy on the situation, we ought to sort of settle down," Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press."

"We are dealing with a huge country that has generally been extremely anti-foreign," added former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger in a separate appearance on ABC-TV's "This Week." Said Kissinger: "That is a major factor in international affairs, and we don't want to give the Soviets and everybody else a free ride by going into a diplomatic antagonism to them."

"One can use the harshest words to describe yesterday's behavior of the leaders of China, and those words would be accurate," added Michel Oksenberg, a professor at the University of Michigan.

Affects Billions of People

"And yet these leaders still affect the quality of life of a billion people, and one does not wish to worsen the quality of life of those 1 billion people inadvertently."

Because the decision by China's aged leaders to unleash military force appeared to have been taken without regard for the international opprobrium that would follow, even those who called for punitive sanctions against China held out little hope that such action would force a halt to the crackdown.

Many contended, however, that the blatant and bloody nature of the Chinese action represented a human rights violation too horrific to be addressed with the kind of special treatment that has become typical of U.S. foreign policy toward China.

"Our ability to influence the course of events in China is very limited," said Solarz, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Asian affairs, "but there is much more at stake."

A Fifth of Human Race

"If we appear to be indifferent or insensitive to the human rights of one-fifth of the human race," Solarz said in an interview on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation," "then I think it'll be very difficult for us to plausibly contend that we are in favor of democracy and human rights all over the world."

"Our relations with the Chinese people will strengthen and grow as they struggle for freedom," added Cranston, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations panel on East Asia. "But our relations with the authorities who

perpetrated these crimes have been dealt a bloody blow."

While Helms joined his Democratic colleagues in urging a halt to military assistance to China, he made clear that he derived a different lesson from the government-ordered brutality that followed the gradual normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations.

"We never should have gotten into the business of supplying arms to any Communist country," Helms said on "Face the Nation."

'Communism and Freedom'

"You've got to understand that there is a division in this world, communism and freedom," he added later, "and to the extent we try to compromise with communism, we lose, freedom loses."

Edwards, in a statement, criticized what he called the Administration's "excessively cautious" reaction to the military crackdown in Beijing.

"Diplomatic messages of disapproval are a pretty puny reaction to the murdering of innocent civilians, whose only crime is to want the same freedoms we in the West take for granted," Edwards said. "The [Defense Department](#), the State Department and the Commerce Department ought to act immediately, in unison, to put some substance into the U.S. condemnations."

The unusual nature of the alliance between liberal Democrats such as Solarz and conservative Republicans such as Helms adds to the pressure pushing the Bush Administration toward more tangible action against China than it has thus far shown an inclination to take.

Lugar Criticizes Response

Even Lugar, who vigorously defended the President's decision to use words rather than deeds to condemn the violence in Beijing, criticized the Administration for maintaining an overly temperate tone as tensions in the Chinese capital began to build in recent weeks.

"I would have spoken out, I think, much more strongly, if I had been the State Department throughout this time," Lugar said.

The intensity of such pressures made it more likely that the Bush Administration would overcome its reluctance and impose some direct sanctions against China, congressional and Administration observers said Sunday.

While the United States does not grant any direct aid to China, its sales of military and high-technology equipment to that country provide a benefit that could quickly be withdrawn. In October, 1987, the Reagan Administration interrupted a process that had eased restrictions on high-technology transfers to punish China for its sales of Silkworm missiles to Iran.

Even then, however, the sales of advanced computers and other electronic goods were simply slowed, not reversed. The imposition of sanctions in the wake of the military crackdown, moreover, would mark the first time since the resumption of formal U.S.-China diplomatic relations in 1979 that the United States has sought to employ such measures to influence the government's conduct within its borders.

U.S. sales of military equipment to China include a \$700-million deal involving radar and avionics equipment for China's F-8 fighter plane, another involving artillery equipment, and a further deal aimed at enhancing China's anti-submarine warfare capability.

High-tech exports, which have been made available to China since 1983, now include products in 13 separate categories ranging from telecommunications equipment to chemicals and power generators. Sales of communications equipment alone are expected to total more than \$5 billion in the next five years.

Other possible Bush Administration sanctions suggested by politicians and China analysts Sunday included the temporary recall of the U.S. ambassador and a decision to grant amnesty to all 40,000 Chinese students now studying in the United States.

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