



The Best of Pepe Escobar

> and decadent communist system would be incapable of such innovations on its own. On January 24, an Indian-American engineer who had worked

capabilities, perhaps with the implication that China's reactive

on the B-2 stealth program, Noshir Gowadia, was sentenced to 32 years in prison for selling secret military aviation technology to China. The New York Times characterized the technology, apparently incorrectly, as "stealth missile technology"; according to the Times of India, the technology in question was nozzle technology meant to reduce vulnerability to heat-seeking missiles, rather than the radar-related cloak of invisibility usually associated with "stealth". It is not difficult to view the timing of Gowadia's sentencing

(which was reportedly originally supposed to occur in November 2010 after five years of imprisonment and a trial that concluded in August 2010 with a guilty verdict) as an effort to emphasize the tainted character of China's stealth achievement. [1] News reports also addressed the possibility that China had

successfully exploited the wreckage of a US stealth fighter to

During the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) campaign

develop its own capabilities.

against Serbia in 1999, an American F-117A stealth fighter was shot down. Some wreckage undoubtedly made it into Chinese hands. Slobodan Lekic and Dusan Stojanovic of the Associated Press (AP) reported on January 23:

"At the time, our intelligence reports told of

Chinese agents crisscrossing the region where the F-117 disintegrated, buying up parts of the plane from local farmers," says Admiral Davor Domazet-Loso, Croatia's military chief of staff during the Kosovo war.

"We believe the Chinese used those materials to

gain an insight into secret stealth technologies ...

and to reverse-engineer them," Domazet-Loso said in a telephone interview. A senior Serbian military official confirmed that pieces of the wreckage were removed by souvenir

collectors, and that some ended up "in the hands

of foreign military attaches". [2] The idea that the United States had not taken adequate steps to secure the F-117A wreckage and useful technology may have thereby found its way into enemy hands is apparently rather irksome to the Pentagon.

January 26 New York Times article titled "US Doubts '99 Jet Debris Gave China Stealth Edge": [I]t's hard to imagine that a great deal of applicable and useful information could have been culled from

the site," said an Air Force official, who asked for

anonymity because he was not authorized to

Elizabeth Bumiller transmitted the US official pushback in the

speak publicly about military intelligence. [3] Careful readers will note the conditional remark that little useful information "could have been culled from the site". There is the issue of what useful information could have been extracted from

wreckage removed from the site. There is a link between Serbia in 1999 and the flight of the J-20 in 2011 that is undeniable: the US bombing of the Chinese

Embassy in Belgrade on May 7,1999. And the wreckage of the F-117A may have been the crucial precipitating factor. It is safe to say that almost no one in China believes that the 1999 embassy bombing was accidental. When the incident is

referenced in Chinese media, the term "mistaken bombing" (wuzha) is often enclosed in quotation marks, as in "alleged mistaken bombing". The official US story has done little to dispel suspicion.

George Tenet, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), testified before the US Congress that the US intended to bomb

Yugoslavia's Federal Directorate for Supply and Procurement aka a warehouse suspected of "arms proliferation activity", but the wrong coordinates were provided to the bomber, causing five 2,000-pound (909 kilograms) MK-84 JDAM GPS-guided smart bombs to slam into the Chinese Embassy instead, killing three (identified by the Chinese as journalists), injuring 20, and gutting the structure. Amazingly, of the 900 target packages executed during the

only mission developed by the CIA. Although the air war was nominally under NATO direction, the embassy mission (as well as several others) was flown as a

Kosovo war, it transpired that the "mistaken bombing" was the

strictly US operation using equipment based in the United States. [4] A European defense publication reported:

It should be noted that, in an interview with the author, NATO spokesman Lee McClenny confirmed that the targeting information did not go

> through JTF NOBLE ANVIL, or any other NATO structure, in contrast to Tennet's [sic] official public statements. Instead, the co-ordinates were passed directly from the CIA to Whiteman Air Force Base, the home of the 509th Bomb Wing, where it was programmed into the JDAMs. Mr McClenny asserted that the entire process had remained 'Stateside', hence the failure of NATO staff to 'scrub' the target to check its accuracy, authenticity and location. When asked, the CIA again asserted that the story given by Tennet [sic] to the House Committee was

went from the CIA to the Pentagon to be processed. The Pentagon was only prepared to say that "some of the F-117 and B-2 missions were used as 'national assets' and therefore did not pass through NATO command structures", despite the requirement under the NATO charter to clear all missions carried out under NATO auspices with the NATO general council ... [Previously reported in Venik's Aviation web site, citing a May 2000 report in Air Forces Monthly; link no longer valid.] A joint investigation by the British newspaper The Observer and Denmark's Politiken made the explosive allegation that the Chinese Embassy had been intentionally targeted to remove a

true, but claimed that the targeting information

Slobodan Milosevic's forces in their struggle to resist NATO According to The Observer, a US officer airily dismissed the handwringing of his NATO associates:

British, Canadian and French air targeteers rounded on an American colonel on the morning of May 8. Angrily they denounced the "cock-up". The

US colonel was relaxed. "Bullshit," he replied to

key rebroadcast station directing the military activities of

the complaints. "That was great targeting ... we put three JDAMs down into the [military] attache's office and took out the exact room we wanted ... The story was largely ignored by the US media. When FAIR, the organization for Fairness and Accuracy in

Reporting, pushed the New York Times to address the allegations, the paper, as it would do again in 2011 on the stealth story, obliged the Pentagon by pushing back.

Today, post-Internet, post-Iraq War, post-Judith Miller, the Times' self-satisfied complacency in dismissing the story has the quaint air of a different era.

In an October 22, 1999 article, FAIR wrote: So far, the reaction in the mainstream US media

has been a deafening silence. To date, none of America's three major network evening news programs has mentioned the Observer's findings

Neither has the New York Times or USA Today, even though the story was covered by AP, Reuters and other major wires. The Washington Post relegated the story to a 90word news brief in its "World Briefing" (10/18/99), under the headline "NATO Denies Story on Embassy Bombing. "By contrast, the story

appeared in England not only in the Observer and its sister paper, the Guardian (10/17/99), but also in their leading rival, the Times of London, which ran a follow-up article on the official reaction the next day (10/18/99). The Globe and Mail, Canada's most prestigious paper, ran the full Reuters account prominently in its international section (10/18/99). So did the Times of India, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Irish Times (all 10/18/99). The prominent Danish daily Politiken, which collaborated with the Observer on the investigation, was on strike, but ran the story on its website. [6] FAIR and its supporters rattled a few media cages, and got dismissive replies from the New York Times and USA Today. The Times' Andrew Rosenthal characterized The Observer article as "not terribly well sourced". In its rebuttal, FAIR stated:

FAIR contacted journalists at both The Observer and Politiken. According to The Observer's US correspondent, Ed Vulliamy, its foreign editor, Peter

Beaumont, and Politiken reporter Jens Holsoe,

their sources included the following: • A European NATO military officer serving in an operational capacity at the four-star level - a source at the highest possible level within NATO confirmed three things: (1) That NATO targeted the Chinese Embassy deliberately; (2) That the embassy was emitting Yugoslav military radio signals; and (3) That the target was not approved through the normal NATO channels but through a second, "American-only" track. • A European NATO staff officer at the two-star level in the Defense Intelligence office confirmed the same story. senior American intelligence official connected to

• Two US sources: A very high-ranking former the Balkans - "about as high as you can get", according to one reporter - confirmed that the embassy was deliberately targeted. A mid-ranking

current US military official, also connected to the Balkans, confirmed elements of the story and pointedly refused to deny that the embassy had been bombed deliberately. • A NATO flight controller based in Naples and a NATO intelligence officer monitoring Yugoslav radio broadcasts from Macedonia each confirmed that NATO's signals intelligence located Yugoslav military radio signals coming from the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. When they informed their

superiors, they were told that the matter would be handled further up in the chain of command. Two weeks later, the embassy was bombed. • An official at the US National Imagery and Mapping Agency told the reporters that NATO's official explanation, which involves a faulty map of

Finally, the Times, still coasting on its Pentagon Papers reputation, replied to one correspondent: "There is nothing in the distinguished history of the Times - where reporters have risked their lives,

Belgrade, is a "damned lie". [7]

been threatened with jail and indeed gone to jail to protect the public's right to know things the government does not want to get out - to suggest that we would withhold such a story."

The case that the US bombed the Chinese Embassy may still be stamped "Not Proved", but the circumstantial evidence is pretty

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As to why the US might have wanted to bomb the embassy, the theories are legion.

They all center on the indisputable fact that China was sympathetic to Serbia and had dispatched a team of intelligence specialists under the direction of a senior military attache, Ren Bokai (identified in many news reports as "Ven Bo Koy"), to get a first-hand look at US technology, capabilities and doctrine.

### Continued 1 2

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The F-117A crashed in a field outside Belgrade and wreckage

was all over the place. The loss of the plane caused extreme

A RAND study indicated that the only thing that kept the US

Heated arguments arose in Washington and

not aggressively having sought to destroy the wreckage of the downed F 117 in order to keep its valuable stealth technology out of unfriendly hands and eliminate its propaganda value ... Said a former commander of Tactical Air Command

"I'm surprised we didn't bomb it because the

As noted above, the Chinese reportedly bought some pieces from farmers; some found its way to a military museum in Belgrade, where it can be viewed today (at one time it was reportedly possible to buy souvenir fragments at the museum gift shop); but much of the wreckage was apparently acquired by the

Serbian government, which distributed - or possibly sold - chunks to its allies as reward/payment for their support.

capabilities of their anti-aircraft missiles.

wreckage.

systems."

vulnerability).

embassy.

In 2001, the Russians confirmed that they had received pieces of the F-117A and used it to improve the stealth detection

It is not unreasonable to assume that the Chinese got some pieces as well - despite the efforts of a "Pentagon analyst" to make the case that China's technological backwardness would disqualify them from any interest in owning some stealth

An article in the September 27, 1999, issue of Aviation Week and Space Technology reported, "A Russian official said that some parts had made their way to Moscow, but that the bulk of the airframe was shipped to China," a claim that "Pentagon analysts" dismissed "because "China ... doesn't have the industrial capability to benefit from either the design or the

In this context, it is suggestive that the F-117A was rather abruptly retired in favor of the F-22A Raptor, perhaps because the Serbian shootdown demonstrated a rather embarrassing lack of stealthiness, and/or access to the wreckage enabled more effective anti-stealth measures by Russia and China (it was reported that plans to deploy the F-117A in South Korea were redrawn after the 1999 incident raised concerns about its

Chinese rumor-mongering on the Internet also tried to fill in the blanks, and link the F-117A wreckage to the attack on the

According to an Internet account of "a private encounter with a Chinese naval officer who was slightly tipsy" (now deleted), the Yugoslavian government had recovered the wreckage of the shot down F-117 and sold key pieces of it to China. The navigation system, fuselage fragments with the Stealth coating, and high temperature nozzle components of the engine were spirited into the basement of the Chinese Embassy. Unfortunately, according to this story, there was a locator beacon inside the INU powered by a battery and, before the Chinese could discover and disable it, the US military was alerted to the location of the F-117

fragments and executed the bombing.

Third World asset.

in apparent retaliation.

attack:

isn't saying.

of our own.

for the missing.

injured.

It would not be out of the question that the Bill Clinton administration would bomb the Chinese Embassy to deflect criticism for its handling of the F-117A wreckage debacle, demonstrate its national security muscularity, and score some Team America points by pummeling some tangentially-related

Indeed, this is what happened the next year, in 2000, when an al-Qaeda attack seriously damaged the *USS Cole* in Yemen, killing 17 seamen; the US cruise-missiled a seemingly innocent pharmaceutical plant in Sudan - then an al-Qaeda stronghold -

In a memoir published in 2006, China's ambassador to Serbia, Pan Zhanlin, rather coyly intimated something very important had been extracted from the embassy in the chaotic aftermath of the

The two comrades in charge of the embassy's important assets were Little Wang and Little Zheng. One slept in the duty office on the fifth floor, one slept in the dormitory on the fourth floor. Little Wang pierced through the dust and smoke and by the light of the flames descended from the

At this time, Little Zheng emerged from the

bedroom. Little Wang grabbed hold of Little Zheng and ran back upstairs. Little Zheng had already been injured and his face was flecked with blood. People who ran into them urgently asked: "Why are you going back up?" Little Wang replied: "There is something that needs doing. This is our job."

They picked up four cases of national important assets and battled through smoke and pierced through flames to get downstairs. The stairwell was cut off, they stumbled down to the third floor. Ahead of time, the embassy had made various preparations for an emergency, so these four cases of important things had already been

prepared. If any untoward event had occurred, they could be picked up and moved immediately. They knew, these things were more important than life.

"Something more important than life". Stealth wreckage? Pan

Regardless of the motives or mistakes behind the US bombing of the Belgrade embassy, however, the consequences were

considered, albeit on a smaller scale, a 9/11 moment for China.

Pan Zhanlin's description of the attack awakens dark memories

He conveys the shock and fear as the embassy explodes into flames, "the loudest sound I ever heard". Survivors found the stairwells blocked by rubble and fire and desperately improvised escapes down the exterior of the building using knotted drapes. Pan saw his friends and colleagues stagger from the ruins of the

Amid the chaos everybody ducked in fear of a follow-up attack as NATO bombers thundered overhead (May 7 was one of the busiest nights for aerial bombing). Then came the frantic ad hoc attempts to rally the survivors, account for the living, and search

First responders were initially unable to enter the compound because the electric gate was disabled when the bombing cut the power; ambulances raced up to the shattered structure with sirens howling to rush away the injured willy-nilly; embassy staffers mounted a frantic search through local hospitals for the

Finally, there was the extraction of the dead; consoling of the

Again viewed through a post-9/11 lens, Pan's account also paints a picture of a privileged Chinese elite that has been stripped of the illusion that it is immune to attack, and realizing with anger, shame and disgust that at that moment it is helpless,

Reports of the bombing triggered an outpouring of populist and official Chinese anger that signaled a break from the pre-

democracy/pro-US popular Chinese outlook prevalent during the democracy movement period, and a shift to the nationalist tone

It should also be noted in passing that Pan's memoir debunks the canard, spread at the time by Western news reports

In fact, at night the embassy was filled with staffers and their families, who believed that it was safer to stay at the embassy - whose coordinates were registered with NATO - than spend the night at their homes as NATO bombing operations against

One Chinese legend has a Chinese plane returning dozens of coffins - instead of the officially acknowledged three - to the motherland. The stealth wreckage, according to this story,

In the reported words of the tipsy naval officer ("who spoke with

"Although some of our people sacrificed their lives,

Premier Zhu Rongji - not given to sentimental public displays - reportedly wept when he met the plane carrying the victims.

Now we know, and it causes us to appreciate even more profoundly that a nation, when it is poor and weak, is without recourse and pitiful (How helpless and evoking bitterness in people's hearts were the tears of Premier Zhu Rongji as he wept at the airfield when the remains of the martyrs were

Whether it was a matter of stealth technology - or the conviction that China must strive for military parity with the United States in order to secure its security and render it impervious to insults and intimidation - it is safe to say that, to a certain extent, the J-

we gained no less than ten years in the development of our stealth materials. We purchased this progress with our blood and

seemingly anxious to minimize the destructiveness of the attack, that at night the embassy was empty (presumably excluding Chinese spooks huddled over their equipment in the intelligence

Chinese opinion was not mollified by the US apology, accompanied by Western insistence that the incident was a

One JDAM failed to explode and buried itself in the ground near the embassy foundations; the building was abandoned and the expensive and dangerous job of removing the bomb was only

wounded; the grieving; and a defiant patriotic oration.

accomplished five years later.

vulnerable and unable to retaliate.

that dominates Chinese opinion today.

simple, regrettable mistake.

Belgrade were at their height.

tears in his eyes"):

returned to China on the same plane.

international mortification."

transported back to China).

20 was Made in America ... via Belgrade.

Another Internet poster wrote:

directory).

significant. Viewed in retrospect, the bombing can be

embassy dazed and bloody, crying out for help.

fifth floor to the fourth floor.

standard operating procedure has always been that when you lose something of real or perceived value - in this case, real technology, stealth - you destroy it." ... Reports indicated that military officials had at first considered destroying the wreckage but opted in the end not to follow through with the attempt because they could not have located it quickly enough to attack it before it was surrounded by civilians and the media. [8]

elsewhere in the immediate aftermath of the shootdown over whether USEUCOM had erred in

from bombing the wreckage to flinders was the presence of a

crowd of government officials, diplomats, journalists and gawkers

anxiety in the United States.

at the crash site:

#### Notes

- 1. <u>Indian-American gets 32 yrs for selling US secrets</u>, Times of India, Jan 26, 2011.
- 2. <u>China's new stealth fighter may use US technology</u>, Yahoo, Jan 23, 2011.
- 3. <u>USDoubts '99 Jet Debris Gave China Stealth Edge</u>, New York Times, Jan 25, 2011.
- 4. <u>USMilitary Acted Outside NATO Framework During Kosovo Conflict, France Says</u>, New York Times, Nov 11, 1999.
- 5. Nato bombed Chinese deliberately, Guardian, Oct 17, 1999.
- 6. <u>USMedia Overlook Expose on Chinese Embassy Bombing</u>, FAIR, Oct 22, 1999.
- 7. <u>Chinese Embassy Bombing Media Reply</u>, FAIR Responds, FAIR, Nov 3, 1999.
- 8. Friction and operational problems, RAND.
- 9. Click here for text (in Chinese).

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