MIT investigates spying charges

By Jim Eisen

Allegations concerning a technology training program for 13 Taiwanese graduate students and engineers that the "Nationalist Chinese Government spured the formal initiation of two investigations by MIT officials two weeks ago.

Dr. Louis B. Menand III, Special Assistant to the Provost, was asked by President Jerome Wiesner and Chancellor Paul Gray on March 16 to report on changes that a former student, working for the Taiwan government, was attempting to photograph Taiwanese students attending an SACC "teach-in" on the training program in February. The photographer reportedly surrendered his film voluntarily to the students. Contacted within 48 hours of the incident, Menand began his investigation immediately.

"I'm moving cautiously," he told The Tech. "I am trying to protect the privacy of those involved." In the midst of many suspicions, he added, he has learned "precious few facts." Anyone can not yet be an act for a foreign government in the United States must register either with the Department of Justice or State, according to Menand, and this presents the legal aspect of the issue. In addition, in an open letter to the MIT community, President Wiesner and Chancellor Gray stated, "We would be indignant if any person came onto this campus for purposes of spying or surveillance." Menand anxious about the student's conduct by the Nationalist government.

In an independent investigation being conducted by an Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on International Institutional Commitments into the program's origins, sponsor, and curriculum content. The 10-member committee was formed last year in response to concern over the Iranian training program in Nuclear Engineering.

The two-year non-degree Technology Training Program is administered by the MIT Center for Advanced Engineering Study. According to Tech Talk, it includes teaching the students how to develop highly sophisticated technological concepts for complex industrial systems and products and thus provide the National Taiwan University with a group of future entrepreneurs who can assume leadership roles in developing new high technology industry for Taiwan. A more controversial aspect is its emphasis on inertial navigation systems used in "navigating, guiding, or controlling high performance vehicles."

The program began on Jan. 1, 1975.

Concern has been expressed by various faculty and student body members, including Chinese and Taiwanese students, over uses of this training. According to SACC member Howard Shobe G., "The program at MIT will transfer military technology to a dictatorship, the Government of Taiwan has been developing nuclear weapons, and this will help them get a nuclear delivery capability."

Neither investigation is directly related to the refusal of the Nationalist government to grant passports to two Boston-area Taiwanese students, allegedly for political reasons. However, according to Menand, this issue seems part of the context in which I'm functioning."