

April 10, 2008

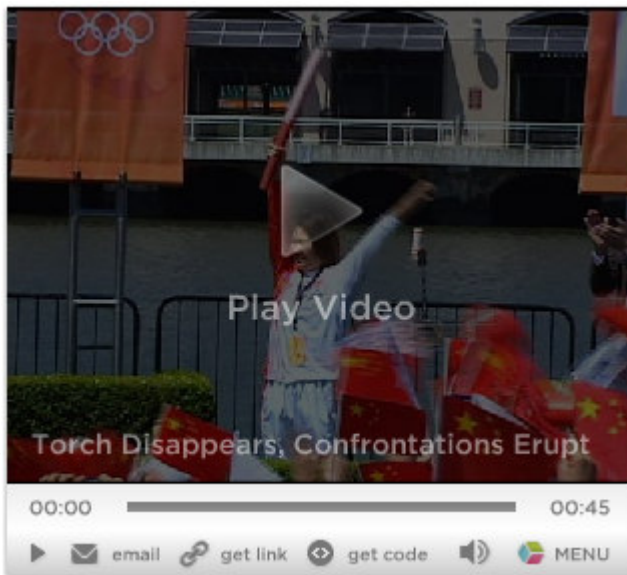
## Olympic-Torch Protesters Given Slip in San Francisco

**Tension in Crowds Over Tibet, China Spurs Route Change**

By **STEPHANIE KANG, JIM CARLTON** and **BOBBY WHITE**  
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SAN FRANCISCO -- The Olympic torch made its long-anticipated one-day visit to the U.S. Wednesday with the expected protests and some hoodwinking of demonstrators by authorities.

Most of the constituencies surrounding the highly charged event -- and media circus -- went home with something to feel good about. The demonstrators had their protests shown on television for most of the day, calling attention to their causes. The price of the last-minute change however, was a trail of



The Beijing Olympic torch travels off its projected route through San Francisco. Meanwhile, heated confrontations erupt. Stacey Delo reports.

people, some bitterly disappointed, who never got to see the torch.


For San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and the city's police department, the relay went off without violence or injuries, mass arrests or clashes between police and demonstrators. Some scuffles and a few arrests was the worst of it.

For China and Olympic officials, the relay took place, and the torch will continue its journey to Beijing. An added benefit for China was that thousands of protesters turned out on its behalf.

**RELAY SERVICE**

Even more visible in San Francisco than the often-

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- **The News:** The Olympic torch traveled through San Francisco surrounded by police and aided by last-minute changes to keep protesters at bay.
- **Backlash:** Prominent during the torch relay were pro-China supporters who rose up to protest the protesters.
- **What's Next:** The torch will travel to South America and Africa, then move to Asia.

violent anti-China protests that have struck the torch run elsewhere was the backlash of hundreds of Chinese-Americans and other pro-China supporters who rose up to protest the protesters. Media attention hasn't only spotlighted the protests but also has galvanized support for China among Chinese-Americans and Chinese nationals living in the U.S.

The torch relay began by abruptly going off script. As befuddled demonstrators looked on, authorities sent the first runner out in a direction other than had been planned, like a rock star slipping out the back door. Throughout out the new, shorter route, torch runners were cushioned by torch guards and phalanxes of police. Protesters frantically called each other on mobile phones to try to keep up with the route, which turned inland, away from the planned waterfront course.



Police line the torch route to provide security before the start of the Olympic Torch relay in San Francisco.

Mr. Newsom had said earlier that he reserved the right to change the route of the relay at any point, even during the race, if there was a possibility that protesters would interfere. Mr. Newsom has said he is trying to balance the rights of protesters with people who want to enjoy the torch relay in safety.

"The mayor made a game-time decision to go a different route," said Nathan Ballard, a spokesman for the mayor. Mr. Ballard added that the decision to hold the closing ceremony for the torch run at San Francisco International Airport, rather than at downtown's Justin Herman Plaza, "was a contingency we had prepared for."

As colorful flags flapped in a stiff breeze off McCovey Cove next to the San Francisco Giants' AT&T Park, police patrolled the waters where fans used to float awaiting Barry Bonds's home runs. Even before the relay began, crowds chanted "China, China, China" and "Olympics! No politics!"

They shouted at, and sometimes jostled, demonstrators objecting to Chinese policies on human rights, Tibet and Darfur. Police struggled to separate the two sides and had detained a protester even before the relay's planned six-mile trip along the waterfront began. About 100 additional police in riot helmets arrived just as ceremonies began.

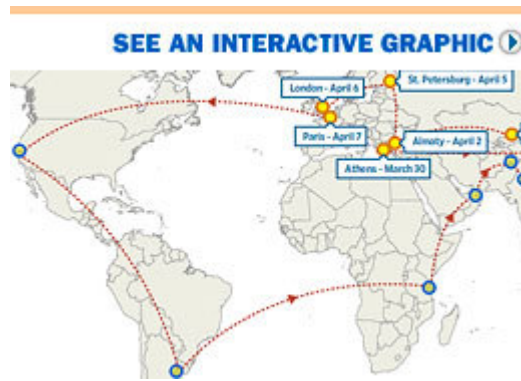
Earlier, many of the pro-China demonstrators invoked slogans about how sports shouldn't be sullied by politics, but the protests seem to have awakened a broader feeling of angry nationalism among many of the pro-China demonstrators. San Francisco's large Chinese-American population includes many who fled Communist rule in China and support Taiwan, and many whose roots in America predate them and who hold no truck with the current Chinese government. But many immigrants are Chinese nationals who left for economic rather than



Darcy Padilla for WSJ

A policeman yelled at a pro-Tibet protester to back away from China supporters before the opening ceremony for the torch relay Wednesday at McCovey Cove, San Francisco.

political reasons and resent the protesters trying to spoil their fast-growing country's preamble to the Olympic Games.



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At dawn Wednesday, for example, two groups of mostly Chinese exchange students -- one from the University of California at Berkeley and the other from Stanford -- arrived in busloads. "We want to encourage Americans to visit China and see the real China," said Yinjie Tang, a 33-year-old Chinese national who is a postgraduate student at Berkeley. "We want to let everyone know that, while not perfect, the human-rights situation is improving."

Since its ceremonial lighting in Greece March 24, the torch has taken a tumultuous journey, fending off protesters in London and Paris. San Francisco, with its robust tradition of counterculture dissent, was expected to be a climactic stop. From here the torch will briefly touch down in South America, Africa and other spots before it moves to Asia, where it is unclear what the reception will be.

In San Francisco, two "Save Darfur" supporters, Bruce Grossan and Rick Williamson, were swarmed by dozens of China supporters. A group of Chinese youths surrounded the two, covering their end-genocide sign with several Chinese flags. Mr. Williamson said he and Mr. Grossan were hit several times with the flagpoles. City police quickly gathered up the two men and asked them to move away from the youths. "I can't ensure your safety," said one SFPD officer.

Tibet and China supporters clashed nearby. "You know nothing about Tibet!" one Chinese man said to a young girl in a "Free Tibet" shirt.

In a press area at the start of the relay, torch runner Raj Mathai, a sportscaster for the local NBC affiliate, stretched. He said security for the runners has been so tight that at a planning meeting for them Tuesday, they convened in a conference room at a San Francisco hotel, then moved to another after just 10 minutes. Mr. Mathai said he and the other runners were advised that, if attacked, they should fall back and let police and security officials protect them. "I am no longer nervous," Mr. Mathai said. "But I am anxious."



A China supporter holds others back from confronting pro-Tibet protesters as the Olympic torch makes its way through San Francisco.

Betty Yuan, head of the Northern California Chinese Culture-Athletic Federation, said earlier this week that she has been getting dozens of phone calls, many from Chinese-Americans upset with news reports of protesters.

She says she believes the majority of people support the Olympic torch. "The people that are going to the protest, they just are little but they make big noise," said Ms. Yuan.

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