

assess the reasoning behind their sentencing decisions in the context of the 2005 Supreme Court ruling that allowed them to use the sentencing guidelines as advisory rather than as requirements.

In 21 of the 24 cases, the judges sentenced defendants to less time than they likely could have received under the sentencing guidelines. Under the guidelines, for instance, a person who possesses five grams of crack cocaine will get the same sentence as someone who sells 500 grams of powder cocaine—although there is little physiological difference in the two.

Sen. Jeff Sessions, an Alabama Republican, said he intended to introduce a bill this year that will propose changing the law to reduce the disparity between the amounts of crack cocaine and powder cocaine necessary to give a defendant the same sentence. He and Utah Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch co-authored a bill in 2003 that would have reduced the disparity to 20-to-1—from 100-to-1—but it got little support.

"I still believe the guidelines are not appropriate on crack and powder cocaine," said Sen. Sessions. "I think we need to make some improvements there based on the reality of what's going on in the courts of America. This study seems to indicate that judges would need more to the 20-to-one ratio rather than 100-to-one."

The Sentencing Commission, which declined to comment on the study, has supported altering its guidelines on crack-cocaine crimes to bring the penalties and amounts more in line with powder cocaine. In 1995, the Sentencing Commission sent Congress a amendment which would have equalized the penalties on the two forms of cocaine, but Congress rejected the amendment. Similar recommendations in the commission in 1997 and 2002 were ignored by Congress.

At least two of the cases highlighted in the study have been overturned by appeals courts in the past week. In one case, Rhode Island Chief District Court Judge Ernest Torres sentenced a crack-cocaine defendant to just over five years in prison, although the sentencing guidelines called for him to be sentenced to between seven and 12 years.

In handing down the sentence, the judge wrote that the 100-to-1 ratio was "excessive" and "not reasonable." However, a three-judge panel on the First Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston ruled last week that Mr. Torres had erred in handing down the sentence.

Laboring in uncharted waters, the court jettisoned the guidelines and crafted a new sentencing range," the appeals court wrote.

barrels of oil equivalent a day in the three months ended Dec. 31. The figure was

national Safety and Health Administration found more than 300 violations at the plant.

Wall Street Journal 01/12/2006 China's Trade Surplus Tripled, Topping \$100 Billion Last Year

By MURRAY HIEBERT

BELJING—China's trade surplus more than tripled in 2005 to surpass \$100 billion, a surge that is likely to intensify protectionist sentiment in the U.S. against one of its biggest trading partners.

The surplus reached \$101.9 billion, with exports rising 28% from 2004 to \$762 billion and imports increasing 18% to \$660 billion, China's General Administration of Customs reported on its Web site yesterday. The 2004 trade surplus was \$32 billion.

Some economists say they believe China's trade surplus may narrow this year because the country's imports have begun to pick up in recent months. Beijing also is seeking to reduce trade frictions by promoting domestic consumption.

"China is gradually becoming a more positive force for global growth as its policies are adjusted towards boosting domestic demand," Goldman Sachs said in a report.

Economists point out that the overall U.S. imbalance with Asia has remained roughly unchanged over the past several decades. Many of the country's trading partners in Asia have moved production lines to China in recent years to take advantage of the country's low labor costs, resulting in "Made in China" labels on goods previously produced in their own countries. As a result, the U.S. trade deficit with much of the rest of Asia has narrowed roughly in step with the expansion of its deficit with China.

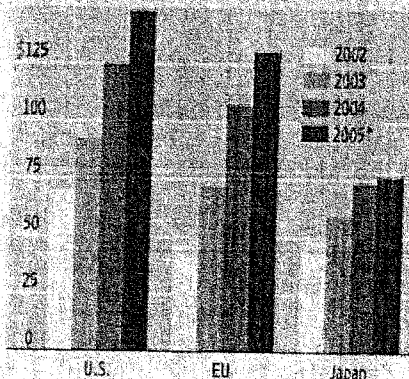
Economists attribute China's large trade surplus in 2005 in part to Beijing's efforts to discourage investment in overheated sectors of the economy, which helped spark a sharp slowdown in import growth in the first half. The cooling campaign targeted sectors including real estate, steel and aluminum production. The measures turned China into a major exporter of steel from a large net importer, economists say.

However, property development started to pick up again in the last few months of 2005, increasing imports of construction materials. Imports of electronic components and machinery also increased.

The pickup in demand was reflected

Fueling Friction

Chinese exports to select trading partners, in billions of dollars



*Through November

Source: General Administration of Customs

in December's trade figures, with exports rising 18% from a year earlier to \$75.41 billion but imports growing faster at 22%, to reach \$64.4 billion, according to customs figures.

A think tank under the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic planning agency, suggested that the trend would continue this year. It predicted that imports would expand about 18%, while exports would increase by about 15%, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

China's two-way trade with the U.S. surged 23% to \$211.63 billion last year, according to the Chinese customs service. It didn't give a breakdown for imports and exports. The European Union was China's largest trading partner, with two-way trade increasing 23% to \$217.31 billion.

China is already under pressure from the U.S. and other trading partners to further revalue its currency, the yuan. Beijing revalued the yuan by 2.1% last year, but critics say the currency remains undervalued against the dollar, making China's exports unfairly cheap. The U.S. is expected to report that its trade deficit with China increased to more than \$200 billion in 2005 from \$162 billion in 2004.

—Andrew Browne in Hong Kong contributed to this article.

venting out of control so that they don't kill in place a real tall will support the govern makes those decisions be done in order."

That's not news to but politicians act like perhaps because the p lieve it. Americans do says Mr. Holtz-Eakin. lot of time speaking to and the like. "But they whole lot of time to sit things, so there's a fai phistication. I'd go out that I think are sort of they look at me like I'

Like what? "The th most amazing is every war in Iraq was a mclure than the [Medica How could you possibl The war in Iraq, \$6 (bi lion a month, maybe \$ lion, a year, something the drug benefit is fore

So how did he descr would get it? "The den pretty predictable," he get older one year at a layer on historical tren spending. If you just ta plus history as your gu and Medicare are as bi entire federal governm then you say, 'Oh, my I can't be.' So either we a really big government to have a tax system th a big government. Or, I have a smaller govern going to make those pri the right people at the

"I think this is self-e Mr. Holtz-Eakin, chuckl ize now this is the price close to the process. I v morning saying it does happens in the next five ple say I am really we

Of course, CBO direc preaching this message: agency was founded in they've occasionally see the political system app today. "I understand pe The political system doe painful choices. We'll ne and we're toast. And yo cle that with a history we have done these thin Eakin says. "I don't hav sion of how it happens. that it does sometimes."

Even though he no lo swer to political masters Eakin won't join those v Bush tax cuts were a m least were too big. But t tion that somehow the U will grow fast enough so to wrestle with health-ca ment-spending trends. how to quantify how im think that is." Mr. Holtz

So how and when ds happen? "One theory is a crisis," he says. "A s do it is. It's a crisis poin That's what we're want

CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

Readers can alert THE WALL STREET JOURNAL to any errors in news articles by e-mailing wsjcontact@wsj.com or by calling 866-40-2607.

RECENT WakeUpWallMart.com in ad campaign that compared Wal-Mart Stores Inc. Chief Executive Lee with two politicians under indictment. Which is the real criminal? A page article yesterday accurately quoted

Mr. Dudley retains an advisory role at the firm. A money & investing article Tuesday incorrectly identified Mr. Dudley as its chief job title.

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um states for two massive systems separated on the scale of several feet. Wiley's Science Journal said the experiment entangled thousands of times more atoms than had ever been entangled before, helping to make clear that this an