

**UZBEKISTAN:
THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN CENTRAL ASIA?**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND CENTRAL ASIA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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UZBEKISTAN: THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN CENTRAL ASIA?

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2004

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND CENTRAL ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 1:12 p.m. in Room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. The Subcommittee will come to order, and as soon as Mr. Ackerman comes from his meeting with His Majesty Abdullah, with whom we just met right off the Floor, we will recognize him also for his opening statement, and I am glad to have Ms. Davis with us, who I will also recognize for an opening statement. Thank you to the witnesses, and thank you to the audience members and to the members of the press who are with us.

Since September 11th and the ensuing war on terrorism, U.S. policy has increasingly focused on Central Asia. U.S. policy has shifted to a comprehensive approach to the region, encompassing assistance in projects addressing security concerns while highlighting the integral part that political and economic reform, respect for human rights, and the promotion of democracy play as bulwarks against regional instability. The success of such a transformation in Uzbekistan is central to the success of the war against terror and the prolonged stability in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan is a strong supporter of United States military actions in Afghanistan and in Iraq and, indeed, of the global war against terror. The United States, in turn, values Uzbekistan as a stable force in the turbulent region. This nation possesses the largest and most competent military forces in Central Asia, with over 65,000 people in uniform, and, although its structure is inherited from the Soviet armed forces, with United States assistance, it is moving rapidly toward a fully restructured organization to be rebuilt around light and special forces.

Its armed forces equipment is not modern. The training, while improving, is neither uniform nor adequate yet for its new mission of territorial security. Accordingly, the United States has continued to consult closely with, and provide security assistance to, Uzbekistan on regional security problems.

It has been a strong partner of the United States on a broad range of foreign policy and security issues, ranging from Iraq and Afghanistan, to nuclear proliferation and narcotics trafficking. In

addition, it has sought active participation in western security initiatives under the Partnership for Peace, OSCE, and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. However, it continues practices that are of grave concern to us in the United States.

In the same manner that President Bush has made political reform in the Middle East a priority, accurately identifying freedom and democracy as antidotes to terrorism, the United States must press for greater political and economic reform within Uzbekistan. In implementing our short-term policies, we must keep in mind our long-term strategic and security goals. In our zeal to address immediate threats, we must be careful not to ignore Uzbekistan's egregious record on human rights, for example, and inadvertently drive the Uzbek people and the populations of other Central Asian states into the hands of extremist elements.

The dangers posed by the behaviors of the Uzbek government became readily apparent after the series of terrorist bombings and attacks on the security forces between March 28 and April 1, which killed dozens of people. The Uzbek government blamed the terrorist acts on an illegal opposition group under suppression since the 1990s. Theories about the causes of the attacks focus on the views that these were strikes against the authorities by disgruntled citizens, perhaps supported by international terrorist groups, or possibly a coup attempt by part of the ruling elite.

Irrespective of who perpetrated these deplorable acts, the Uzbek government's current reaction toward these attacks has been no more than a continuation of its current strategy, cloaked in the rhetoric of fighting terrorism, that is, the suppression of all forms of political opposition. The recent violence suggests that this strategy is failing and raises the question of whether this even more draconian approach will only serve to exacerbate an already precarious situation.

Widespread torture of detainees is common in criminal investigation in Uzbekistan and has become an unmistakable feature of the government's crackdown against independent Islam. The government refuses to hold police and security forces accountable for acts of torture and even tactically encourages torture through its broadcasting of political prisoners' public confessions as tools of political propaganda. Uzbekistan also scores particularly poor on the government's failure to effectively address the trafficking of persons, particularly women, illegally across borders for purposes of sexual exploitation.

Increasingly frustrated with Uzbekistan, Congress inserted language into the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2004. This provision states that funds appropriated will only be made available to the Uzbek government if the Secretary of State determines and reports that Uzbekistan is making progress on the human rights commitments made in the Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation of 2002. That language included calls for multiparty elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary. These have not been met, and widespread repression has continued with no end in sight.

Failure to obtain the certification or to demonstrate that Uzbekistan is committed to turning over a new leaf means that the State Department will be required to terminate all of the aid pro-

grams that it administers. Unless Uzbekistan can show tangible progress, those funds will be cut off on July 1st.

This is not an eventuality that we in Congress want to see. Concurrently, we remain concerned with Uzbekistan's long-term economic outlook. Economic growth is far below potential due to the country's poor investment climate, failure to attract foreign investment, an extremely restrictive trade regime, and failure to reform the agricultural sector of the economy due to the price system in Uzbekistan, which is not functioning properly due to the government intervention in the markets.

Substantial structural reform is needed, particularly in the area of improving the investment climate for foreign investors and in freeing the agricultural sector from smothering state control. Continuing restrictions on currency convertibility and other government measures to control economic activity, including the implementation of severe import restrictions and partial closure of Uzbekistan's borders, has almost paralyzed the consumer market.

The United States has invested heavily in Uzbekistan with respect to humanitarian and technical assistance. The United States has provided technical support to Uzbekistan's efforts to restructure its economy and to improve its environmental and health care system, provided support to growing NGOs, and provided equipment to improve water availability and quality. Continued assistance may help to ameliorate many of these short-term problems, but beyond these immediate prospects, the issues at hand reveal a much deeper strategic dilemma facing both governments. Uzbekistan's utter failure to reform, both politically and economically, jeopardizes not only its strategic partnership with the United States, and its subsequent ability to defend itself against any military threat, but also to its own internal stability.

We look forward to hearing your views on how our policy can contribute to progress in these important areas. And now I am very pleased to yield to the Ranking Member of our Subcommittee, my good friend, Mr. Ackerman of New York.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ros-Lehtinen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

Since September 11th and the ensuing war on terrorism, U.S. policy has increasingly focused on Central Asia.

U.S. policy has shifted to a comprehensive approach to the region, encompassing assistance and projects addressing security concerns, while highlighting the integral part that political and economic reform, respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy, play as bulwarks against regional instability.

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Uzbekistan is a strong supporter of U.S. military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq and of the global war against terror. The United States, in turn, values Uzbekistan as a stable force in a turbulent region.

This nation possesses the largest and most competent military forces in Central Asia, with over 65,000 people in uniform. Although its structure is inherited from the Soviet armed forces, with U.S. assistance, it is moving rapidly toward a fully restructured organization to be built around light and Special Forces.

Its armed forces' equipment is not modern, and training, while improving, is neither uniform nor adequate yet, for its new mission of territorial security. Accordingly, the U.S. has continued to consult closely with, and provide security assistance to, Uzbekistan on regional security problems.

Uzbekistan has been a strong partner of the United States on a broad range of foreign policy and security issues ranging from Iraq and Afghanistan, to nuclear proliferation and narcotics trafficking.

In addition, it has sought active participation in Western security initiatives under the Partnership for Peace, OSCE, and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

However, it continues practices that are of grave concern to the U.S.

In the same manner that President Bush has made political reform in the Middle East a priority, accurately identifying freedom and democracy as *antidotes* to terrorism, the United States *must press* for greater political and economic reforms within Uzbekistan.

In implementing our short-term policies, we must keep in mind our *long-term* strategic and security goals. In our zeal to address *immediate* threats, we must be careful not to ignore Uzbekistan's egregious record on human rights, for example, and inadvertently drive the Uzbek people, and the populations of other Central Asian states, into the hands of extremist elements.

The dangers posed by the behavior of the Uzbek government became readily apparent after a series of terrorist bombings and attacks on the security forces shook Bukhara and Tashkent between March 28 and April 1, killing dozens of people.

The Uzbek government blamed the terrorist acts on an illegal opposition group under suppression since the 1990s.

Theories about the *causes* of the attacks focus on the view that these were: strikes against the authorities by disgruntled citizens, perhaps supported by international terrorist groups or, possibly, a coup attempt by part of the ruling elite.

Irrespective of who perpetrated these deplorable acts, the Uzbek government's current reaction toward these attacks has been no more than a continuation of its current strategy, cloaked in the rhetoric of "fighting terrorism"—that is, *the suppression of all forms of political opposition*.

The recent violence suggest that this strategy is failing, and raises the question of whether this even more draconian approach will only serve to exacerbate an already precarious situation.

Widespread torture of detainees is common in criminal investigations in Uzbekistan, and has become an unmistakable feature of the government's crack-down against independent Islam. The government refuses to hold police and security forces accountable for acts of torture, and even tacitly encourages torture through its broadcasting of political prisoners' public "confessions" as tools of political propaganda.

Uzbekistan also scores particularly poorly on the government's failure to effectively address the trafficking of persons, particularly women, illegally across borders for purposes of sexual exploitation.

Increasingly frustrated with Uzbekistan, Congress inserted language into the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for Fiscal year 2004. This provision states that the funds appropriated will only be made available to the Uzbek government, if the Secretary of State determines and reports, that Uzbekistan is making progress on the human rights commitments made in the Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation of 2002.

That language included calls for multiparty elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary. *These have not been met*, and widespread repression has continued with no end in sight.

Failure to obtain this certification or to demonstrate that Uzbekistan is committed to turning over a new leaf, means that the State Department will be required to terminate all the aid programs it administers. Unless Uzbekistan can show tangible progress, those funds will be cut off on July 1. This is not an eventuality that we, in Congress, want to see.

Concurrently, we remain concerned about Uzbekistan's long-term economic outlook.

Economic growth is far below potential due to the country's—poor investment climate; failure to attract foreign investment; an extremely restrictive trade regime; failure to reform the agricultural sector of the economy; and due to the price system in Uzbekistan, which is not functioning properly due to government intervention in markets.

Substantial structural reform is needed, particularly in the area of improving the investment climate for foreign investors and in freeing the agricultural sector from smothering state control.

Continuing restrictions on currency convertibility and other government measures to control economic activity, including the implementation of severe import restrictions and partial closure of Uzbekistan's borders, has almost paralyzed the consumer market.

The United States has invested heavily in Uzbekistan with respect to humanitarian and technical assistance.

The U.S. has provided technical support to Uzbekistan's efforts to restructure its economy and to improve its environment and health care system, provided support to nascent NGOs, and provided equipment to improve water availability and quality in the Aral Sea region.

Continued assistance may help ameliorate many of these short-term problems, but beyond these immediate prospects, the issues at hand reveal a much deeper strategic dilemma facing both governments.

Uzbekistan's utter failure to reform both politically and economically, jeopardizes not only its strategic partnership with the United States and its subsequent ability to defend itself against any military threat, but also its own internal stability.

We look forward to hearing your views on how our policy can contribute to progress in these areas.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you, as always, for your leadership and especially for scheduling today's hearing on Uzbekistan.

As the title of the hearing implies, many believe that Uzbekistan is key to a successful United States policy in the region because of its location, population, energy resources, and the relative size and strength of its military. Indeed, Uzbekistan has been a strong supporter of the global war on terrorism since the September 11th attacks. But Uzbekistan also presents us with a classic example of United States short-term strategic needs trumping our long-term interests.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11th, President Karimov offered the use of Uzbek air space for the war on terrorism. By early October 2001, there were a thousand United States troops on the ground in Uzbekistan, along with approximately 1,500 aircraft in an agreement for coalition forces to operate from Khanabad Air Base. In return, the United States pledged to consult with Uzbekistan in the event of a threat to Uzbekistan's security and territorial integrity.

This agreement took a more formal shape in March 2002, with the signing by Uzbekistan and the United States of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation. In this agreement, the Government of Uzbekistan made explicit commitments concerning democratization, protections of human rights and religious freedoms, and the establishment of a market-based economy. Apparently, the Government of Uzbekistan believes that the first, last, and only actions it really needed to take on any of these issues occurred with the signing of the agreement.

I do not think anyone can say with a straight face that Uzbekistan has made "substantial and continuing progress" on these issues, as required by last year's Foreign Operations Act, and so, unable to make the determination required by that law, the Secretary of State cannot provide United States assistance to the Government of Uzbekistan during the current fiscal year.

The international community is also reducing assistance levels to Uzbekistan because of the lack of progress on reform issues. In early April, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development announced that it would be curtailing lending to that nation.

It is regrettable that the situation has come to this, but it is clear that President Karimov does not respond to diplomatic entreaties. It is equally clear that President Karimov has learned that all he really needs to do is provide us with assistance in the global war

on terrorism and that the rest is really not that important to us. This is an unfortunate lesson, but Uzbekistan is not the first nation to learn it.

The conclusion is also not lost on those groups in Uzbekistan who want to work for reform but are unable because of Uzbekistan's ridiculously onerous registration laws for both nongovernmental organizations as well as political parties, the extraordinary repression of religious organizations, and the endemic corruption. These groups expect the United States to speak up for reform, but increasingly they view the United States supporting the oppressive regime against which they are struggling.

This situation is not unique to Uzbekistan. It is sentiment we find anywhere in the world where U.S. officials speak in lofty terms about democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, only to have our policy move in the opposite direction. It is a sad lesson we teach.

I hope, Madam Chair, today our witnesses can provide us with some new thinking about how to balance in a better way our short-term strategic interests with our long-term goals for reform. I thank you, Madam Chair, and do look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Ackerman.

Ms. Davis, for some opening remarks? Mr. Smith?

Mr. SMITH. Just briefly, Madam Chairman. There is no question that Uzbekistan is very important in Central Asia, and I guess my concern is yours, and I align myself with a lot of your comments, Madam Chairman. There are media reports that we have had troops based in Uzbekistan from before September 11th and that we have today over 1,000 troops there, so that is one of the issues I wanted to clarify with our witnesses.

Certainly, it is the largest country in the region. Its domestic terrorist groups have been linked to international terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda. It also has substantial untapped and gas reserves. In summary, it is very important in the region. What happens with terrorists, what happens with drug production, what happens with what appears to be less than full cooperation with the United States, it seems to me, results in a situation where there needs to be more oversight from Congress, making sure that these appropriations, that our taxpayers somehow receive, for lack of a better expression, the bang for their buck in what is happening in Uzbekistan.

So I look forward also to the witnesses' testimony justifying the increased funding that is in the President's budget, and with that, I would like to, Madam Chairman, put the rest of my statement in the record.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection. Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Rohrabacher?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. I would just like to say a few things about Uzbekistan to put this in perspective, not to say that I have a monopoly on perspective on that part of the world, but I have been there many times, and I have been deeply involved with conflicts long before 9/11 in that part of the world, and I dealt with the Uzbek leadership prior to 9/11 and after 9/11.

Let us note that Uzbekistan has been an island of stability in a sea of turmoil in that region. Now, I know that stability quite often is being used as an excuse to overlook human rights. I do not overlook human rights abuses, and I do not think our government should. But let us acknowledge that this stability in Uzbekistan permitted the United States to launch a counteroffensive against those who had murdered 3,000 of our citizens and declared war on us. Without the friendship of Uzbekistan, without the cooperation of Uzbekistan, we would not have been able to be successful in our operations in Afghanistan. There is no doubt about that.

So we owe a debt of gratitude for that because had we instead gone the southern strategy in dealing with Afghanistan, I have no doubt that there would be 100,000 or 150,000 American troops in Afghanistan today, pinned down and reliant on supplies from a very unstable area of Pakistan.

So the Uzbeks helped us at this time. They signed on when we really needed it, when our people had been murdered, and so it has, since 9/11, been a bastion of friendship for the United States, as well as an island of stability. And, again, we all recognize that that does not excuse human rights abuses and a lack of democratic reform, but we have to make sure that we do not forget those things as well as we are talking about policy toward that country.

We are in the middle of a war, and it is a war on radical Islam in which Uzbekistan is on the front line. Oftentimes, at war, people's civil liberties are violated. Now, to be fair about it, Uzbekistan, long before the war on terrorism, was engaged in policies that violated people's civil liberties. There is no doubt about that, but when we are looking for change in the middle of a conflict situation where we have \$2 billion worth of drug money being poured into that region from Afghanistan financing radical Islam, which is our enemy in the war that we are fighting, we have to realize that we have got some complicated decisions to make.

My suggestion, and I am looking forward to hearing the testimony today to discuss these ideas, my suggestion is to make sure that we try as many creative approaches rather than just a sledgehammer-in-the-face approach to a human rights abuser, which the regime is, try to take some creative approaches. I would like to hear about those, if we have got any positive approaches that can alter the human rights policies of the current Government of Uzbekistan while at the same time not creating a crisis in that part of the world which will only help our enemies, the radical Islamists who care creating all sorts of tensions throughout that region.

So perhaps we could have further exchange programs that would focus on Uzbekistan, bring young Uzbek leaders here, and focus on a positive program rather than a negative program to try to help them in the right direction. With that said, I appreciate your leadership, Madam Chairman, and this is a very significant issue because it deals with a complicated set of decisions we need to make and have to make as a people. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Now, we are pleased to introduce our panelists today, old friends of our Subcommittee. Lorne Whitney Craner was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and

Labor on June 4, 2001. In this position, he coordinates U.S. foreign policy and programs that support the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy worldwide.

Prior to this appointment, Lorne was President of the International Republican Institute, IRI, a position he had held since 1995. Lorne has also held the position of Director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs.

Thank you, Lorne, for being here.

And we will also hear from Ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe, who took up his duties as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs on September 4, 2001. His areas of responsibilities include countries in the eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia. A Career Minister in the Senior Foreign Service, Ambassador Pascoe has most recently served as the American Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and he earlier served as the U.S. Special Negotiator in Regional Conflicts and the U.S. Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group. Thank you.

And on November 1, 2003, Ms. Mira Ricardel was appointed as Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. She is a principal adviser to the Secretary of Defense on the formulation and coordination of policy for NATO, Europe, Russia, and the Central Asian Republics, and nuclear forces, missile defense, and technology security policy, and counterproliferation and arms control.

Prior to her appointment, Mira was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Eurasia. She was responsible for planning and developing U.S. defense and military policy on regional security matters, national security issues, and defense priorities for Russia, Ukraine, as well as the countries of Central Asia and the Balkans.

Thank you to all. Your full statements will be made a part of the record, and please feel free to summarize. Thank you. Lorne?

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LORNE W. CRANER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR BUREAU, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. CRANER. Madam Chairperson, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for holding this hearing.

The attacks of September 11th linked the United States and Uzbekistan together in a common battle against global terrorism. The most manifest symbol of this new relationship was the historic, March 2002 visit of Uzbekistan's President Karimov to the United States. The White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon saw this visit as an historic opportunity to deepen cooperation not only on security matters but also on human rights and political and economic reforms, essential elements of the robust and lasting relationship we hoped to build.

During that visit, President Karimov and Secretary Powell signed the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework. With that agreement, we enshrined in our bilateral relations a conviction that true security can only be founded on an open-market-based economy and a transparent and democratic political system.

The Government of Uzbekistan reaffirmed its commitment and intention to further intensify the democratic transformation of its society, and the United States agreed to provide advice, aid, and assistance in that area. As a result, we expected progress in ensuring respect for human rights freedoms, establishing a genuine multi-party system, ensuring the independence of the media, and strengthening civil society.

In 2001, at the start of our expanded relations, we stood before a monumental task: Parliamentary and presidential elections since independence had been neither free nor fair. There were no registered human rights groups. Security forces abused human rights activists regularly. Opposition political parties were not registered, nor were they allowed to operate freely. Censorship was widely practiced. And during the year, the ICRC suspended its newly begun program to visit prisons because it had not been able to get the government to agree to pre-trial detention visits.

So where do we stand nearly 3 years after our deepening cooperation? Well, the United States has upheld its end of the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

We expanded our support for democracy and human rights dramatically, both in a diplomatic and a material sense, from President Bush and Secretary Powell on down. We have addressed any acts of repression by aggressively urging the Government of Uzbekistan to undertake meaningful reforms, and we put our money where our mouth was. Our democracy assistance in the 3-year period after 9/11 doubled in comparison to our assistance in the 3-year period before 9/11. I have detailed much of what I think is creative programmatic activity in my written testimony.

In judging the success of our policies of the past 3 years, we cannot overlook some important gains. There have been winners as a result of our engagement. Political space has marginally opened. For example, in the past year, independent opposition parties have been holding national meetings and have taken the bold steps of trying to register. After years of moribund opposition activities, parties are at least hopeful that they can compete in upcoming elections, and human rights activists are able to meet.

In May, the Government of Uzbekistan invited an independent forensic team working with Freedom House to investigate a suspicious death in custody. The team, observing Uzbekistan's own investigation, concluded that the death was a result of a suicide, not police mistreatment.

In particular, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior are to be commended for their invaluable collaboration in ensuring that the independent monitoring of the investigation into the recent death proceeded in a professional and cooperative manner. We are also encouraged by the dialogue between the Interior Ministry officials and the Coalition Against Torture.

But we see much more that remains troubling. Uzbekistan's human rights record remains very poor. Serious abuses and deaths in detention continue. Successive presidential amnesties have lowered the number of political and religious prisoners to an estimated 5,300 to 5,800, yet many have been rearrested, and detentions of suspected Islamic extremists continue. While Uzbekistan took the commendable step of inviting U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture,

the government has not taken any meaningful steps to implement his recommendations.

Opportunities that might easily have been taken have been ignored. Despite repeated attempts, none of the four opposition parties has been able to register, which will preclude them from participating in parliamentary elections this winter. Prepublication censorship has been abolished, but new amendments to the media law encourage self-censorship. Two independent human rights groups have been registered, but others have been denied.

In the past few months, we have seen serious setbacks, especially the backward trend of harassing and hampering the work of U.S. implementing partners. The Open Society Institute was denied re-registration. In April, Parliament passed a new law banning any foreign assistance for political parties, and by "foreign assistance" in this case, they mean training and study tours abroad. NDI, IRI, and Freedom House have been publicly accused by the government of engaging in unconstitutional activities.

In sum, the Government of Uzbekistan has had a very disappointing record on democracy and human rights and has not yet taken advantage of the opportunity offered to them to become a full-fledged partner of the United States. The Government of Uzbekistan, as a whole, has chosen not to institutionalize and implement real reforms, reforms that are badly needed in order to ensure long-term stability and security.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing. We look forward to working with you to encourage Uzbekistan to adhere to human rights standards and norms.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Craner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LORNE W. CRANER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR BUREAU, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you holding this hearing and for this opportunity to testify on Uzbekistan, an authoritarian state with limited civil rights, where the Government's human rights record remains very poor, with numerous serious abuses.

Nearly three years ago, the United States and Uzbekistan embarked on a new path in their bilateral relations. The attacks of September 11 linked our two nations together into a common battle against global terrorism. The most manifest symbol of this new relationship was the historic March 12, 2002 visit of Uzbekistan's President Karimov to the White House. An evolution in our relationship, officials from the White House to the State Department to the Pentagon saw this visit as an historic opportunity to deepen cooperation not only on security matters, but also on human rights and political and economic reform. From the very beginning we have regarded all of these areas as essential elements of the robust and lasting relationship we hoped to build.

The international community, especially human rights groups, worried that this new relationship gave the Uzbek authorities the "green light" to commit human rights abuses with impunity because the U.S. would turn a blind eye to such abuses. Our critics were wrong. In fact, our strategic relationship has meant an increased focus on human rights. We have shone an even brighter spotlight on the democracy and human rights record of Uzbekistan. We have instead championed human rights by closely observing the Government of Uzbekistan's human rights record, bringing any abuses to the attention of the Government. And most importantly, we have addressed any acts of repression by urging the Government of Uzbekistan to undertake meaningful reform. We have used our new, closer relations to expand not only our agenda but also the range of Government officials with whom we have a dialogue on democracy and human rights. We have used increased, high-level U.S. Government visits and interactions to pursue a human rights and democracy agenda across the board. And we put our money where our mouth is. Our democracy assist-

ance in the three-year period after September 11 doubled in comparison to our assistance in the three-year period prior to September 11.

During the March 2002 visit of President Karimov, Secretary Powell stressed to Karimov that the region's long-term stability and security are inextricably linked to the need to strengthen human rights, democratic institutions and economic reform. Our countries then signed the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework. With that document, we enshrined in our bilateral relations our conviction that true security can only be founded on an open market-based economy and a transparent and democratic political system. In this historic document not only did the Government of Uzbekistan reaffirm its commitment and intention to further intensify the democratic transformation of its society, but the U.S. also underscored its intention to provide advice, aid, and assistance in that area. As a result, we expected progress in all areas of democratic reforms, including in ensuring respect for human rights freedoms, establishing a genuine multi-party system, ensuring the independence of the media, and strengthening civil society.

So where do we stand nearly three years after our deepening our cooperation? Has our increased engagement brought satisfactory results? We are now at a particularly appropriate time for a historical review of the past three years. What has happened to the situation of democracy and human rights in Uzbekistan and what have we done to promote them?

I am very pleased to say that the United States has upheld its end of the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework document. We have expanded our support for democracy and human rights dramatically. We are maintaining these increased levels of support for human rights and democracy organizations, especially to assist political and human rights in promoting peaceful change. We have funded a Human Rights Clinic at the Tashkent State Law Institute, the first ever in Central Asia, with a second to open in the Fergana Valley this fall. In March Ambassador Purnell attended the opening of the first law firm in Uzbekistan dedicated exclusively to the protection of human rights that provides its services free of charge, another U.S.-funded project. In addition, the U.S. is funding five public defenders' centers (PDCs) throughout Uzbekistan that are designed to provide free criminal defense services to poor people from the moment of detention. As we know from our own Human Rights Report, much of the torture and abuse in the Uzbek legal system occurs in the pre-trial detention period. This project aims to prevent coercion, torture and self-incrimination during that crucial period and to ensure the provision of effective trial counsel throughout the legal process. In just one example of this project's value, earlier this year, lawyers at one PDC were successful in gaining the release of people illegally detained in Fergana City in the aftermath of late March bombings.

Beyond these rule of law activities, the U.S. has funded the establishment of two Human Rights Resource Centers (with a third to open this year), which offer a secure environment for human rights activists to network and organize; the Centers provide essential access to information and Internet technology. The Centers' extremely popular training programs are giving a new generation of human rights defenders the tools they need to be effective and hold their government accountable. A new program started this spring with U.S. funding has already demonstrated outstanding results: under the stewardship of Freedom House, a coalition of leading human rights defenders, journalists, medical personnel and lawyers have formed a civic coalition of forces to combat torture. This group has developed an advocacy strategy that included hosting two groundbreaking roundtables where coalition members were seated at the table with high-ranking law enforcement officials from the Ministry of Interior (MVD). One human rights participant remarked afterwards, "This is something we have been dreaming about for years." The roundtables have been followed by concrete outcomes, such as the recently concluded agreement between the MVD and the Coalition to allow independent monitoring of prison conditions by the group in addition to direct contact between human rights groups and MVD officials at the local level.

We have also stood firmly behind our stated intention to support the development of a genuine multi-party system. The U.S. has funded both the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute to work actively with Uzbekistan's opposition and pro-government parties, providing guidance on grassroots organizing, press relations, and the drafting of party platforms. NDI and IRI training programs helped the Party of Agrarians and Entrepreneurs, the Free Farmers Party, and Birlik to organize and develop the skills necessary to hold regional and national congresses and to submit registration applications. While the Government continues to deny them, as well as the Erk party, registration, these political activities, unprecedented in Uzbekistan, reached thousands of people

throughout the country. Our efforts have resulted in more citizens being politically active than has been seen in years, despite the serious risk of harassment.

Lastly, broadening access to objective information and supporting the efforts of those journalists willing to test the limits continues to be a priority. U.S.-funded training programs have helped expose promising print and broadcast journalists to modern, independent journalistic practices. In spite of government harassment and denial of re-registration, with U.S. funding the Institute for War and Peace Reporting has conducted trainings designed to expand the coverage of human rights issues in Uzbekistan.

In 2001, at the start of our expanded relations, we stood before a monumental task: Parliamentary and presidential elections since independence had not been free nor fair. There were no registered human rights groups, and security forces abused human rights activists. Opposition political parties were not registered nor were they allowed to operate freely or publish their views. Censorship was widely practiced and the Government tolerated little, if any, criticism of its actions. Approximately 7,500 persons were in detention for political or religious reasons. And during the year, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had suspended its newly begun program to visit prisons because it had not been able to get the Government to agree to pretrial detention visits.

In 2004 we see a picture that remains troubling: Uzbekistan's human rights record remains very poor; serious abuses and deaths in detention continue—at least four suspicious deaths since the human rights certification last year. Successive presidential amnesties have lowered the number of political and religious prisoners to an estimated 5,300–5,800, yet many have been re-arrested and detentions of suspected Islamic extremists continue, often based on such flimsy evidence as the individual prays five times a day. While Uzbekistan took the commendable step to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Government has not taken any meaningful steps on implementing his recommendations after concluding that torture is systematic in Uzbekistan. Habeas corpus legislation, which could do much to prevent torture in pretrial detention, has not been passed by parliament despite assurances to the contrary.

Despite repeated attempts, none of the four opposition parties has been able to register, which will preclude them from participating in parliamentary elections this winter. While prepublication censorship of the media has been abolished, new amendments to the media law encourage self-censorship. While independent journalist Ruslan Sharipov has been paroled from prison, others remain imprisoned or are harassed and some journalists have been forced to flee the country. While two independent human rights organizations have been registered, others have been denied.

I stand before you now and say we remain deeply concerned by the poor observance of internationally recognized human rights standards by the Government of Uzbekistan and by its disappointing record in fulfilling its commitments made in our bilateral strategic partnership framework. In the past few months we have seen serious setbacks, especially the backward trend of harassing and hampering the work of U.S. implementing partners. The Open Society Institute was denied re-registration, and a new banking regulation is crippling our efforts to provide assistance to local NGOs, communities, and even former weapons scientists. In April parliament passed a law banning any foreign assistance for political parties, including training and study tours abroad. NDI, IRI and Freedom House have been publicly accused by the Government of Uzbekistan of engaging in “unconstitutional activities.”

In conclusion, I think we can say that the Government of Uzbekistan has not yet taken advantage of the opportunity offered them to become a full-fledged partner of the United States. The Government of Uzbekistan has chosen not to institutionalize and implement real reforms, reforms that are badly needed in order to ensure long-term stability and security. As President Bush recently stated [in his address to the Air Force Academy June 2, 2004]:

America has always been less secure when freedom is in retreat. America is always more secure when freedom is on the march.

We do remain hopeful, however, because we do see signs of earnest desire for reform. Some leaders in the Government of Uzbekistan have demonstrated a clear desire to reform but they are being held back by others who are less interested in reform. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior are to be commended for their invaluable collaboration in ensuring that the independent monitoring of the investigation into the recent death in detention proceeded in a professional and cooperative manner. We are also encouraged by the dialogue between Interior Ministry officials and the Coalition Against Torture. I note, too, the efforts

of Ambassador Kamilov in addressing our concerns and seeking means of resolution. These are constructive steps that we welcome.

In judging the success of our policies of the past three years, we cannot overlook some important gains we have made in helping a nascent sector of civic activists. There have been winners as a result of our engagement. The people of Uzbekistan have benefited. Political space has marginally opened—for examples, in the past year independent opposition parties have been holding national meetings and have taken the bold steps of trying to register. After years of moribund opposition activity, parties are at least hopeful that they can compete in upcoming parliamentary elections. And human rights activists are able to meet and advocate for change. In May, the Government of Uzbekistan invited an independent forensic team working with Freedom House to investigate a suspicious death in custody. The team, observing Uzbekistan's own investigation, concluded that the death was a result of suicide, not police mistreatment. The Uzbekistani government stated this cooperation was 'precedent setting.' While peaceful change may seem far off at the moment, hope among the courageous citizens of Uzbekistan remains alive.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing. We look forward to working with the Committee to encourage Uzbekistan to adhere to internationally recognized human rights standards and norms.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Ambassador Craner.
And, Ambassador Pascoe, thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE B. LYNN PASCOE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. PASCOE. Madam Chairperson, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear here today and to be with you in this hearing.

I would like to talk a little bit about what our policy is broadly in the region, where we are working very hard, I think, on three areas. One is the security area, whether it is counterterrorism, whether it is better control of the borders, whether it is a better military establishment, and we are trying to provide better security for the region. A second area is in the area of human rights improvement and development of reforms, both in the political and the economic areas; and, finally, to try to help in the kind of economic development which will bring their populations up to a level that we do not have the manufacturing of the kinds of crises, the kinds of problems, the kinds of tensions that lead to a growing terrorist problem in the region.

As you have all rightly pointed out, when you talk about Central Asia, you certainly have to talk about Uzbekistan as the key to the region. It is in the middle. It is the largest population by far. It is the guardian of a centuries' long tradition of enlightened Islamic scholarship and culture, and it does have the most effective military in the region.

Certainly, Uzbekistan is not stranger to terrorism, as the most recent incidents in Tashkent and Bukhara demonstrated. We have good and strong security cooperation with the country, and I am sure Ms. Ricardel will talk about it in more detail. But suffice it to say, at this point, they were there early on with us on Operation Enduring Freedom. The base at Karshi-Khanabad has been absolutely critical to our efforts. Uzbekistan was the first country to actually finalize an "Article 98" agreement with us, and we have been working very closely with the Uzbek military to bolster its own capabilities and professionalism.

I think all of us who look at our policy in the area, though, realize that there are some problems in Uzbekistan that are quite real. This is a country that I think, coming out of the Soviet Union, had perhaps the best opportunities in the region, and it has not moved forward as quickly as we had hoped. They chose a quite conservative economic-development policy which caused them to fall less far than the other regions after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the ending of the subsidies from Moscow. That may have looked good in the early days of the '90s when other countries in the region all fell much farther. Unfortunately, now, the costs of that process are beginning to become very real.

The lack of agricultural reforms, although they are talked about but still not instituted, has actually led to a 30 percent decline in the cotton harvest, which is Uzbekistan's primary export. The industrial sector is mired in low-value production and is dependent on protectionist policies and state-guaranteed loans. And unfortunately, because we believe it is the key to development in the region, Uzbekistan has the lowest per capita foreign direct investment of anywhere in the region.

We certainly had hopes that this was changing. In fact, it did not move very quickly, and the only major step in the last year or so that Uzbekistan has taken on economic reform have been the accession to the obligations of the IMF Article VIII provisions for a convertible currency, but the way they did it, which normally should be a great step toward a market economy, but the way they did it was to dry up the local currency and close down the borders in such a way that it increased hardship on people and had negative effects on thousands of small businessmen and consumers across the country. When you tie to that an increasingly heavy burden of administrative controls on financial issues, the opportunities for corruption, of course, as we all know, increase.

There are some positive signs in this area. Uzbekistan joined with the other countries of Central Asia to sign the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the United States a couple of weeks ago. We hope this, as well as the recent discussions of a free trade zone for Central Asia, in which President Karimov took the lead, will, in fact, lay the basis for a new period of regional cooperation, which is absolutely essential to the development of the region.

In my statement, I talk quite a bit about the promotion of human rights and civil society reforms, which we believe are equally important over the long term, and we have been working at it very hard. I will cut my statement down here because Lorne, obviously, went into that discussion himself in greater detail.

But I do think that while, at least on the human rights side, you can perhaps make an argument that there have been some developments that have been positive, it is harder to make that argument on the political reform side, which had been proceeding slowly, if not very dramatically. However, after the November 2003 events in Georgia, it was clear that the Government of Uzbekistan consciously moved to halt progress on democratic reform. They have promulgated new rules that make it very difficult for NGOs to operate and have certainly created a new registration process that only with our strong insistence, allowed all of the American-

affiliated NGOs except one, which is the Open Society Institute, to be re-registered. But they have been hemmed in by a series of economic and other laws that are going to make it very difficult for them to operate in the future.

We believe that it is absolutely critical that Uzbekistan make progress in all of these areas. Some people said after 9/11 that we ignored the political and economic reform side. This is certainly not true. It has been there, and we have argued it intensively, from the very first. We do believe, though, that they are all required, and they must all work together, for Uzbekistan and the Uzbek people to reach the level of development that they need and, therefore, becoming a very, very close partner of the United States.

You asked, Madam Chairperson, earlier before we came on the question about the Secretary's certification process in the 2002 Strategic Partnership Framework. Our estimate is that about \$18 million of the \$55 million would be affected by that question, which is money going directly to the central government. As we have noted, the framework outlines progress Uzbekistan and the United States would like to see be made in several areas. There is no real deadline on the legislation, but a decision must be made soon to allow the expenditure of fiscal year 2004 funds.

It is unfortunate, in our view, that no national security waiver was included for Uzbekistan in the legislation, which would have allowed us to have a far more nuanced approach to encourage compliance since, in fact, many of the programs that are affected in this \$18 million could include nonproliferation programs and other programs that are designed to increase respect for human rights.

While I, at this point, would not really want in any way to predict what the Secretary will decide when he has seen all of the facts on this, I do expect that he will have to make the decision in a fairly short time in a few weeks.

Frankly, we believe that the road ahead can be a bright one. We think there is room for a tremendous amount of progress, but there is a lot of work to do, and we need to move forward with the people of Uzbekistan and its citizens.

We would be pleased at any time to answer questions. Thank you very much, Madam.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pascoe follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE B. LYNN PASCOE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Madame Chairwoman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your Committee today. The strategic goal of the United States in Central Asia is to see the development of independent, democratic and stable states, committed to the kind of political and economic reform essential to modern societies, and on the path to integration into the world economy. This strategy is based on the simultaneous pursuit of three interrelated goals.

The first of these goals is security. Our counter terrorism cooperation bolsters the sovereignty and independence of these states and provides them the stability needed to undertake the reforms we feel are in their long term interest. In order for these nations to achieve their potential, they must allow for greater transparency, respect for human rights, and movement toward democratic politics. Finally, the development of Central Asia's economic potential, including its extensive natural resources, requires free market economy reforms and foreign direct investment. This is the only way to improve the well-being of the region's people, diversify world energy sources, and facilitate the movement of these countries into the global economy. We seek a balance among all three of these objectives, recognizing that they are inter-

linked, and that failure to achieve any one of them will likely prevent us from securing the other two.

Central Asia has major strategic importance for the United States, and Uzbekistan inevitably assumes a key role in our policy toward the region. It occupies a core position in Central Asia: it is the only country that borders all Central Asian countries as well as Afghanistan. It has by far the largest population, constituting roughly 46% of the region's total. It is the guardian of a centuries-long tradition of enlightened Islamic scholarship and culture, and it boasts the largest and most effective military among the five countries.

Uzbekistan felt the intense pain of terrorism once again with the dramatic attacks in late March-April in Tashkent and Bukhara. It has long understood the need to confront the danger of extremist elements who would use violence to further their narrow-minded, misguided goals.

The United States and Uzbekistan enjoy strong security cooperation. Uzbekistan has been an early and outspoken supporter of the war on terrorism. Indeed, it has played a critical role in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and provided the military base at Karshi-Khanabad, now home to roughly 1,500 U.S. servicemen and women, without rent or as part of a broader defense agreement. Uzbekistan was one of the first countries to sign an "Article 98" agreement with us allowing U.S. nationals to be exempt from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. Over the past decade, we have developed a close working relationship with the Uzbek military that has allowed it to bolster its capabilities and professionalism.

But Uzbekistan also has some very real problems. The country with the most promise in the region at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, it has unfortunately not lived up to its economic or political potential. It adopted a slower, more cautious, approach toward economic reform than its neighbors since independence in an effort to avoid—or postpone—the inevitable economic dislocations.

The costs of this conservative policy are now becoming increasingly obvious. While some of the other countries in the region have entered a period of significant growth in recent years, Uzbekistan's economy has stagnated. The absence of agricultural reforms has led to a 30% decline in the cotton harvest, Uzbekistan's primary export, over the past decade. The industrial sector is mired in low value-added production, and is dependent on protectionist policies and state-guaranteed loans for much of its continued production. Uzbekistan has the lowest per capita foreign direct investment in the region. Growth might have been even slower, had Uzbekistan not enjoyed relatively high commodity prices for its two main exports, cotton and gold.

In the first few months after President Karimov's March 2002 visit to Washington and the signing of the Framework Agreement, there were indications that Uzbekistan planned to institute broader economic reforms. This momentum slowed dramatically, however, as various groups that would have been affected by reforms argued against further opening up of the economy. The only substantial step since that time has been Uzbekistan's accession in late 2003 to the obligations of the IMF Article VIII provisions which pave the way for a convertible currency, normally a crucial step on the path to a market economy. However, Uzbekistan accomplished this by severely limiting the amount of local currency available in the economy and sharply restricting trade. This included closing many traditional border crossings and shutting down several major bazaars. These steps, which technically allowed them to meet the criteria, ran directly counter to the spirit of Article VIII and its emphasis on encouraging the free movement of currency and goods. The negative effect on thousands of small businessmen and consumers across Uzbekistan was immediate and predictable. In addition, the heavy burden of administrative regulation on business registration, international trade and currency conversion provide all too many opportunities for corruption.

But there are some recent positive developments. In late May, Uzbekistan enthusiastically joined its neighbors in signing a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the United States. This will provide a forum for us to discuss trade issues and to work towards mutually beneficial solutions. These discussions, along with President Karimov's recently announced proposal for a free-trade zone in Central Asia, offer the possibility of increased regional cooperation, which is a vital necessity if Uzbekistan and its neighbors are to prosper and the region is to meet its economic potential.

The promotion of human rights and civil society reforms are equally critical for long-term stability. Uzbekistan's record on human rights and civil society reform remains poor. We have, however, seen some progress over the past few years, although not always at the rate we had hoped. In August 2003, Uzbekistan began a process to bring Uzbek law on torture into conformity with international standards. Dozens of police have been prosecuted under this law. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has shown welcome initiative in engaging in dialogues with human rights ac-

tivists and NGOs. The Ministry announced a program that would allow human rights NGOs to conduct prison monitoring.

At the end of May, Uzbekistan broke new ground by inviting independent forensic investigators associated with Freedom House to observe the investigation into a May 19 death in custody. The international team concluded the death was a suicide and that there were no signs of torture. Uzbekistan has said this open investigation marked an important precedent. Following the March-April bombings, the government's measured response in rounding up suspects (approximately 150-200 remain in custody) stands in sharp contrast to the aftermath of the 1999 bombings when thousands were arrested.

Since independence, political reform has proceeded slowly, but there seemed to be some positive momentum in the past couple of years. After the November 2003 events in Georgia, however, the Government of Uzbekistan consciously moved to halt progress on democratic reform. It promulgated new rules to force all domestic and international NGOs to go through an onerous new registration procedure. We insisted that registration of U.S. NGO implementing partners be carried out in compliance with our bilateral agreements on the provision of assistance. As a result, almost all U.S. funded NGOs except the Open Society Institute were reregistered. OSI was not allowed to continue its work in Uzbekistan.

Although they were registered, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, and Freedom House received warnings that if they continued working with unregistered political parties they would lose their status. No opposition parties have been registered. New banking regulations severely restrict the ability of our implementing partners to provide assistance to NGOs, communities, and even former weapons scientists.

A strong and stable Uzbekistan depends on the political empowerment of all its citizens and on an opening of civil society. The Government does tolerate meetings of unregistered independent political parties and small political demonstrations. But sustaining long-term stability will require the Government to do more to provide the people of Uzbekistan the ability to express their political views and to participate more fully in the civic life of their country.

Long-term stability will also require the Government and people of Uzbekistan to develop a way to advance religious freedom while restraining extremism. Fortunately, traditions of cultural and religious tolerance have been indigenous to Uzbekistan for over a millennium. Our challenge is to help our friends in Uzbekistan allow the faithful to rekindle these traditions, which had been suppressed during Uzbekistan's incorporation into the Soviet Union.

Madam Chairwoman, you asked that we discuss the determination and report the Secretary is required to make on Uzbekistan's progress in implementing the 2002 Strategic Partnership Framework. This would affect about \$18 million in planned Fiscal Year 2004 assistance to the Government of Uzbekistan. This Framework outlines progress that Uzbekistan and the United States would like to see made in the areas of human rights, national security cooperation, economic reforms, civil society, law enforcement cooperation, and freedom of expression and media. There is no deadline in the legislation, but a decision must be made soon to allow the expenditure of FY 2004 funds. It is unfortunate that no national security waiver was included for Uzbekistan in the legislation which would have allowed for a more nuanced approach to encourage compliance, since many of the programs potentially affected by this legislation support non-proliferation programs or are intended to increase respect for human rights. While I don't want to predict what the Secretary will decide, I do expect he will make his decision in the next few weeks.

Madame Chairwoman, I appreciate this opportunity to address you on this important topic. We believe Uzbekistan and the Uzbek people have tremendous potential and a bright future. We are also confident that a firm basis exists for a closer and stronger U.S.-Uzbek bilateral relationship. But much remains to be done. We look forward to working with you and members of this body to help Uzbekistan and its citizens achieve their potential and to promote the major U.S. strategic interests in the region. I'll be pleased to answer any questions. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Before we go on to our next witness, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize Congressman Joe Pitts so that he could have an opportunity to make an opening statement. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I will submit my opening statement for the record, but I would like permission to submit

for the record a letter from the American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce to Colin Powell, also a white paper entitled "CNH in Uzbekistan" document, and the statement of the Institute of Global Engagement run by former Ambassador Seibel.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I will yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Do you want to tell us what is in those documents and what they say just to let us know? We will have to read it. All right. Well, thank you. Thank you so much.

Ms. Ricardel?

STATEMENT OF MIRA R. RICARDEL, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Ms. RICARDEL. Madam Chairperson and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Uzbekistan.

Our security cooperation and military-to-military relations with Uzbekistan are important not only in the context of the global war on terrorism but in terms of the impressive reforms underway in Uzbekistan's armed forces and within the Ministry of Defense.

After the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States, Uzbekistan's offer of support came early, was unconditional, and uncompensated. At the height of combat operations in Afghanistan, it hosted more than 3,000 United States personnel. Now, around 1,500 U.S. troops are based there. As we work to bring peace, stability, and development to Afghanistan and the region, the United States deeply values the strong support we received from President Karimov and the Government of Uzbekistan.

Our defense and security relationship with Uzbekistan began before 9/11; however, in the wake of 9/11, it advanced dramatically, enabling us to work more intensively with the Uzbeks on a broad range of reforms, as outlined in the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, reforms that will ensure Uzbekistan's long-term stability, sovereignty, and economic viability.

United States-Uzbek cooperation in the defense and security area is exceptional, a genuine strategic partnership. The Department of Defense enjoys excellent relations with the Government of Uzbekistan at all levels, both civilian and military. Uzbekistan has been quick to respond to issues of concern to the United States. Their immediately signing of an Article 98 agreement is a notable example. Relations between U.S. Central Command and the Uzbek armed forces at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base are superb. Uzbeks provide force protection at Khanabad and coordination with United States forces.

In addition, cooperation combatting transnational security threats is a major focus of our relationship with Uzbekistan. In 1997, we jointly agreed to eliminate, through the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, a Soviet chemical weapons production, research, and testing complex near Nukus. The complex had tested positive for nerve agent and was demilitarized by 2002.

In 2001, the Government of Uzbekistan and the Defense Department began the Biological Weapons Proliferation Prevention program. A notable success was our bilateral effort that destroyed an-

thrax buried by the Soviets on Vozrozhdeniye Island in the Aral Sea. We are also working with Uzbek bio-research institutes to consolidate and secure dangerous pathogen collections.

Since 1996, through the Department's International Counterproliferation program, we have trained Uzbek personnel in effective border-control procedures and helped develop their capabilities to investigate, control, and prosecute any WMD-related proliferation incidents.

Uzbekistan is also dedicating significant resources to the interdiction and disruption of narcotics from Afghanistan. The Uzbeks purchase, through the Foreign Military Financing program, U.S.-made patrol boats to better control the Amu Darya River border with Afghanistan.

At the same time, we have been working close with the Ministry of Defense to support Uzbekistan's objectives of westernizing its Soviet-style military and becoming interoperable with the United States and NATO. Uzbekistan is making significant progress. Alone among Central Asian states, Uzbekistan has a civilian defense minister and has established firm civilian control of the military. Uzbek defense priorities are: NCO and officer education, special operations forces development, and command, control, communications, and computers development, or C4.

I would like to offer an example of how Uzbekistan's defense-reform efforts support our broader bilateral goals. Currently, six non-commissioned officers from the United States Army are assigned duty in Uzbek NCO academies. These NCOs instruct Uzbek NCOs on the roles, missions, and responsibilities of the NCO in a modern military organization. In addition to tactics and leadership, these instructors address rule of law in the military and human rights. As Uzbek society adapts to the new, post-Soviet world, the role of the Uzbek NCOs is critical not only in the military but also in society after they leave their service.

Closer integration with NATO and the West through the Partnership for Peace program is a primary goal of Uzbekistan's defense-reform efforts. Uzbekistan has begun NATO's PARP [Planning and Review Process] and IPAP [Individual Partnership Action Plan], demonstrating its readiness to be transparent. Uzbekistan also has invested in a modern, computer-simulation center in Tashkent that is co-located with a Partnership for Peace information center which can serve as a venue for exercises, instruction, and coordination among Partnership for Peace states.

Uzbekistan is valued partner and friend of the United States. Our bilateral defense cooperation and military relations are exceptional and critical to our efforts in the global war on terrorism. The Government of Uzbekistan has committed to westernizing its armed forces and becoming interoperable with the United States and NATO. U.S. security assistance has facilitated these reform goals. The United States-Uzbek relationship is important today and will be so in the future. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ricardel follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MIRA R. RICARDEL, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Madame Chairwoman, Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Uzbekistan. Our security cooperation and military to military relations with Uzbekistan are important—not only in the context of the Global War on Terrorism, but in terms of the impressive reforms underway in Uzbekistan's armed forces and within the Ministry of Defense.

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Uzbekistan's offer of support came early, was unconditional and uncompensated. At the height of combat operations in Afghanistan, it hosted more than 3,000 U.S. personnel. Now around 1,500 US troops are based in Uzbekistan. As we work to bring peace, stability and development to Afghanistan and the region, the United States deeply values the strong support we receive from President Karimov and the Government of Uzbekistan.

Our close cooperation on vital military operations in the Global War on Terrorism provided an opportunity to develop and deepen relations in other areas—economic, technical and political. Our defense and security relationship with Uzbekistan began before 9/11. However, in the wake of 9/11 it advanced dramatically, enabling us to work more intensively with the Uzbeks on a broad range of reforms, as outlined in the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework—reforms that will ensure Uzbekistan's long-term stability, sovereignty and economic viability.

Security Cooperation is a key area of bilateral cooperation identified in the Framework Declaration between our countries, and in that regard, Uzbekistan is making substantial and continuing progress. U.S.-Uzbek cooperation in the defense and security area is exceptional—a genuine strategic partnership. The Department of Defense enjoys excellent relations with the Government of Uzbekistan at all levels, both civilian and military. Uzbekistan has been quick to respond to issues of concern to the U.S. Their immediate signing of an Article 98 Agreement is a notable example.

Cooperation combating transnational security threats is a major focus of our relationship with Uzbekistan. Our mutual efforts in the Global War on Terrorism and in countering the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction are significant. We also are beginning to work together bilaterally to combat illegal narcotics trafficking in Central Asia.

For three years prior to the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the Government of Uzbekistan was virtually alone as it confronted the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a Taliban ally and Al-Qaeda supported terrorist group in Central Asia. The U.S. provided only limited security assistance at the time. The battle against the terrorists continues to this day; in April of this year in Tashkent and Bukhara the terrorists bombed police targets while simultaneously killing or maiming over fifty innocent bystanders. The terrorist threat to the stability and sovereignty of Uzbekistan and Central Asia remains a reality.

Since the beginning of Coalition operations, Uzbekistan has been a stalwart supporter of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, providing unrestricted access, basing and overflight rights. Further, Uzbekistan generously has provided this support at no charge. Relations between U.S. Central Command and the Uzbek armed forces at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base are superb. Uzbeks provide force protection at Khanabad not only in terms of physical security at the gates and barriers of the facility, but also through security coordination with U.S. forces. The operational and security tempo at Khanabad could not be maintained without this close relationship.

In the counterproliferation arena, the Department of Defense has been working closely with Uzbekistan since 1996 through the International Counterproliferation Program. In 1997 we jointly agreed to eliminate through the Cooperative Threat Reduction program a Soviet chemical weapons production, research and testing complex near Nukus. The complex had tested positive for nerve agent and was demilitarized by 2002. In 2001, the Government of Uzbekistan and the Defense Department began the Biological Weapons Proliferation Prevention program. Bilateral efforts that destroyed anthrax buried by the Soviets on Vozrozhdeniye Island in the Aral Sea were a notable success in countering the threat of biological weapons proliferation. We also are working through this Cooperative Threat Reduction program with Uzbek bio-research institutes to consolidate and secure dangerous pathogen collections.

In support of Uzbekistan's efforts to secure its borders against proliferation threats, we have trained Uzbek personnel in effective border control procedures and helped develop their capabilities to investigate, control and prosecute any WMD-related proliferation incidents.

In cooperation with the Uzbek Institute of Nuclear Physics, the Academy of Sciences, and Uzbek border services, DOD developed a portal monitor demonstration program, where fixed radiation portal monitors and detection systems were placed at three diverse border locations. This demonstration program immediately

began identifying radioactive contraband. Based on this data, our Cooperative Threat Reduction office has designed an implementation plan in coordination with the Departments of Energy and State to provide fixed portal monitors at all major entry points into Uzbekistan, with particular emphasis on the Uzbek-Afghan border. Engineering assessments have been completed and a contract to modify the ports of entry and install the portal monitors will be awarded this year.

The Government of Uzbekistan understands clearly the threat posed by narco-trafficking as well as its link to terrorism, and is committed to working with the U.S. and other partners to stem the flow of illegal narcotics. Uzbekistan is dedicating significant resources to the interdiction and disruption of narcotics from Afghanistan. The Uzbeks purchased through, the Foreign Military Financing program, U.S.-made patrol boats to better control the Amu Darya river border with Afghanistan.

At the same time, we have been working closely with the Ministry of Defense to support Uzbekistan's objectives of Westernizing its military and becoming interoperable with the US and NATO. Uzbekistan is making significant progress reforming its Soviet-style military. Indeed, in many areas it serves as a model for other countries in the region. Alone among Central Asian states, Uzbekistan has appointed a civilian defense minister and has established firm civilian control of the military. Under the leadership of Defense Minister Gulamov, the Uzbek Ministry of Defense has initiated defense reform plans for training, equipping, and utilizing its forces along NATO lines. Uzbek priorities are: NCO and Officer Education; Special Operations Forces (SOF) development; and Command, Control, Communications, and Computers (C4) development. Specific activities—U.S. trainers in Uzbek NCO academies, reform of the Officer Education System along U.S. lines, individual and collective training of Uzbek SOF by U.S. SOF—are included in the annual military to military contact plan with United States Central Command.

I would like to offer an example of how Uzbekistan's defense reform efforts support our broader bilateral goals. Currently, six Non-Commissioned Officers from the United States Army are assigned duty in Uzbek NCO academies. These NCOs instruct Uzbek NCO's on the roles, missions and responsibilities of the NCO in a modern military organization. In addition to tactics and leadership, these instructors address rule of law in the military and human rights. As Uzbek society adapts to the new, post-Soviet world, the role of Uzbek NCO's becomes critical not only in the military, but long after they leave the service and function as leaders in their own neighborhoods and workplaces. Defense Minister Gulamov explains that with the large number of Uzbeks receiving the NCO training, this instruction will in fact become a significant "engine of change" within the wider society. Notably, the Government of Uzbekistan supports this NCO program through its own budget, choosing to use U.S. assistance monies to fund other defense reform and development priorities such as communications interoperability.

Closer integration with NATO and the West through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program is a primary goal of Uzbekistan's defense reform efforts. To support closer integration with the West, Uzbekistan has begun the PARP (Planning and Review Process) and IPAP (Individual Partnership Action Plan) processes. That Uzbekistan is prepared for the level of transparency required by these processes is a good indicator of its willingness to work towards Western military standards. Uzbekistan also has invested in a modern computer simulation center in Tashkent that is co-located with a PfP information center to serve as a venue for exercises, instruction and coordination among Partnership for Peace states.

Uzbekistan is a valued partner and friend of the United States. In the 13 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has begun to develop the national institutions vital to successful statehood. Our bilateral defense cooperation and military relations are exceptional and critical to our efforts in the Global War on Terrorism. The Government of Uzbekistan has committed to Westernizing its armed forces and becoming interoperable with the U.S. and NATO; U.S. security assistance has facilitated these reform goals. The U.S.-Uzbek relationship is important today and will be important in the future.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

We have been joined by Congressman Schiff. I do not know, Adam, if you would like to make some opening statements before we get to the questions.

Mr. SCHIFF. Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just wait for the questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Secretary Craner, how much of the U.S. assistance budget goes to the police force? And as you know, that is a group that the human rights groups accuse of torture. What conditions are placed on this assistance? How effective has our assistance been in serving as a leverage to extract structural, economic, and political reforms from the Uzbek government? Do not worry if you do not have the exact figures; that is fine. The main thing is if we are helping the police, human rights groups accuse them of torture, what conditions are we placing on this assistance, and how effective has our assistance been in serving as a leverage to extract reforms from the Uzbek government based on this assistance?

Mr. CRANER. I do not have the exact figure for you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. That is fine.

Mr. CRANER. I will have to get that.

One of the things our expanded relationship has enabled us to do is make it possible for people like me who do human rights to be able to talk to people in the Interior Ministry. Frankly, even our Ambassador in Uzbekistan had not had that opportunity before September 11th.

In the many trips I took to Uzbekistan, I took advantage of that opportunity, and over the years, we have been implementing the norm of the Leahy law in our assistance to the police and the security forces of Uzbekistan. Under the Leahy law, there have been occasions where we have declined to offer training to somebody because we believed that to do so would violate the Leahy law.

It has been intriguing, most recently, to see the leadership of the Interior Ministry begin to truly engage on human rights issues with Freedom House and others. I outlined a little bit of that in my testimony. So I think, over these past couple of years, some engagement with the Interior Ministry has yielded some results. Would we like to see greater results? Certainly, but I would say it has yielded some.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Ms. Ricardel, how would you characterize the Uzbek views on our military presence in their country? Are we welcome, tolerated? Are we received out of a shared belief in our mission, or for individual political priorities for Uzbekistan? How successful have our public-diplomacy efforts been thus far, and how does this affect our efforts on other fronts? Where can we do better?

Ms. RICARDEL. I would say that, yes, we have been welcome from the very start in Uzbekistan. I know that our military commanders there are very pleased with the cooperation that we have had. We have received full basing access, overflight rights, and without any requests for compensation for this access and overflights. I do believe that, as you put it, there is a shared view of the importance of the mission, the threat posed by terrorism and Islamic extremism.

Where could we do better? I think, in public diplomacy, we can always do better in a lot of ways. That is not an area that I am working on full time. I could get back to you with some maybe ideas that we are working on in the Department, but I think, in general, we are quite pleased with the relationship we have had with the Uzbeks, not just on the higher, senior level but on the local level.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Ambassador, is Uzbekistan, which is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, considering boosting military cooperation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization? Is that a response to the recent wave of terrorist attacks or part of an effort to revive regionalism in Central Asia, at least in the security field? What is the view from the United States on such cooperation? How does it affect U.S. decisions on the political and the security fronts?

Mr. PASCOE. Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson.

To begin with an interesting story perhaps, right after 9/11, when we were looking around for groups to work with in the region more closely, we said, well, the SCO has its counterterrorism unit out there, so we will try to cooperate with them. That counterterrorism unit turned out to be something that was on paper and a building, and there was nothing there at all. So I think it shows and illustrates, from the very first, that we were interested in any organization that was effective, that was working for the goals in the region.

I should say, in general, we have argued that there is nothing exclusive about the U.S. presence in the region. We think that all of the countries in the region should have good relations with Russia as well as with us, also with China, and particularly with Afghanistan and South Asia, as well as with Europe.

So our interest is really on the question of effectiveness, how good they are, whether they actually are doing something. We do know that they are having the summit meeting of the SCO in the next couple of days. They are in the process, really, of trying to get the organization going and moving, in that, they have just opened, in the past few months, the antiterrorism center, which now is actually in Tashkent, which they did just get open. We are hoping, frankly, that the group will be effective.

We do not see any need whatsoever to have exclusive groups out there that are cutting in different directions. In fact, we have, from the first, offered to take up even an observer's status at some point with the organization to work with this organization. We are happy to try to promote regional cooperation on counterterrorism issues, and, in fact, one of our successes of our program has been to get the countries, particularly Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and, at times, Kazakhstan, working more closely on the counterterrorism issues that are out there.

So we tend to support it, Madam Chairperson.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Congressman Schiff.

Mr. SCHIFF. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wanted to pose two questions to the panelists. The first, I think, was the subject of one of my colleagues' remarks earlier, and that is the President has articulated a policy of the advancement of democracy around the world. That is a philosophy that I share. It comes into great conflict with practical constraints in places like Pakistan and in places like Uzbekistan, I think, it comes into sharpest relief in situations like that.

I am interested in your feedback on whether we are undermining the broader effort to promote democracy because of our reliance on countries like Uzbekistan who have been very helpful to us in Af-

ghanistan and elsewhere but, nonetheless, have human rights records that have been compared only marginally favorably to North Korea and Burma. The suppression of the Islamic faith and other issues perhaps bring greater jeopardy to Uzbekistan and also raise serious questions about our dedication to the promulgation of liberty and democracy around the world.

So I wonder if you could comment on how you are balancing that long-term priority with the very short-term imperative of having cooperation.

The second issue I wanted to raise is that of Interpol's Red Notice system, and it is something I wrote to Secretary Powell about, and the use of red notices improperly for political and personal vendettas, in particular, the case involving the Maqsudi family, Monsur Abdui, Ahmed Maqsudi, Fahred Ahmed Maqsudi, and Abdul Raouf Maqsudi, all of whom are citizens and residents of the United States. I believe, Ambassador Jones, Assistant Secretary Jones, and Human Rights Watch both agree that red notices against that family were requested by the Government of Uzbekistan for political purposes as revenge for the decision of Monsur Maqsudi to divorce the daughter of the Uzbek President.

So if you could also comment on what efforts are being made to make sure that the red notice system is not abused and, in particular, in the case of the Maqsudi family.

Mr. CRANER. Congressman, on the first question of human rights and democracy versus security needs, we have tried to follow a policy that enables us to pay attention to both. You have heard the President talk about how we will engage with governments in the short term on the terrorism issue. In the long term, we are going to worry about democracy and human rights, too.

What does that mean practically? It means that unlike in the first part of the cold war, we are not going to ignore problems with human rights and democracy in the countries of allies. We are not going to say to them, "You can do whatever you want at home. Just help us overseas." And, in fact, we have been very, very aggressive with governments all over Central Asia, and with other governments with which we are engaging in the war on terror.

We follow that up, as I said in my testimony, by putting our money where our mouth is. We follow up by engaging people within Uzbekistan civil society who want to see their country become more democratic, who want to see more human rights in their country. We have had some success, we think, with some of the ministries in Uzbekistan. We think that there is some political will that exists to move forward incrementally.

The issue is, what is the extent of the political will at the center in Uzbekistan? And the question that we are being asked when we look at the certification is, has progress been sufficient? Have you seen the kind of progress you would have hoped to have seen by now? But that is how we are incorporating human rights and democracy into our security policy, by telling our allies, "It's not enough just to help us militarily. You must open up your societies democratically."

Mr. SCHIFF. I want to give you time on the last question, too, but a quick follow-up. When you say that you taking practical steps to engage some of the private organizations,—I assume you mean

NGOs—does this mean providing financial support to human rights organizations in Uzbekistan or a free press in Uzbekistan? Or does it mean simply at the level of having conversations or dialogue with them about the importance of—

Mr. CRANER. The former, the former. After 9/11, we doubled the amount of funding we were spending just for human rights and democracy—

Mr. SCHIFF. In Uzbekistan.

Mr. CRANER [continuing]. In Uzbekistan with civil society, not with the government, in helping journalists, in helping open a legal clinic, not in giving funding for but in giving advice for political parties in Uzbekistan that had long not been registered. Across the spectrum of civil society, the United States has given people in Uzbekistan opportunities that they did not have before September 11th to be able to open their society up. We can continue to do that regardless of the decision on the certification. It is something we should continue to do.

Mr. SCHIFF. And on the red notice issue?

Mr. CRANER. On the red notice issue, I am going to turn to my colleague, Lynn.

Mr. PASCOE. Well, if I can just add one thing, Lorne, I would hardly dare to add to anything that you say, but I must say, Mr. Congressman, for us, human rights is part of the strategic problem because if these countries do not reform, do not change, they then are subject to all kinds of forces on them, internally and from the outside. So I think of that, there is absolutely no question.

When we did our first strategic document on Central Asia and on Uzbekistan and other areas right after 9/11, it was not that there was some of this and then human rights, yes, we have got to think about human rights; human rights are an integral part of the process, as is democracy, because I think all of us believe in what we have seen over the last 50 years of development of countries that if you do not have that, you do not have the firm stability on which to build the rest of the relationship and the strategic and military and other relationships. So, for us, it is key and very much part of it.

On the red notices, sir, I think we have all seen, those of us who have some interest in this area, a lot on the Maqsudi case, including in *The Washington Post* at great detail. On the red notice issue, as you know, they are issued by the Interpol Secretary General at the request of one of the member countries. Interpol and the general secretariat review it for compliance with the constitution, but then it is up to each country itself to give what effect and importance to the red notice that is within their own jurisdiction.

Under the U.S. law, a red notice alone is insufficient to arrest a person for purposes of extradition. As you know, and you asked what we have done about it, the red notice may be contested by the person affected appealing to Interpol, and we have given Mr. Maqsudi and others ways to do that, suggestions and work with their lawyers on that question.

You are quite right that, in our view, this red notice against the Maqsudis was political or personal; and, therefore, we have asked that it be stricken in the United States and not show in our records.

Overall, let me just say, Mr. Congressman, that I think all of us who follow this know that this is a very tough and very sort of heart-rending, child-custody case at the basis of this problem, which has mushroomed in many other areas, and it is a very complex one. We certainly try to help Mr. Maqsudi, who is an American citizen. We have raised this issue many times in Tashkent. We have raised it in Moscow, and we have tried to set up various meetings, and we continue to work on these issues to see if we can help him to see his children.

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Chair, I appreciate you letting me go over time, and if I could just ask—the Chair is also a signatory to that letter—we would love to get a response from the Secretary. The letter was sent out in April, and if you could follow up. I do not think we have heard back on that yet.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, and I would like to follow up on his comments, and we would appreciate a firmer response on that. That would be most helpful.

Mr. PASCOE. As you know, Madam Chairperson, one of the things we always do before this is we check, and we see whether the correspondence has been answered, and I was assured that that had been. So I will double-check when I get back—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. PASCOE [continuing]. To see if it has not been. I was actually working from the text of the letter coming back to you, and I am surprised you have not received it yet.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Mr. ROHRABACHER.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So I guess if there are two messages this hearing is sending to the leadership of Uzbekistan it is thank you very much for helping us in the war on radical Islam and terrorism, and number two is just because we appreciate your help there does not mean that we are ignoring human rights abuses and the fact that you need some real progress to show when it comes to human rights and democratization. There it is in a nutshell. That is what we are trying to say.

Let me ask a few questions based on this. Let me ask Mr. Craner first. It is 5,300 to 5,800 political prisoners are being held now. Is that what you said?

Mr. CRANER. Political and religious.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. The religious. Now, let us recognize that there are some religious people that we are fighting right now in that very same region. Right? Now, of the 5,300 or 5,800, has there been anything to discern whether or not those people are radical Islamists that believe in violence and were engaged in those types of activities or whether or not they are in some way just practicing their religion and experiencing repression?

Mr. CRANER. We do not know the exact numbers, but given that you can be put into prison for having a long beard or for praying five times a day, it is obvious that some of those people are not radical people who have taken up weapons.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Now, before, Uzbekistan was in the Soviet Union, and they did not have freedom of religion. There have been many new mosques that have been built. What percentage of those mosques were built with money from Saudi Arabia?

Mr. CRANER. I do not know the answer to that.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Would it surprise you if a large number of those mosques were built by the Wahabbi sect from Saudi Arabia?

Mr. CRANER. No. It would not surprise me.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. What would that indicate to you in terms of the activities, then, by the Uzbek government toward those people in those mosques?

Mr. CRANER. Well, I think the point you are making is that there may be a threat to the Government of Uzbekistan from within its borders. I take your point.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Or perhaps even the people—

Mr. CRANER [continuing]. From outside its borders.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [continuing]. Even outside the border and the people of those mosques may well not believe in the type of freedom we are talking about.

Mr. CRANER. Right. Understood.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. When Uzbek government officials talk to me, they say, Saudi Arabia poured their money into these mosques. We do not care if people worship God, but we are not going to let the local mosques be declared a territory in which they are sovereign, and they can go out and force people, women to wear covers and men to adhere to religious strictures from their faith.

Mr. CRANER. Well, that is certainly not happening in Uzbekistan. I think what we worry about is what we all used to worry about in the 1980s in the countries of some of our allies—in a Chile or a South Korea or a Philippines—and that is that if people do not see a moderate outlet for their political thoughts and their political feelings, they are going to gravitate to a radical outlet for those thoughts and feelings.

Our point with the Government of Uzbekistan has been, please provide that moderate outlet. Please register political parties. Please register NGOs. Please allow newspapers to operate. Otherwise, you will find people gravitating to the threat you and I fear.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I personally am in total agreement, and I think that what you are talking about is totally consistent with what I believe in. That, however, does not mean we should use that not to look at some very serious problems that they have that may not be consistent with our human rights, the premises that we operate under.

For example, if a mosque is built by the Wahabbi sect, and then that mosque sends people into the community and begins to try to exercise authority over the people of that community, forcing women to cover themselves and beating people with sticks who do not, then we would not blame the Uzbek government for what they did in that case, would we, or would we?

Mr. CRANER. Well, we would certainly want to see the human rights of the people in that community respected.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Correct.

Mr. CRANER. That could happen from either side in this case.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Correct. By the government or by that.

Mr. CRANER. Yes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And we have to understand that this is not as simple as it is here. I, for one, believe that there is some perhaps repression of religion. But the government there tells us, we

do not care if people worship God. What do we care if people are worshipping God? Muslims can worship God any way they want, but we are afraid, when you have so many mosques that were built by the Wahabbis, who have something else in mind. Now, that is another issue from political parties.

I happen to be sympathetic in listening to them when they say that they could care less about how people worship God. I think they care a lot about people who are engaged in politics and about trying to create an opposition party and a free press. They care a great deal about that, and they are willing to rule with an iron hand, which we cannot tolerate.

If I could be indulged for just one moment more, I would like to ask the Ambassador, you just came from Malaysia. You had Maktiar,—is that how you pronounced his name?—and he stepped down as things were becoming more repressive in Malaysia. Is that not correct?

Mr. PASCOE. He finished the end of his term, sir, and he decided that he was not going to run longer, and his designated successor, Mr. Abdullah Badawi, now is the Prime Minister. He was elected.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. It did prevent, however, a decline into repression, which it looked like Malaysia was going in that direction for a while. Is that right?

Mr. PASCOE. I would not describe it that way, Mr. Congressman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. I would, so let me just note, because my time is up, that perhaps the best thing that top leadership of Uzbekistan could do today would be to understand that they are not going to have their jobs forever and that they should, in fact, become patriots and help organize free elections, recognize opposition parties and step aside so that they can have a free election and go down in history as being a positive influence on their country rather than having to be carried out of power by a revolution that uproots and causes turmoil in their society.

So I would hope that the leadership of Uzbekistan is listening. We are grateful, but it is time for you to let that country be free and step aside. Thank you very much.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. Engel?

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and I am delighted to be here. I want to welcome our panelists, especially my good friend, Secretary Ricardel, with whom I have had the pleasure of working closely when she worked for Senator Dole and subsequently. So everybody welcome, but, Mira, a special welcome to you.

So let me start with Secretary Ricardel. Assistance that is provided to Uzbekistan under the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program is conditioned similarly to Freedom Support Act assistance, although the President has the authority to waive those conditions, which is the authority he exercised last December. What are these funds used for, and do you expect the President to exercise a similar waiver for the next fiscal year, for 2005?

Ms. RICARDEL. Let me first, Mr. Congressman, by saying thank you for your remarks.

The Cooperative Threat Reduction does have a national security waiver which was used last year. I do not want to predict what the

President will do for fiscal year 2005, but I would like to say that the programs that we have underway, several are, I think, of special importance.

The Biological Weapons Proliferation Prevention Program, which was one of the notable efforts that we had that I mention in my testimony was to destroy anthrax that was buried by the Soviets on Vozrozhdeniye Island, or Voz Island. We do not think that pathogens could have survived in the open, but we may go back to make sure that they have not.

We have also been working with bio-research institutes in Tashkent and Samerkent to consolidate and secure dangerous pathogen collections, and we have also been working on describe surveillance and response capabilities to enable fast discovery of any diversion or accidental release of biological materials, and we are doing research, or helping the Uzbeks do research, on naturally occurring plague.

The total funds obligated to date for this program are \$16 million, and we have also, in terms of WMD proliferation prevention programs, established radiation monitors and training for key border crossings. An implementing agreement was signed for this in 2003. The initial funding for that is about \$5 million.

So these are all significant, I think, very important programs for the Department and efforts that the Uzbeks are fully cooperative with us on.

Mr. ENGEL. Let me just speak for myself. This is a new world. The war on terror is certainly a very important thing which, for me, changes the equation. The cooperation between Uzbekistan and the United States in the war on terror is important, and obviously we want to find the right balance in encouraging them to make democratic reforms. The question, I think, for each one of us is, where is that line? Where is that balance?

Secretary Ricardel, your testimony talks about Uzbekistan making substantial and continuing progress in the area of security cooperation. There has been some trepidation that cooperation only in the security arena might be enough for some to feel that Uzbekistan warrants a positive determination by the Secretary of State. I would like to, if you have not already commented on it, I would like to hear your comments on that fine balance. Obviously, we are not totally closing our eyes to a lack of democratization, but we are saying that cooperation in the security area is very important.

Ms. RICARDEL. Thank you, Mr. Congressman. I believe that the intention, of course, of the legislation is clear, that it seeks to promote reform. I think, in the area of security assistance, especially FMF and IMET, we have seen the Uzbeks use it very wisely. We have seen them use it in a way to promote the kinds of reforms that we expect in a military that will be part of a democratic society. The emphasis on NCO education, for example, that I highlighted in my statement is very important. Also, I think the IMET program in general is a great way to expose military leaders to American values and not just to our training and systems.

The question really is, and the Secretary of State needs to make this judgment, but do we have more influence on the reform process if we certify or not? I think that obviously we want to see re-

forms across the board. They are very important, and I believe that all of the Members of this Committee who have been here today have highlighted that, as have my colleagues. I think the question is, how can we do this in the best way? And certainly in the security area, I am not sure that by not certifying and by withholding FMF and IMET funding that we will be advancing the cause of reform in the security area.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you.

Ambassador Pascoe, what is the State Department's view of some people who say that President Karimov's repressive policies are providing fertile recruiting opportunities for terrorists and Islamic extremists?

Mr. PASCOE. Well, our view is, and very strongly, that to have real stability in this society, to have the development in the right direction, you need the democratic reforms, and you need the respect for human rights. This, over time, clearly is required if the government is going to have the right connections with its people. Another part of that is the economic side of it. You need to have people with jobs. Clearly, all of this is an important mix together.

We have urged the government, all through the time but particularly since 9/11, to move more quickly on the democratic reforms and on the human rights reforms.

I do not think that I necessarily buy in any short time, Mr. Congressman, the idea that an attack on one day represents a response for this or that action. I saw a fair amount of that in the newspapers after the events in March and April in Tashkent, and I must say, from a country that has had attacks and from watching what goes on in Europe, I do not think the connection is all that close that some people try to make. Our issue really is to work with the government and the people of Uzbekistan not only in the security area to help them avoid those kinds of issues but also to help them make the fundamental changes in their society that are necessary that we believe will help over the long term.

But let us not kid ourselves. The scourge of international terrorism is not going around looking only for repressive regimes. It is operating everywhere internationally, and we have to be very understanding of that issue and have to try to deal with it wherever it arises.

Mr. ENGEL. Okay. I have one more question. Let me ask Secretary Craner, then. Do you know the status of the Open Society Institute's application to be registered in Uzbekistan? They have been denied once, apparently. Have they reapplied, and has our government urged the Uzbeks to reconsider their decision?

Mr. CRANER. They were rejected. Before they were rejected, we urged that they be registered. They were not registered.

Mr. ENGEL. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, and, again, welcome everybody, especially Secretary Ricardel.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. All right. All right. Enough already.

Mr. ENGEL. I am going to embarrass her, but she is a great person.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Eliot. Thank you so much.

Congressman Pitts, would you like to be recognized?

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Secretary Craner, could you elaborate a little bit on what you consider some of the accomplishments are in Uzbekistan as far as United States engagement and perhaps some of the things we are working on at present?

Mr. CRANER. Certainly. There have been two human rights groups registered. I am talking now in the last 2½ years. Political parties are not allowed to register to compete in this fall's elections. There would be no opposition party for this fall's elections. They are allowed to meet.

The Interior Ministry, as I noted, has engaged on this most recent case that looked like a death by torture in prison to allow an independent forensic expert to look at the body, and it was determined that it was, in fact, a suicide.

As I noted, pre-publication censorship was lifted, but a variety of other laws and persuasion has led people to practice self-censorship. I noted that the number of prisoners was down. In 2001, it was probably around 7,500. Now, as I said, it is between 5,300 and 5,800.

The most promising thing I think that we saw in these last 2½ years was the invitation to the U.N. Rapporteur on Torture. That is a gentleman named Theodore van Boven. I spent some of my time trying to get him into countries like Uzbekistan, and it is always a good sign when a country has agreed to admit him. He issued a very honest report about what was going on in Uzbekistan, and reported that torture was systemic.

The Uzbek government has drawn up a plan that responds to, and, I think, structurally would take care of, many of those issues, but we have yet to see any implementation of that plan.

Mr. PITTS. And would you speak a little bit as to the dialogue happening between the local government levels and NGOs, human rights groups?

Mr. CRANER. Again, the Interior Ministry has engaged, in the last 2 months, with NGOs in Uzbekistan who had been having a lot of trouble with local Interior Ministry officials and has begun to tell them, you should not be having so much trouble at the local level, and if you do, let us know. Again, from the ministry, that is an encouraging step. We have had encouraging steps like that over the last 2½ years from a number of the ministries, but, again, the question exists of what is the overall political will of the center.

Mr. PITTS. What about the problem of human trafficking? What is being done? What is the United States, or what is Uzbekistan, doing to address this problem? What obstacles do you see that have to be overcome?

Mr. CRANER. We were concerned that Uzbekistan was going to be a category 3 country, which is the worst category of trafficking. As Lynn will tell you, we spent much of the summer of 2003 in a very intense, months-long exchange with the Government of Uzbekistan over the issue of trafficking, and as a result of their actions, they are in category 2, which is the category where we are not seeing an end to trafficking in that country, but clearly the government is taking steps toward that end.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Ambassador?

Mr. PASCOE. Could I just add one thing, sir? In 2003, the Government of Uzbekistan did draft comprehensive trafficking legislation

and submitted it to the legislature. It also prosecuted 101 individuals in trafficking-related cases using their existing criminal statutes, with some 80 convictions as of the present time.

So, as Lorne said, we have been working with the government on it, but they have been making progress.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, so much, and I want to thank the panelists for being here with us today, and we appreciate you waiting around for the questions. We thank you so much.

Now, we will be hearing from our two private panel witnesses, Ms. Zeyno Baran, who is the Director of the International Security and Energy Programs at the Nixon Center. She joined the center in January 2003 and established the Eurasia and Turkey projects. Her current research focuses on strategies to thwart the spread of radical Islamist ideology in Eurasia. Ms. Baran has also working on the Black Sea Oil and Gas Pipeline Project since 1996 and frequently travels to the region.

She will be joined by a longtime friend of our Subcommittee, Mark Schneider, who is the Vice President of the International Crisis Group. Prior to his position at ICG, Mr. Schneider was the Director of the Peace Corps in Washington, DC, responsible for the policy program and operations of the agency, which pursues goals of contributing to development, international understanding, and peace through the works of the 7,300 Peace Corps volunteers. And I know on the History Channel, they just put a show on last night on the Peace Corps. Mr. Schneider has also served as the Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean, at the Agency for International Development. That was from October 1993 to 1999, and he was responsible for managing all USAID development assistance programs in the Western Hemisphere.

Welcome to both. Your entire statements will be made a part of the record, and we will ask you to summarize. Thank you so much, and we will begin with Ms. Baran.

STATEMENT OF ZEYNO BARAN, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND ENERGY PROGRAMS, THE NIXON CENTER

Ms. BARAN. Thank you, Madam Chairperson and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you very much for inviting me today.

The United States and its allies, like Uzbekistan, are in the midst of an existential war which has yet to be defined and fought effectively. While it may take some time for us to develop correct strategies against a new enemy, we need to keep in mind that Uzbekistan is, indeed, a front-line state in this war. It is a strategic nuisance for militant Islamist groups because it may be one of the few countries that can defeat them if the government can create political space to allow the native, tolerant form of Islam to flourish.

For now, unfortunately, the United States and the Uzbek government are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Uzbek people. I will not get into details, but, as we know, there exists the textbook conditions for the growth of radical Islam in Uzbekistan today.

For both the United States and Central Asia, militant political Islam poses both an ideological and a political threat. The radical Islamists, first and foremost, want to win the ideological war. They know that Communist satellite states fell only when the broader population, spurred by the well-articulated ideals of the intelligentsia, began to deny the legitimacy of those who ruled over them. Today, Islamists are using their religion to deny Central Asian governments, and especially the Government of Uzbekistan, that very legitimacy.

The group that most effectively employs Islam to achieve political ends is Hizb-ut Tahrir, a transnational political party founded by a Palestinian in 1952. It seeks to reestablish the caliphate, or Islamic rule, throughout the world. Like other Islamist movements, its goal is to overthrow secular Islamic governments around the world. They promote an "Islamic way of life" to bring justice and order to a chaotic world.

H.T. members are engaged in open propaganda to build tension between people and their governments. They work to delegitimize governments and gradually turn people against the regimes and the security forces. When a critical mass is created outside the government, and a sufficient number of people in key positions in the military and police are on their side, the regime is peacefully overthrown. I urge you to keep these thoughts in mind when analyzing developments in Uzbekistan.

The radicals that want to overthrow Karimov accuse him of being a disbelieving Jew. If they manage to overthrow the Karimov regime, even through peaceful means, the results could be disastrous for the Uzbek people, the region and the United States. The outlook of such groups is predominantly anti-American, anti-Semitic, and virulently expansionist. There is no reason to believe that this outlook will change once power is in their hands.

An Uzbekistan ruled by followers of a radical Islamist ideology would certainly not improve human rights or democracy, nor would it cooperate with its neighbors or the United States. Given the level of poverty and corruption in the country, Uzbekistan could easily become a terrorist base as well.

Now, I will make a couple of creative suggestions, as was asked of us. I will start by saying that religious freedom, as understood in the United States, should not be directly applied to Uzbekistan. In dealing with religious radicalism and government repression in Uzbekistan, my suggestion is to look at the Turkish and not the American or British examples, both of which come from completely different historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

The Turkish example is useful in understanding the tension between trying to create a modern and open democratic system and dealing with the threat of radical and militant Islamic political ideology. It is also important in understanding the methodology Karimov may be trying to emulate.

Turkey is unique as the only NATO member that is a secular, democratic, and Muslim country. While today it is considered to be an example for many Muslim countries, and the Turkish Prime Minister was invited to last week's G-8 summit as a democratic partner, it is important to remember that Turkey was, for many

years, criticized by western governments and human rights groups for its policies in dealing with political Islam.

Uzbekistan wants to maintain its secular regime; and, therefore, I doubt it will listen to suggestions from western countries that have never dealt with the holistic nature of Islam. It will, however, listen to advice on creating the right legal and constitutional safety nets so that radical groups or sleeper cells cannot take over secular regimes.

The Turkish example means also good governance and socio-economic development. Note that Turkey's leading party is named Justice and Development, the two key elements missing in most Muslim countries.

Turkey can also explain why secular opposition parties are essential for the long-term stability of a mainly Muslim country. It can also share its own experience on why torture does not work and why political openness and economic development are necessary.

Another suggestion is to look at the Georgian case, which is another former Soviet country that had once fallen into the hands of criminal and corrupt people and today is mentioned as America's great democratic success story. While there are many differences between Georgia and Uzbekistan, there are some key lessons that can be applied. The current Georgian President was justice minister, and the current Prime Minister was the speaker of the Parliament under the previous government. In these capacities, both men worked closely with the U.S. Government, as well as NGOs and many USAID programs. After a while, they realized that the system was too corrupt and too weak for them to make any significant changes, resigned from their posts and became leading opposition figures. These two visionary leaders then led a peaceful "Revolution of the Roses," which holds great promise for forging a democratic and prosperous Georgia.

Replicating the experience of the "Rose Revolution" in other countries is impossible, but the U.S. Government and various American NGOs need to help the few Uzbek reformers in the government and not just support anti-government forces. Since Georgia revolution last fall, the Karimov government started to believe that the United States wants to oust it from office as well. It is important to change this perception to get real buy into internal change and to provide the political space for reformers and NGOs to function properly.

The U.S., first and foremost, needs to help support a set of pro-democratic people within the system and work toward steady evolutionary change. This will lay the foundation for a new generation of pro-democratic, tolerant and competent leaders who provide alternatives to the current regime rather than Islamists who will be a danger to Uzbekistan, Central Asia, and the United States. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Baran follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ZEYNO BARAN, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND ENERGY PROGRAMS, THE NIXON CENTER

On September 10, 2001, most Americans knew little about events in Central Asia, and even less about Uzbekistan. Shortly after the al-Qaida attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President George W. Bush was on the phone with President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, asking him for permission to use the

Karshi-Khanabad base to launch Operation Enduring Freedom. Bordering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan was strategically located from which to launch the attacks. Despite initial opposition from Russia, Karimov quickly gave his permission, and became the first post-Soviet leader to help the U.S. successfully conclude the counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan.

With Afghanistan no longer in the headlines, Americans have again forgotten about Uzbekistan. The March/April 2004 terrorist attacks inside Uzbekistan briefly brought the country back into the headlines. I hope the next time we hear about this strategic country, located in the heart of Central Asia, it will not be in association with another major terrorist attack.

With a population of 26 million, nearly 90 percent of which is Muslim, Uzbekistan can influence events all across Central Asia as well as in Afghanistan and Pakistan. 300,000 ethnic Uzbeks live in Kazakhstan, and Uzbeks constitute 9.2% of the population of Turkmenistan, 12.9% of Kyrgyzstan, and 25% of Tajikistan. There are more than 2 million Tajiks that live in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Developments in Uzbekistan therefore have a direct impact on all other Central Asian states. Moreover, as it is bordering all other Central Asian states, without Uzbekistan, it is nearly impossible to have any significant regional cooperation.

Bordering China and Russia, Uzbekistan is also a key member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security forum that in addition to China and Russia includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In June 2002, Uzbekistan was chosen as home for the SCO's Anti-Terrorism center. Russia, and especially China, wants to use SCO as an alternative security alliance to the U.S. military presence in Central Asia. While the U.S. may no longer think in Great Game terms, big powers in the region do, and for them, Uzbekistan figures highly in their strategic calculus.

With these geo-strategic pressures, it was a bold decision for Karimov to let his country be used as a launching pad for operations against a neighboring Muslims country. But having experienced terrorist attacks against his homeland and attempts on his own life in February 1999, Karimov knew the enemy well. His secular, pro-American and pro-Israeli policies have made him a perfect target for terrorist groups. Radical Islamists who want to overthrow Karimov accuse him of being a "Jew." The same ideologically driven militants that have declared war on Uzbekistan attacked the U.S. on 9/11.

The U.S. and allies like Uzbekistan are in the midst of an existential war, which is yet to be defined and fought effectively. While it may take some more time for us to develop correct strategies against the new enemy, we need to keep in mind that Uzbekistan is a strategic nuisance for militant Islamist groups because it may be one of the few countries that can defeat them if the government can create political space to allow the native, tolerant form of Islam to flourish.

For now, unfortunately, the U.S. and the Uzbek government are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Uzbek people. The reasons are simple: Post-Soviet transition problems, worsened by the politically and economically oppressive policies of the current regime have produced tremendous poverty, corruption and resentment among the people. Uzbekistan has a horrendous human rights record, with ongoing torture in its prisons, creating many "Enemies of State," as the title of a recent Human Rights Watch report correctly identifies. At least a third of the people live below the poverty line, and the existing clans and corrupt officials make it nearly impossible for economic reforms to uplift the general population. Foreign investment is rare and those that have been operating in Uzbekistan may leave. These are the textbook conditions for the growth of radical Islamist groups, which first came to Uzbekistan when perestroika provided a political opening; since then, these groups have gradually established a network of cells to organize and carry out attacks on Karimov's secular regime.

There have been some small positive changes that occurred since the U.S. established bases in Uzbekistan. Relations deepened when U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and then Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov signed on 12 March 2002 the "Declaration of the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework". This document states that ". . . the two countries agreed to cooperate not only in matters of military security but also in the security that comes from an open-market based economy and an open, democratic system . . ." U.S. and Uzbek officials noted that it was Karimov and not the U.S. side who wanted the inclusion of certain language binding Uzbekistan to do more on human rights and democracy. Then, as a clear sign of his interest for closer engagement with the U.S, Karimov sent his former Foreign Minister Kamilov as his ambassador to Washington.

While the U.S. has been disappointed that over the last two years progress has been minimal, the Uzbek side thinks that they have taken some significant steps considering the regional problems they face. Uzbek authorities are proud to note

that they are the first post-Soviet country to invite and receive the UN special rapporteur on torture, Teo Van Boven. Based on Boven's recommendations, the government then adopted a national plan to prevent torture and even opened up some of its prisons for inspections.

When Human Rights Watch recently reported the death of Andrey Yuryevich Shelkovenko as a prison murder, Uzbekistan invited American and Canadian experts as well as representatives from Freedom House and Human Rights Watch to take part in the initial phase of the investigation. This commission reported that Shelkovenko's death was indeed suicide and not murder. Many critics of the Uzbek government argued that this was an easy case and that is why they allowed independent forensic experts to investigate. While this is one case among many, it is nonetheless a good precedent for the Uzbek government.

There was an even more important change in Uzbek behavior following the March/April 2004 terrorist attacks. Contrary to many Uzbek and Western analysts' predictions, the Uzbek government did not use these attacks as an excuse for total crackdown and mass repression; instead, thanks to engagement with the U.S., key people in the government, and Karimov himself, understood that such a crackdown would backfire domestically and internationally.

Following persistent U.S. urgings, Uzbekistan also finally decided to increase regional cooperation, not only on security and law enforcement areas but economic issues as well. Karimov has invited Afghanistan to take part in the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) so this war-torn country that is once again falling into a dismal abyss of opium production, can benefit from regional cooperation. At the last CACO Heads of States Summit in Kazakhstan on May 28, 2004, Karimov suggested the creation of a Central Asian Common Market. Together with the other Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan on June 1, 2004 signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States. These events and political decisions suggest a small but promising trend that Uzbekistan is headed in the right direction.

The big question we must grapple with at this time is to identify the right policies and tools for the U.S. to make sure this trend continues and there are further improvements in the realm of human rights, economic prosperity and political openness. With specific regard to long-term U.S. national security interests, it is essential that Uzbekistan remains secular and cooperates closely with its neighbors on economic, political and security matters. A stable Uzbekistan is vitally important to preventing the proliferation of WMDs and to curb narco-trafficking, both of which are directly pertinent to the fight against terrorists.

For both the U.S. and Central Asia, militant political Islam poses both an ideological and a political threat. The radical Islamists first and foremost want to win the ideological war; they know that Communist satellite states fell only when the broader population, spurred by the well-articulated ideals of the intelligentsia, began to deny the legitimacy of those who ruled over them.

Today, Islamists are using the religion to deny the Central Asian governments that very legitimacy. The use of Islam as a political tool or ideology originates from the Middle East. Many Arab nations used fundamentalist and radical interpretations to build strong networks against the colonial occupiers. Later, with the failure of pan-Arabism, communism and nationalism, Islamism became the only other option for governments and militant groups alike to justify their authoritarian rule. They never truly tried to establish liberal democracies in fear of losing control and instead blamed the West for all their problems.

The result of this approach was the creation of radicals who developed Islamist ideas to justify their violent positions. These groups are also not talking about Islam per se, but rather about politics and power. Islam as a religion speaks of piety, ethics and belief. Based on its moral and ethical principles, Islam is compatible with democratic values. It promotes values of tolerance, dialogue, the pursuit of moral excellence, values shared by all world religions and liberal democracies. The Quran states,

We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us, and in what had been sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and their offspring, to Moses and to Jesus and to all other prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between them, and we submit to Him and obey. (3:84)

The most central tenets of Islam are fundamentally against suicide bombing. According to Islam, God gives life and only God can take it. Killing oneself and killing others are sins. Brainwashed suicide bombers are tools in the hands of a radical few. These radicals indoctrinate their followers, convincing them that since life on earth is just a test and the real life is what we call afterlife, if one kills himself

or herself in promoting Islam, or waging jihad, then that person has finally ended the long waiting period of uniting with God.

These dangerous groups use Islam as a tool against the state in countries where there is growing inequality, poverty, loss of hope and corruption in secular governments, like in Uzbekistan. They are able to educate and influence the masses by recalling a mythical Golden Age of Islam. Using Islam's holistic approach, they urge people to fight in the name of religion, even if it means taking one's own life.

The group that most effectively employs "Islam" to achieve political ends is Hizbut Tahrir (HT), a transnational political party founded by a Palestinian in 1952. HT seeks to re-establish the caliphate, or Islamic rule, throughout the world. Like other Islamist movements, HT's goal is to overthrow secular regimes around the world. Unlike many others, however, HT hopes to achieve this goal peacefully.

Their plans unfold in three stages. First they seek to teach Islam in a way that gets Muslims politically and socially active, which in the West we would call "consciousness raising." They promote an "Islamic way of life" to bring justice and order to a chaotic world. At the second stage, HT members engage in open propaganda to build tension between the people and the governments. They work to de-legitimize governments and gradually turn people against the regimes and the security forces. When the second stage is complete and the ground is ripe for the establishment of Islamic governments that will be ruled by Islamic law, or Shariat, the third and final stage begins. At the last stage, when a critical mass is created outside the government, and a sufficient number of people at key positions in the military and police are on HT's side, the regime is peacefully overthrown. I urge you to keep these stages in mind when analyzing developments in Uzbekistan.

While Islamic Jihad, another exported group from the Middle East, took responsibility for the spring attacks in Uzbekistan, and terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) target Uzbekistan, I think HT, which is not considered a terrorist organization, is an even more dangerous long-term threat, as it is the elementary school for the ideological training of many other groups. While HT's denials of its involvement in the spring attacks are probably true, the identity of those who gave the orders is irrelevant since HT-intentionally or unintentionally-creates the ideological foundation for violence. In short, HT and the Islamic militants fighting in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Iraq have different tasks to complete, but are moving toward the same objective.

Radical Islamists are increasingly appealing to the Uzbeks because they provide simple answers to people who are not offered an alternative ideology and have no hope for a better future. Uzbeks, like all people, want first and foremost to have food for their families as well as basic personal securities. They need to be treated with dignity. The absence of these most basic needs turn people to reactionary movements. Several people I interviewed last fall in an Uzbek prison said, "I did not know why I am in this world, but after I joined HT, it all made sense."

Part of the problem is that there are too few properly trained imams and too few resources for the development of alternative teachings to counteract the influence of the Islamists. Since 9/11, the Uzbek government has understood the need to help Uzbek citizens reacquaint themselves with their traditional, tolerant form of Islam, rather than allow the import of foreign ideologies and radical schools of Islamic thought. There is growing interest in reviving pre-Soviet Uzbek heritage, thereby facilitating the enlightenment of Uzbek people. But more time and certainly more money is needed to see significant changes.

Moreover, even if there were all the right resources to teach moderate Islam, as long as Western democracy and capitalism are perceived to have failed in Uzbekistan (and globally), the Islamists will continue to win people over. And they may not even need to use force to come to power. To succeed, Islamists would not need massive popular support; given the overall resentment towards the Karimov regime, the presence of a small number of people in key government positions would be sufficient. Moreover, the lack of democracy and checks and balances on the government would make a takeover and the consequent consolidation of power much easier.

If these groups manage to overthrow the Karimov regime, even through peaceful means, the results could be disastrous for the Uzbek people, the region, and the United States. The outlook of such groups is predominantly anti-American, anti-Semitic and virulently expansionist-and there is no reason to believe that this outlook will change once power is in their hands. An Uzbekistan ruled by followers of a radical Islamist ideology would certainly not improve human rights or democracy, nor would it cooperate with its neighbors or the U.S. Given the level of poverty and corruption in the country, Uzbekistan could easily become a terrorist base as well.

In fact, Uzbekistan has already become a base for the spread of radical propaganda throughout the region. Some poor Uzbeks are moving to neighboring coun-

tries in search for work, and taking their ideology with them. While several years ago, practically all HT members in Central Asia were ethnic Uzbeks, increasingly Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and even Russians have been recruited into HT. Internet-based anti-Karimov propaganda is inviting radicals into Uzbekistan, and ideologically trained Uzbeks are beginning to turn up in a variety of global hotspots. Reportedly, Pakistani forces encountered many Uzbek fighters during their recent campaign in South Waziristan, and possibly wounded IMU leader Tahir Yoldash. There are also reports that an Uzbek woman may be running a suicide bombing training center in Pakistan.

It is clear that radicals who cannot operate in Uzbekistan are moving to neighboring areas where there are openings. Does this mean that Uzbekistan is keeping its territory safe from terrorists? Or does it mean it is inadvertently exporting terrorists to its neighbors? Given that many Uzbeks who get attracted to radical Islamist ideas are among others victims of human rights violations, injustice and lack of economic opportunities, what should the U.S. do? And in the short term, how should the U.S. deal with the certification issue?

The certification debate has taken a life of its own, and the decision will not only impact the quality of U.S.-Uzbek relations but also have huge implications for Uzbekistan's (and the region's) future. While I will not make a recommendation, I would like to point out some of the immediate implications of deciding either way.

If Uzbekistan is not certified, the U.S. would end up alienating a secular Muslim government that is a fully supportive member of the coalition in the war on terror. The timing would be terrible for the Uzbek government, as this decision would be seen as a victory for radical Islamists, who would be further emboldened to try to overthrow Karimov.

At the same time, with U.S. leverage significantly reduced, we could see regression in the sphere of democracy and human rights. For the last two years, reformers within the Uzbek government have been using the U.S. as an excuse to push for openings in a system that is in the hands of local clans and powerful mafia groups. If the small improvements these few people were able to push through are not recognized, they will lose their main leverage to continue pushing for change.

Moreover, many Uzbeks would say "the U.S. only cares about its military needs; once the Taliban fell and they got out of the Uzbek government what they needed, they think they can toss us away." Many Muslims outside Uzbekistan already think that the U.S. uses human rights and democracy only as a pretext for conducting operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan and for efforts to contain China.

In reality, both Russia and China are hoping that the U.S. will alienate the Uzbek (as well as Kazakh and Kyrgyz) government and people so that they can fill the resulting vacuum. Unlike Western institutions and governments, Russia and China do not care about democracy and human rights and are working hard to pull this strategic country closer to their political, economic and security systems. Being a prime terrorist target, Uzbekistan is clearly tempted to once again take the Soviet approach against its opponents, but engagement with the U.S. has so far kept this tendency in check. The certification decision may influence which way Uzbekistan will tilt in the longer run. There are plenty of people around Karimov who would welcome non-certification so can they can pull closer to Russia; this option ought to worry anyone who cares about human rights and democracy in Uzbekistan.

From a realist point of view, one can argue that while the Karimov government may not be an ideal partner, we cannot humiliate it politically and then expect it to cooperate with us on issues important to U.S. national security. Uzbekistan is one of the few Muslim countries that wants to increase engagement with the U.S. Alienating the Uzbek government and empowering the Islamist opposition would send a negative message to the countries targeted by the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative.

On the other hand, if the U.S. certifies Uzbekistan, the certification will lose its meaning, since it is hard to argue that Uzbekistan has made "significant" progress on the key issues the certification seeks to judge. Moreover, in case of a certification, other countries that are part of the "anti-terror coalition" might get emboldened to think that they too may get a "strategic waiver." Western human rights organizations, liberal media and some of the Islamists would question the administration about the President's "forward strategy of freedom." Additionally, the U.S. may further lose credibility in the Muslim world by condoning another repressive regime.

Regardless of how this issue is resolved, in the medium and longer term, there are some key areas the U.S. needs to focus on to prevent Uzbekistan from becoming a source of instability in Central Asia and instead work on turning it into a partner in regional security.

First, religious freedom as understood in the U.S. should not be directly applied to Uzbekistan. In dealing with religious radicalism and government repression in

Uzbekistan, my suggestion is to look at the Turkish, and not the American or British examples, which come from completely different historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The Turkish example is useful in understanding the tension between trying to create a modern and open democratic system and dealing with the threat of fundamentalist and militant Islamic political ideology. It is also important in understanding the methodology Karimov may be trying to emulate.

Turkey is unique as the only NATO member that is a secular, democratic Muslim country, and while today it is considered to be an "example" for many Muslim countries, and Turkish Prime Minister was invited to last week's G-8 summit as a "democratic partner," it is important to remember that Turkey was for many years criticized by Western governments and various human rights groups for its policies in dealing with political Islam. Uzbekistan, or any other Muslim country that wants to maintain its secular regime, will not listen to naïve suggestions from Western countries that have never dealt with the holistic nature of Islam. It will, however, listen to advice on creating the right legal and constitutional safety nets so that radical groups, or "sleepers cells," cannot take over secular systems.

Ottomans tried for centuries to deal with political and radical Islam. When Kemal Ataturk founded modern Turkey in 1923, he ended the *Shariat* and *Khalifat* as they would prevent Turkey's integration into the modern, Western world. He did not deny people from learning about or practicing Islam, but banned *madrasas* that were filled with people who were teaching different forms of Islam. He created a state ministry that would coordinate the teaching of Islam in traditional way. Turkey first concentrated on creating an economically prosperous state and shortly introduced multi-party system and democratic elections. Since then Turkey has gone through several cycles of increased openness to Islamic groups, followed by banning of religious activities, and even military coups. Over the ensuing eight decades, the tension between the secular establishment and Islamists has not entirely disappeared, but the end result is that today in Turkey there is no radical Islamic movement with any significant following.

It is noteworthy that in Turkey mainstream Islamic movements have not so far been radicalized despite periodic clampdowns. This is in part because Turkey (like Uzbekistan) was on the Silk Road and through interaction with many different cultures its interpretation of Islam became much more moderate and accepting. Moreover, a majority of Turks (like Uzbeks) belong to the (Sunni) liberal *Hanefi* school of Islam that is prevalent in Central Asia. Many Turks (like Uzbeks) also follow Islam's spiritual path, Sufism (*Tasavvuf*). A majority of Turks belong to the largest Naqshbandi Sufi order, which started in Bukhara and spread to rest of Central Asia and India, later to China, and the Soviet Union, and today is growing in Europe and North America. In Sufi belief there is no difference among Muslims, Jews and Christians, and thus its teachings are peaceful and tolerant.

Given there are so many religious and cultural similarities, I would strongly recommend looking at the Turkish model, which would mean strengthening secular and democratic regimes coupled with vigilance and constitutional and institutional safeguards as well as good governance and socio-economic development. Note that Turkey's leading party is named "Justice and Development," the two key elements missing in most Muslim countries and exactly those Turkey has been able to achieve. It can also explain why secular opposition parties are essential for long-term stability of the country.

Turkey can also share its experience with Uzbekistan on why torture does not work and why political openness and economic development are necessary.

This is an area the U.S. can have input as well by using the Shelkovenko case as the precedent. The U.S. can work with the Uzbek government to have other torture and killings investigated by an independent commission. When the findings indicate wrong doing, the Uzbek government can punish the guilty accordingly, thereby demonstrating to their own people and the international community that systemic torture is no longer tolerated and justice will take hold.

It is extremely important for Uzbekistan to provide affordable secular as well as traditional Islamic education to weaken the hold of extremist interpretations. For example, while Uzbekistan is the center of Sufism, few imams know about Uzbekistan's own traditional Islam. One of the most important steps Uzbekistan can take is to have well-trained imam able to defeat those spreading radical ideologies.

Finally, I would suggest looking at the Georgian case, which is another former Soviet country once fallen into the hands of criminal and corrupt people and today mentioned as America's great democratic success story. While there are many differences between Georgia and Uzbekistan, there are some key lessons that can be applied. Current Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili was Justice Minister and current Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania was Speaker of the Parliament under the previous government. In these capacities both men worked closely with the U.S. gov-

ernment, as well as NGOs and many USAID programs. After a while they realized that the system was too corrupt and too weak for them to make any significant changes, resigned from their posts and became leading opposition figures. These two visionary leaders then led a peaceful "Revolution of the Roses," which holds great promise for forging a democratic and prosperous Georgia.

Replicating the experience of the "Rose Revolution" in other countries is impossible. The U.S. Government and various American NGOs need to help the few Uzbek reformers in the government and not just support anti-government forces. Since the Georgian revolution last fall, the Karimov government started to believe that the U.S. wants to oust it from office as well. It is important to change this perception to get real buy into internal change and to provide political space for the reformers and the NGOs to function properly. The U.S. first and foremost needs to help support a set of pro-democratic people within the system and work toward steady, evolutionary change. This will lay the foundation for a new generation of pro-democratic, tolerant, and competent leaders who provide alternatives to the current regime, rather than Islamists who will be a danger to Uzbekistan, Central Asia and the United States.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.
Mark?

**STATEMENT OF MARK SCHNEIDER, VICE PRESIDENT, THE
INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP**

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here, and I want to express my appreciation for your inviting me to testify today on behalf of the International Crisis Group on the effort to promote political and economic reform in Uzbekistan. The title of this hearing is phrased as a question: "Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia?" We believe that Uzbekistan will never be the key to regional success if there is a continuing failure to secure reform in Uzbekistan.

The policies of the Government of Uzbekistan continue to cause serious political and economic distress within that nation while undercutting stability across Central Asia as a whole. Unfortunately, this combination of political and religious repression, corruption, and misguided economic policies provides fertile ground for Islamic extremist recruiters. The close relationship between the United States and Uzbekistan is, unfortunately, damaging the image of the United States in the region and in the wider Muslim community.

Given the events since the signing of the Strategic Partnership Framework, we believe that it would be detrimental to the United States, within the region, and in Uzbekistan, were the Department of State today to certify that the Government of Uzbekistan has achieved "substantial and continuing" progress in human rights and political and economic reforms. It would be the wrong message because, unfortunately, Uzbekistan has not.

As you have heard from the witnesses before you, Uzbekistan has gone backwards in critical areas. Far from opening up its system, as we have heard, Freedom House ranks Uzbekistan as only slightly better than North Korea and Burma in terms of violating political and civil rights. The Heritage Foundation ranks Uzbekistan 149th in the world, alongside North Korea, Burma, Zimbabwe, and Libya, in terms of economic freedom. And as you have heard, the State Department's most recent Country Report on Human Rights Practices, released in February 2004, describes the country as one with very poor human rights, where serious abuses continue to take place.

The United States-led military action in Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban in 2002 eased many of the security pressures on the Uzbek government, but high expectations of change in early 2002 have been stifled. The commitments made by the Government of Uzbekistan in the far-reaching United States-Uzbekistan Declaration on Strategic Partnership, signed in March 2002, have, in almost all instances, not been fulfilled. In each of the areas of the declaration cited in the legislation, specifically those singled out, “respect for human rights, establishing a genuine multiparty system, ensuring free and fair elections, freedom of expression, and the independence of the media,” the judgment must be that the standard has not been met.

In human rights, there has been virtually no improvement in the gross and systematic patterns of abuse and repression. Let me just cite one report, the specifics, and I am quoting now:

“Both police and the National Security Service routinely tortured, beat, and otherwise mistreated detainees to obtain confessions or incriminating information. Police and the NSS allegedly used suffocation, electric shock, rape, and other sexual abuse; however, beating was the most commonly reported method of torture . . . and the severity of torture did not decrease during the year.”

That report was February 2004. It was not a non-governmental human rights organization; it was a State Department official report to the Congress.

At the same time, as you have heard, human rights defenders find it difficult to operate and face harassment from the authorities. ICG has experienced this firsthand. Our analyst, Azizulla Ghaziev, was threatened by the police and forced to flee the country.

Let me just say, by the way, Madam Chairman, that the Assistant Secretary, Lorne Craner, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary and Ambassador, Lynn Pascoe, did everything they could to ensure that Mr. Ghaziev was able to leave the country safely.

The bombings of police targets in April in Tashkent and Bukhara resulted in deaths or injuries to dozens of innocent civilians. Effective prosecution of those responsible is essential. However, torture and repression are not the answer, and as we have seen, torture clearly plays a role in promoting further extremism. It sends prisoners back to their communities bitter, broken, and violent, and we have seen that reality across the globe.

At the moment, officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are largely not held accountable for their actions, and in many regions the police act as a state within a state, with little fear of redress.

With respect to political liberalization, as you have heard, Uzbekistan’s political system is entirely uncompetitive. No independent political parties are permitted to register. The Parliament contains either members directly appointed by President Karimov or those from parties which support him. As a result, the parliamentary elections now scheduled for December are destined to be a farce. Five official parties will be permitted to participate, none of them with any independence, and the opposition parties are not able to register.

In this context, when parties cannot be the avenues for political expression, the increasing restrictions on civil society organizations are particularly worrying. The Tashkent branch of the Open Society Institute was forced to close. A media NGO, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting from London, lost its registration, and the activities of others, including NDI and IRI, are restricted. There is now a separate organization within the National Security Service monitoring their contacts and a special committee in the tax inspectorate reviewing all external funding, which has had a tremendously negative impact on domestic Uzbek NGOs.

With respect to economic reform, unfortunately, the economic steps that were promised in the partnership have not been carried out. The failure to achieve significant reforms has led to stagnation. Young people, in particular, have been unable to find employment, and increasingly seek to leave the country. From rural areas, marginalized youth travel illegally to the cities, where they are obviously an ideal vulnerable group for the attention of radical recruiters.

What should be the policy? You have heard the discussion today, and you, yourself, Madam Chairman, have talked about the balance. I think that what we would argue is that right now, with respect to the current legislation, there is no option. There is no wiggle room. The legislation demands that there be substantial continuing progress. There has not been.

Now, with respect to the future, we believe, until there is some progress, the U.S. should continue to suspend, and I emphasize the word “suspend,” funding to the central government until there is evidence of change in three areas: Human rights, political liberalization, and economic policy. This does not guarantee any automatic, overnight shift in policy, but it does send the message that the international community and the U.S. are distancing itself from the actions of that government for very specific reasons.

Refusal to certify also would provide an opportunity for the United States to represent itself throughout the Muslim region as supporting being able to operate freely, even while it supports governments acting against violent radical forces.

Without a change in the political environment, the best the international community can do is distance itself from the worst aspects of government policy. But that then demands, as you indicated, that we look for additional ways to reach out to those forces within Uzbek society which are looking for space, which are looking for evolutionary change. That means some of the programs that currently exist that work for openness in the media, private enterprise, political activity, legal reform, the programs that deal with health and basic education—that work together with local communities on conflict mitigation and local governmental agencies—should continue and, in fact, be expanded. I should add that those programs that are narrowly limited, as we have heard from Deputy Assistant Secretary Mira Ricardel, on controlling nuclear materials, should continue to be permitted.

Otherwise, the alternative for the United States, to be identified as the uncritical supporter of an increasingly repressive regime, is bad for the United States, it is bad for the security of United States

citizens, and it is bad for the people of Uzbekistan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schneider follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARK SCHNEIDER, VICE PRESIDENT, THE INTERNATIONAL
CRISIS GROUP

Madame Chairman, I want to express my appreciation for your inviting me to testify today on behalf of the International Crisis Group on the effort to promote political and economic reform in Uzbekistan. The title of this hearing is phrased as a question: "Uzbekistan: The Key to Success in Central Asia?" We believe that Uzbekistan will never be the key to success in Central Asia if there is a continuing failure to secure reform.

The policies of the Government of Uzbekistan continue to cause serious political and economic decline within Uzbekistan while undercutting stability across Central Asia as a whole. Unfortunately, this combination of political and religious repression, corruption and misguided economic policies provides fertile ground for Islamist extremist recruiters that have been identified by both the Uzbek government and the United States as public enemy number one. Indeed, the close relationship between the U.S. and Uzbekistan is damaging the image of the U.S. in the region and in the wider Muslim community. We believe that it would be extremely detrimental to U.S. interests in the region were the Department of State to certify that the Government of Uzbekistan, as required by the current law, has achieved "substantial and continuing" progress in human rights and political and economic reforms. Uzbekistan has not made progress in these areas, and it definitely has not made "substantial and continuing" progress. Instead, it has taken many important steps away from real political and economic reform.

Uzbekistan has Central Asia's largest population; in fact, its 25 million people constitute nearly half the population of Central Asia. The size of California, Uzbekistan is a political, military and economic linchpin within the region that borders each of the four other Central Asia countries as well as Afghanistan. Dry and land-locked, it sits astride the land route from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran into Russia and Western Europe.

Uzbekistan has faced significant problems since its independence in 1991—the difficult legacies of Soviet rule, internal threats to stability, and the problems arising from neighboring Afghanistan. But its heavy-handed response to these challenges has merely worsened the situation. It has exaggerated risks, targeted the innocent, enacted policies that have only worsened security problems and consistently failed to tackle real dangers. Neighboring Kyrgyzstan has, if anything, faced deeper economic and security challenges than Uzbekistan but it has not responded by spending its scarce resources on prison camps and a large internal security apparatus. Instead it has struggled toward more economic and openness and political participation. The results can be seen in the number of Uzbeks who now seek work in Kyrgyzstan and the traders who go there to buy goods.

Far from opening up its economy and political system after the Soviet Union collapsed, Uzbekistan's former Communist leaders retained the worst elements of Soviet rule, ensuring that it has become one of the world's most repressive states in political and economic terms. Freedom House ranks it Uzbekistan as only slightly better than North Korea and Burma in terms of political and civil rights. The Heritage Foundation ranks it 149th in the world alongside the same countries and Zimbabwe and Libya in terms of economic freedom. The State Department's most recent Country Report on Human Rights Practices released in February 2004 describes a country with a "very poor" human rights climate where "serious abuses" continue to take place.

The U.S.-led military action in Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban in 2002 eased many of the security pressures on the Uzbek government, apparently allowing it to relax its strict controls over the population. The death of the head of the insurgent Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) during Afghanistan's liberation by U.S.-led forces, removed a major threat to Uzbekistan. But high expectations of change in early 2002 have not been fulfilled. The commitments made by the Government of Uzbekistan in the far-reaching U.S.-Uzbekistan Declaration on Strategic Partnership signed in March 2002, have in almost all instances not been fulfilled. If in 2002 there were some small signs of change, during 2003 and 2004 the situation, particularly in politics and the economy, has actually worsened.

In each of the areas of the "Declaration" cited in the legislation, specifically those singled out for mention; "respect for human rights, establishing a genuine multiparty system, and ensuring free and fair elections, freedom of expression, and the

independence of the media,” the judgment must be that the standard has not been met.

HUMAN RIGHTS

There has been virtually no improvement in the patterns of abuse and repression within Uzbekistan. Arrests and harassment of religious and political activists persist, continuing reports of torture have been described by the UN special rapporteur, Theo van Boven, as “systematic,” and the security forces remain largely unaccountable. Human rights defenders find it difficult to operate and face harassment from the authorities. ICG has experienced this first hand. Our analyst Azizulla Gaziev was threatened by the police and had to flee the country. A few cosmetic changes—discussion of improvements in prison conditions and an as yet un-implemented government action plan against torture—have so far not produced any real change in reality.

UN rapporteur van Boven’s report in early 2003 has still not produced any substantive response from the Government of Uzbekistan, beyond proposals for some discussions and seminars. Here the State Department report is quite specific, “. . . both police and the NSS [National Security Service] routinely tortured, beat, and otherwise mistreated detainees to obtain confessions or incriminating information. Police and the NSS allegedly used suffocation, electric shock, rape and other sexual abuse; however, beating was the most commonly reported method of torture . . . and the severity of torture did not decrease during the year.”

Conditions in prisons remain terrible, although a number of international organisations, including the OSCE, have begun working on prison reform. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) obtained greater access to prisons in 2003 than in 2002. However, reports from released prisoners and relatives of prisoners suggest that serious abuses of prisoners remain routine.

In detention centres run by the police and the National Security Service, beatings and torture are regularly reported by human rights groups. There are continued reports of deaths in custody, apparently the result of torture or ill-treatment. Several of those are quoted in detail in the State Department report. Yet, many human rights cases seem to go unreported, as relatives fear for their own safety if they approach human rights groups or international organisations.

Torture may play a role in promoting Islamic extremism. It sends prisoners back to their communities bitter, broken and violent. We have seen that reality across the globe. Often the argument is made that those states that have taken a tough and often violent line against Islamist groups—Egypt, Algeria—have been most successful at crushing Islamic insurgencies. In fact their use of torture and repression just exported the problems. Some Egyptians ended up in Afghanistan at the heart of Al-Qaeda and some Algerians spread violence into across Europe. Repression and torture do not solve the problems of Islamic extremism, they just drive it elsewhere. Banning books and jailing people for their beliefs do not end dissent, they force them underground and to become further radicalized.

Freedom of assembly and freedom of expression were both major elements of the Us-Uzbek agreement. Sadly, there has been almost no progress on either of these fronts. The abolition of censorship has not produced a freer press—initial attempts by some journalists to move beyond the stifling confines of official propaganda led to newspaper closures and the harassment of journalists. With minor exceptions, the press, and radio and television, continue to only provide official views of domestic reality. Restrictions on religious freedom have not only affected Muslims—Christian groups have also been a target of repression. This is a pattern all too familiar around the world—if religious repression is tolerated against one group, it soon spreads more widely.

Officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are largely unaccountable for their actions, and in many regions the police act as a “state within a state” with little fear of redress. The security forces are highly corrupt, and human rights abuses are also used as a way of extorting money from families. While there is no real effort to reform the security forces, human rights abuses will remain systemic. Attempts by international organisations to engage with the security forces in training, roundtables or seminars do no harm, but they should not be considered evidence of any serious change within the security organs.

POLITICAL LIBERALISATION

Uzbekistan’s political system is entirely uncompetitive, and no independent political parties are permitted to register. The parliament contains either members directly appointed by President Karimov or those from parties which support him. Several opposition parties do operate as unregistered groups, and their activities are

sometimes tolerated by the authorities, but there have been frequent arrests or detentions of activists from such parties, particularly the Erk party. Others such as Birlík or the Free Farmers' party have been permitted to hold meetings, but have also faced harassment and repeatedly refused legal status on technicalities, despite consistent international pressure.

As a result, parliamentary elections in December 2004 seem destined to be a farce—five official parties will be permitted to participate, but none of them have any independence from the state. Opposition activists may attempt to put forward independent candidates in some districts, but it seems very unlikely that they will be permitted to run. Current legislation calls for encouraging “a genuine multiparty system.” That system does not exist and is actively discouraged by the government.

In this context, increasing restrictions on civil society activism are particularly worrying, and represent a real step backwards.

International NGOs have faced increasing legal restrictions, although decisions are made on purely political grounds. The Tashkent branch of the Open Society Institute was forced to close; the Institute for War and Peace Reporting also lost its registration; the activities of other international NGOs, such as NDI and IRI, became increasingly restricted, and there were severe new restrictions imposed on external funding of NGO projects, with a special department in the National Security Services monitoring their contacts and a special committee in the tax inspectorate reviewing all external funding. This has had a major impact on domestic NGOs, many of which cannot survive without international funding.

ECONOMIC REFORMS

Uzbekistan's progress in embracing economic reforms has been painfully limited. A long-awaited announcement on convertibility of the Uzbek currency came in October 2003, but the reality was disappointing. Although the currency is now freely convertible in theory, such currency transactions remain surrounded by layers of informal administrative restrictions, and foreign trade is so limited that convertibility is largely meaningless for businesses. Uzbek President Islam Karimov—an economist trained in Soviet central planning—has forged policies that deny the entrepreneurial spirit of the Uzbek people and their hopes for better lives.

Foreign trade restrictions have severely limited the flow of goods into the country, and hit the small and medium-sized business sector hard. By all unofficial accounts, living standards have declined for most of the population. Privatization of state enterprises has hardly progressed. Banking reforms have also stalled, ensuring that informal financial transactions continue to dominate while leaving entrepreneurs frustrated by inefficient and corrupt banks which are closely controlled by the state. Capital flight has increased—it only makes sense to invest elsewhere when the investment climate in Uzbekistan is so poor.

The failure to achieve significant reforms of Uzbekistan's Soviet-style economy has led to stagnation: the economy hardly grew at all in 2003. Despite the repressive nature of the state, factory workers staged rare strikes in 2003 over unpaid wages, and pensioners went out on the streets demanding their state payments. Young people, unable to find employment, increasingly seek to leave the country. From rural areas marginalised youth travel illegally to the cities—they are an ideal vulnerable group for the attention of radical Islamist groups. Meanwhile a small elite gains huge financial reward from the present system through corrupt and sometimes criminal activities.

POLICY

The international community's approach to Uzbekistan has tended to favour engagement and quiet diplomacy over criticism. But the results in terms of reform have been disappointing. A continuation of government policies is likely to lead to greater instability, continued economic decline, further support for underground Islamist radical groups, increased terrorism, and potentially a gradual collapse of the current order. Karimov's economic and political policies simply undermine international efforts to enhance the security of his state, Central Asia and the wider world.

Since the present policy is not working, it is time to do something else. Most of the international community is united in its assessment of the Government of Uzbekistan's policies: the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has cut public lending; the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has issued critical policy statements; other IFIs have also limited lending to central government. However, in our view, the U.S. government, if it were to issue significant public criticisms of Uzbekistan within Uzbekistan, could strengthen an otherwise fairly consistent international stance toward the government.

It is no longer credible for the State Department to continue to certify that Uzbekistan is making “substantial and continuing progress” on meeting its commitments under the U.S.-Uzbekistan strategic partnership. To retain credibility in the country, the State Department will have to deny certification, but Congress will then need to ensure that programs of benefit to Uzbek society, continue and even expand.

The U.S. should suspend funding to the central government until there is evidence of change in three areas:

- Human rights: a real effort to make the security forces more accountable; and a plan for the implementation of the UN recommendations on torture, with the approval of the UN Special Rapporteur himself.
- Political liberalisation: the registration of opposition political parties in such a way that they are permitted to take part in parliamentary elections in December, with international monitoring to allow that to occur; lifting restrictions on the activities of international NGOs and on funding to local NGOs;
- Economic policy: liberalisation of the foreign trade regime, allowing a resumption of legal private cross-border trade, and a lessening of pressure on private businesses, particularly through lifting of banking restrictions.

Suspending aid to the central government provides no automatic guarantees of any overnight shift in the desired direction of Uzbek government policy. But it does send a message that the international community is distancing itself from the actions of that government. This is particularly important in this predominantly Muslim region: at present U.S. support for the Uzbek government fuels the perception among the local population that America is engaged in anti-Islamic policies, and employs double standards when dealing with the Islamic world. ICG has done considerable field work and polling on these issues and we have reported on the strongly negative trends in public opinion of U.S. policies in the region.

It is worth comparing U.S. policies towards Belarus and Uzbekistan—two almost identical regimes but facing very different U.S. responses; one highly critical, the other highly supportive. These different policy responses to European and Islamic countries send the wrong message about the U.S. government’s real commitment to democracy and economic and religious freedoms.

Uzbekistan is facing a long drawn-out political and economic crisis, largely brought about by failed government policies. The steps necessary for economic growth to occur and movement to build democratic institutions are well known and achievable, but there is no political will to implement them. Without a change in the political environment, the best the international community can do is distance itself from the worst aspects of central government policy. Programs should continue that are narrowly limited to controlling nuclear materials, to conflict mitigation in local communities, to health and basic education and to helping civil society groups press for more openness in the media, private enterprise, political activity and legal reform. The alternative is the identification of the U.S. as the uncritical supporter of an increasingly repressive dictatorship. That is bad for the United States, bad for the security of U.S. citizens and bad for the people of Uzbekistan.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [presiding]. First and foremost, I want to thank the Chair for her leadership on this issue and providing us this forum today. I think that it was necessary. The type of discussion we have had today is extremely healthy and helpful to try and determine what decisions will be made in a very difficult, difficult situation. We have a complicated and multilayered challenge in front of us here.

Ms. Baran, clearly, we understand here that radical Islam is a threat to freedom and a threat to people’s lives. We have lost thousands of American lives right in front of us, in front of our face, on television as those buildings collapsed in New York and as the plane flew into the Pentagon here. Those could have been not just 3,000 American lives; it could have been 20,000 American lives lost that day.

So we realize that there are forces in this world that are so hateful and despicable, and hate the American way of life so much that they are willing to commit this type of mass murder in order to

cower us in order to achieve their own goals. With that in mind, what is the best way to counteract that? And I think Mr. Schneider has certainly laid a good case, that radical Islam is going to be spurred more by corrupt and repressive government than by anything else. If we permit the young people in Uzbekistan to think that their only way out—the only idealists they know are the ones that are at their mosque who are calling for people to cut other people's heads off, that is going to lead to those people and a lifetime of activity and energy aimed at going in the wrong direction.

I think we need to reconfirm to the young people of Uzbekistan that we believe that their country, just as the people of every other country, have a right to the democratic freedoms that we stand for here in the United States. At the same time, we do recognize that President Karimov has saved lives. Let me note, President Karimov, in his decision to help us in the war, has saved the lives of thousands of American soldiers. I have no doubt that if President Karimov would not have given us the opportunity to use Uzbekistan in the way it was used during the war as a staging area against the Taliban, that we could have found ourselves in a situation where thousands and thousands of American soldiers would be dead today who are now alive and with their families, et cetera.

So we have to balance that out, and the balance is, of course, and I hate to say this because I am sure President Karimov and them are listening, but we have to give them an honorable way out. It is time for President Karimov and his administration to look for an honorable way to leave power, and the best and most honorable way is to dedicate themselves to free elections and letting the people decide, and then they could leave power in Uzbekistan as heroes of the people and as unifiers of the society against the evil forces of radical Islam, let me note, because Islam is not evil itself.

Islam, just like Christianity, Judaism, and others, it is a faith, and many wonderful people are engaged in it. The worst thing we could possibly do is try to have an Islam versus us. Well, it is not. It is people who are willing to commit monstrous crimes and try to superimpose their will on society through force and the rest of us who are trying to stand up for some modicum of decency between people who deal with one another and the way we have our human civilization.

So with that said, I want to compliment both of you. You were a little more tough, but I am sure you believe in democracy, and you believe in the long run. You are talking about short-run things that we must do to make sure that radical Islam does not take over Central Asia. Please feel free to comment on that, and then I am going to have to run as well. I am sorry.

Ms. BARAN. Okay. Very quickly, I was speaking as a Muslim, and I am extremely concerned about some of the things you have mentioned; how much there has been Wahabbi funding and other types of funding that went into Central Asia and specifically Uzbekistan, and prevented tolerant Islam to flourish.

Leaving that aside, I think one of the reasons I gave the Georgia example is that it is important to prepare Uzbekistan for democratic change. I fully agree with what you said, Congressman, in terms of having free and fair elections at some point when there

are democratic forces, but we need to still train them to get there, and even though, at this point, Uzbekistan may not be an ideal partner, we need to continue working with them. I am not making a recommendation on certification. It is a very difficult balance. I do agree with Mark: Given where we are, there may not be any other option.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, let me compliment both of you on your testimony and the testimony we have heard today. We want the people of Uzbekistan and all of Central Asia to know America stands for human rights and democracy. Just because we are at war with radical Islam, and in that regard, I hope on both fronts that we are unified with the people of Central Asia, in that we are against radical Islam, and we are for treating people decently and having human rights and democratic government. That should unify us with all of those people, but in the situation where we have the current regime in Uzbekistan who is not living up to those democratic standards, we have got to acknowledge that in the same way that we condemn radical Islam for their sins against humanity.

So with that said, thank you very much. I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing, and I declare it now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:58 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

Ms. Ros-Lehtinen:

How much of the U.S. assistance budget goes to the police force? What conditions are placed on this assistance?

Mr. Craner:

Our Fiscal Year 2004 assistance budget totals approximately \$58 million, of which \$2 million is planned for law enforcement programs. The bulk of our assistance is for technical assistance programs. We estimate that about one-third of past and present law enforcement assistance (excluding anti-terrorism programs) was used to train and equip personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and other Uzbek agencies that have policing components, such as border guards. The balance is used for training of judges and prosecutors and promoting legal reform. Thus, a very large portion of our law enforcement assistance program goes towards strengthening Uzbek commitment to rule of law.

We do not place conditions on our law enforcement assistance. U.S. law enforcement training programs generally include components on how to improve respect for human rights. Our goal is not just to help Uzbek law enforcement agencies fight crime more efficiently but also to help them move away from the authoritarian methods used under the Soviet regime. Where applicable, participants in our law enforcement assistance programs are subjected to vetting procedures. Our intent is to select participants who are open and responsive to positive change.

We are greatly increasing law enforcement programs that focus on improving human rights. Such programs include a new program that will use a series of exchanges over the next two years to further familiarize senior Uzbek judges, prosecutors and law enforcement personnel with modern, internationally-accepted procedures for the conduct of investigations and prosecutions. A US-supported OSCE project, begun in 2003, will improve the standards of operations in Uzbek prisons through proper training of prison personnel. It is anticipated that Freedom Support

Act funds will also be allocated for the creation of a unit within the MVD to investigate police misconduct.



June 10, 2004

The Honorable Colin L. Powell
 Secretary of State
 US Department of State
 2201 C Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Powell:

On behalf of the American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce (AUCC), we are writing to respectfully request that you certify the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations, in accordance with the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, Division B, Title IV, Section 568(a).

Over the past year, according to a variety of news media and some members of the academic community, Uzbekistan has continued to make substantial progress toward meeting the commitments established under the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership & Cooperation Framework on March 12, 2002. In an Addendum to this letter, we provide the views of the above-mentioned authorities on specific achievements of the Republic of Uzbekistan, since March 2002, in the areas of concern cited in the legislation.

The AUCC represents the great majority of the leading American major corporations, medium and small businesses and non-profit organizations which play the principal role in American-Uzbek commercial, financial and investment relations. These firms, in total, comprise thousands of American employees in their work forces, and produce revenues which amount to billions of dollars annually.

All AUCC member firms have established extremely close relationships with Uzbek partner firms -- built over time with mutual respect, trust, and business confidence. As names of senior American business executives and firms listed at the conclusion of this letter as co-signers will attest, these AUCC members include a number of America's best-known and most well-respected companies.

In addition, the ties of friendship and brotherhood between the United States and Uzbekistan established by AUCC and its more than 75 members represent a strategic asset to the United States of America in the context of the ongoing war on terrorism, in which the Republic of Uzbekistan has been our stalwart ally and coalition partner since immediately after the terrible events of September 11, 2001.

Mr. Secretary, any de-certification of Uzbekistan could have severe consequences for US-Uzbek relations and may irreparably harm long-term business partnerships that have developed between US companies and the Republic of Uzbekistan. Certainly, such a step would be seen by the Uzbek Government as a symbolic blow, which would draw a strongly-negative reaction from that Government. Furthermore, the US Government's on-going support of Uzbekistan has been, and remains, critical to continued progress on these important issues. Further, the State Department's certification is a complement to the strategic and long-term partnerships that have developed between the Republic of Uzbekistan and US companies. These long-term partnerships

play a critical role in driving Uzbekistan's continued progress toward the commitments outlined in the Strategic Partnership & Cooperation Framework. Uzbekistan has been a staunch ally of the United States, and welcomes U.S. investors and business. Any action—or inaction—that results in an interruption of the American Government's financial and programmatic support to Uzbekistan could impair Uzbekistan's progress and adversely impact our bilateral business opportunities, resulting in lost U.S. exports and jobs.

If you have any questions, or if we may be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call on us, or on Bob Pace, Executive Director of the AUCC at (202) 828-4111.

Sincerely,


 Jim Cornell
 President
 American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce

The following companies, and officers of AUCC Board Member firms, wish to associate themselves with the views expressed in this letter:

Paolo Monferino
 President and Chief Executive Officer
 Case New Holland Inc.

Tom Enos
 Vice President of International Operations
 Newmont Mining Corporation

James Cornell
 President
 RWE NUKEM, Inc.

Jim Tevebaugh
 General Director
 Caterpillar CIS

Carolyn B. Lamm
 Senior Partner
 Law firm of White & Case
 Corp.

Oliver Hauck
 President & CEO
 Siemens Transportation Systems, Inc.

William B. Dunavant, Jr.
 Chairman and CEO
 Dunavant Enterprises, Inc.

cc: His Excellency Abdulaziz Kamilov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan
 The Honorable Donald L. Evans, Secretary of Commerce
 The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defence
 The Honorable Ted Stevens, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
 The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
 The Honorable C.W. Bill Young, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
 The Honorable David Obey, Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Appropriations
 The Honorable Beth Jones, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, US Department of State
 The Honorable Alan Larson, Under Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, US Department of State

ADDENDUM

Reported Recent Progress by the Government of Uzbekistan

Respect for Human Rights:

The Government of Uzbekistan has achieved demonstrable progress in the observance of universally recognized human rights. Uzbek authorities have granted Red Cross observers and the United Nations Special Commissioner on Torture access to make inspections. Uzbek authorities have prosecuted a number of police officers for human rights abuses and, if convicted, guilty parties are sentenced to significant prison terms. In recent days, Uzbekistan agreed for the first time to permit joint monitoring by government officials and Uzbek domestic human rights groups of prison conditions. In addition, to help resolve a controversial case of death in police custody, Uzbekistan permitted an independent forensic review of the case. Finally, Uzbek authorities continue to expand their already ample cooperation with the United States in such important fields as women's rights, treatment of religious minorities, trafficking in persons, and child welfare legislation.

Establishment of a Multi-Party System & Electoral Reforms

With regard to the political system of Uzbekistan, we understand that progress also has been achieved toward permitting legal political parties to hold meetings and engage in organizational activities. At the same time, Uzbekistan electoral reforms will result in the formation of an enlarged Parliament (Oliy Majlis) of Uzbekistan in this year's legislative elections, with significant expansion in those elements of Parliament who will serve as directly elected representatives of the Uzbek people. There are already a number of political parties in existence in Uzbekistan which, according to expert observers, represent a variety of viewpoints and interest groups from within the populace.

Freedom of Expression & Independence of the Media

Recent reforms in the areas of freedom of expression and independence of the media have resulted in the lifting of official censorship of the Uzbek press. We also understand that there has been an ongoing process of the formation of independent radio and television stations throughout the Republic of Uzbekistan. And, finally, recent months following the abolition of press censorship have seen a growth in the range of issues which are openly discussed in the Uzbek press.

CNH and UZBEKISTAN

**AN ONGOING PARTNERSHIP
1994 - 2004**

**Presented
by
Oivind Myrhaug
Business Director, Central Asia
Case New Holland, Inc.**

**American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce
Annual Meeting
Washington, DC
May 26, 2004**

1. Background - Getting Together

For those who don't know our company very well, we are one of the world's biggest producers of agricultural machinery and construction equipment. Under the Case New Holland or CNH flag you will find brands whose roots go back to the earliest days of the agricultural machinery industry here in the USA, like CASE IH, and New Holland, as well as major Construction equipment brands like Case, O+K and Fiat Kobelco. We have a world wide turnover of more than 11 billion dollars. More relevant to today's discussions, though, CNH, through Case Corporation, has, since the opening up of the formerly closed Soviet markets, been a pioneer in, and is now a major player in, the agricultural machinery markets of the CIS.

At a very early point, in 1994, Case entered into discussions with Uzbekistan. Clearly the key country of Central Asia, with a large and growing population of some 26 millions. Being a major cotton producer, Uzbekistan also had a long history as a producer of agricultural machinery, such as tractors and cotton pickers. The stress of the huge changes resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet system was not easy for Uzbek agriculture and in particular to the agricultural machinery production industry. Starved of investment, it was unable to keep up with technological advance, and now suddenly also without its main Soviet markets. Case found a stable government with a clear plan to re-focus the state agricultural system on the newly independent country's own needs, and an appreciation of the need for technological progress in its own industry. The conditions clearly existed for a progressive agricultural machinery producer to enter into a partnership, and this is exactly what we did.

In November 1996, under President Karimov's leadership and vision, that partnership was formalized in a Long Term Co-operation Agreement. CNH would invest in the production of cotton harvesting machinery through the Joint Venture UzCaseMash and agricultural tractors through its Joint venture UzCaseTractor. In setting up a pioneer leasing company to meet the needs for retail finance of the agricultural market through the Joint Venture UzCaseAgroLeasing and in establishing a country wide product support operation to the best international standards with Joint Venture UzCaseService. Case also committed itself to aiding in the modernization of farming in Uzbekistan, which had fallen behind the rest of the world under the Soviet system, by showing modern practices and technologies at a Model Farm. In total, this represented a major investment. It also

represented a uniquely direct and active commitment in the modern era for a farm equipment producer, and it was based on the perception that Uzbekistan had a clear plan for agriculture and would be a reliable and dependable partner.

2. Onward, as Partners

That perception of the commitment and dependability of Uzbekistan as partner has been, and continues to be, fully justified.

Uzbekistan's farming has made huge strides in the production of wheat. Production since the Soviet era has increased by around 400%, and the country is now normally self-sufficient, even exporting wheat to its previous suppliers in some years. CNH takes pride in the critically important contribution that the 1700 wheat combines and 2000 plowing tractors it has supplied since 1995 has made, and makes every year, to this effort. It is important to note that this would not have been possible without the support of the US Export-Import Bank.

In our manufacturing joint ventures, Uzbekistan proved its ability to match the best western standards in manufacturing agricultural machinery, and in producing machines to a level of quality acceptable anywhere.

The previously limited ability of the country to support modern machinery has been transformed by the UzCaseService joint venture. With the exception of 3 expatriate specialists, a totally Uzbek managed operation, and clearly the best national machinery support operation in the whole CIS Region.

And in our Model Farm operation, we have established that Uzbek agriculture, with appropriate technology and some investment, can, as we suspected, double yields of major crops like cotton, and do so using significantly less of the country's scarce water resources.

Of course there have been difficulties. We have seen all the normal problems of farming in a low rainfall area. Such as droughts and crop failures; major changes in the value of the Uzbek currency Soum and difficulties for end users in the under-funded farming industry, to find the money to pay promptly for equipment and services. The stresses on the Uzbek economy have sometimes made it very difficult for the government to meet its commitments to lenders, and to maintain conversion. The production volumes achieved at our manufacturing joint ventures, often

because of these same stresses, have not always been in line with projections. But I would like to say clearly to you today; that the Government of Uzbekistan has always honored its obligations to us, and has always been available to discuss, in a co-operative spirit, problems that arose.

Our partnership has met our expectations; and we believe, has also met the expectations of Uzbekistan. It has been, and continues to be, a model of how such partnerships should operate.

3. New Perspectives for Co-operation

Uzbekistan today has embarked on the privatization of its agriculture. All over the country the previous collective farms have been and are being divided and private citizens are leasing land to become the future private farmers of Uzbekistan. In some other CIS countries the process took place earlier, but was too often accompanied by a dramatic fall in agricultural output. In Uzbekistan, the maintenance of the old agricultural pattern, with a state contracting service carrying out the major land preparation and harvesting operations, enabled the production increases that I have mentioned above. As machinery producers, we can also assure you that, at its best, it was also a very economically effective way to use machinery. Our tractors typically got through many times more hectares per year than they would in any western country and land preparation costs are accordingly low.

This transition to privatized agriculture is, of course, a major challenge for the country, even if there has been more time for adjustment and preparation of the move than in other countries, and even if there is a major effort to educate the new farmers. At all sorts of levels, CNH is seeking to help its partners achieve the smoothest possible transition.

CNH and Uzbekistan have renewed their commitment to our Joint Ventures and are engaged in refocusing them to meet the needs of the new farmers, with new product lines more suited to smaller producers, and selected technologies new to the market.

Uzbekistan, working with the International Finance Corporation, has taken major steps to make leasing simpler and easier and we expect that our Leasing joint venture will play a growing part in the market.

The service support offered by UzCaseService, both directly and by its impact on raising service standards throughout the industry, is playing and will play an essential role in supporting the new farmer.

Our Model Farm has shown the kind of progress in yield which is possible and will, through its new training centre, make available to the leaders of the new agriculture relevant expertise tested in local conditions.

4. Summary

In summary our successful partnership has left us optimistic about agricultural development in Uzbekistan. The privatization process, however, is vital and we are confident that the Government will organize it effectively through adequate legislation, land reforms, necessary guarantees and prices of crops. It is also important that the Government is aware of the danger, or rather vacuum, which we might see between the previous times and partly today's' central purchasing of equipment and private farmers' ability to make purchases now and in the future.

We in CNH are prepared to take a pro-active role in this process. We are content about the political stability in Uzbekistan and its willingness to support our company, our infrastructure is well established; the CNH machine population of more than 5000 major machines is being well looked after by our service operation of more than 300 Uzbeks - - who are part our our Case NewHolland family. Our production joint ventures are geared for much higher volumes than we see today. We have a leasing joint venture ready to support and we have a massive backing by senior management to further growth, in order to continue our mutual success in the agricultural business in Uzbekistan.

On behalf of Mr. Paolo Monferino, CNH's President and Chief Executive Office - - we honor our partners; we thank them, and we are proud of our partnership.



United States Department of State

Washington, D. C. 20520

MAY 25 2004

Dear Ms. Ros-Lehtinen:

This is in response to your letter of April 27 expressing your concerns about the Interpol Red Notices for Mansur, Frared, and Abdul Maqsudi.

As you may know, Red Notices are international wanted notices issued by the Interpol Secretariat General at the request of one of the 181 Interpol member countries. Before issuing a Red Notice, the Interpol Secretariat General reviews it for compliance with the Interpol Constitution. In particular, the Secretariat General reviews the Red Notice application for consistency with Article 3 of the Interpol constitution that prohibits the organization from engaging in activities of "a political, military, religious, or racial character."

Each Interpol member country determines for itself what effect to give to a Red Notice within its jurisdiction according to its law and practice. Although many Interpol member countries consider a Red Notice to be the equivalent of a provisional arrest request for the purpose of extradition, under U.S. law, a Red Notice alone is insufficient to arrest a person for purposes of extradition. Instead, Red Notices are treated in the United States as requests for a "look out" for the fugitive in question and are entered in the appropriate U.S. law enforcement databases. The U.S. National Central Bureau (USNCB), a component of the Department of Justice, administers the Interpol Notice system for the United States, both requesting the issuance of notices based on criminal charges in the United States, and taking action on notices issued by other Interpol member countries.

The Honorable
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen,
House of Representatives.

The subject of a Red Notice may contest the issuance of the notice by directly appealing to Interpol. Such an appeal is considered by Interpol's Commission for the Control of Interpol's Files which is empowered to examine Interpol's notices or other actions for compliance with the organization's rules, including Article 3 of the Interpol constitution. The Commission may also request information from the National Central Bureaus (NCBs) involved to assist it in making its determination. The Commission then makes a recommendation to the Secretary General. If the Secretary General does not act upon the Commission's recommendation, the Commission may raise the issue with the Interpol Executive Committee.

Although a member country itself may also question the issuance of a notice, the United States would intervene with the Interpol Secretariat General in such a matter only after the most careful consideration and based on uncontroverted facts and compelling policy reasons. The regime of self-imposed limitations which Interpol applies with respect to activities of a political character is one that has generally worked well and that has largely avoided casting Interpol as arbiter of disputes between countries about whether particular charges brought by one are perceived by another as politically motivated. The United States - which has aggressively pursued allegations of corruption, support of terrorism, and other serious charges against foreign nationals who may enjoy positions of considerable power and influence - must be particularly wary of reciprocity considerations in this context.

With respect to the Red Notices for the Maqsudis, as indicated in your letter, regardless of the validity of the underlying charges against the Maqsudis in Uzbekistan, the Department of State is of the view that Uzbekistan's motivation in requesting the Red Notices against the Maqsudis was political or personal. Accordingly, we requested that USNCB withdraw all entries relating to the Red Notices against the Maqsudis in U.S. law enforcement databases. We also understand that attorneys for the Maqsudis have made submissions to Interpol arguing that the Red Notices are in violation of Article 3 of the Interpol constitution and should be withdrawn. Interpol is reviewing these submissions. The United States has responded to subsequent requests from Interpol for information on the case. Finally, the

Departments of State and Justice have continued to consult closely on the appropriate actions to be taken by the United States concerning the Maqsudis' case.

With respect to your more general point about the application of Article 3 of the Interpol constitution, Interpol has recently commissioned a working group composed of senior officials of its member countries, academicians, and other experts to study issues relating to Article 3, including the way in which concerns about possibly politically motivated requests should be handled. The United States' nominee for membership in the working group was not selected. However, we are looking forward to reviewing the working group's recommendations concerning these important issues.

Should you have any additional questions or comments on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Paul V. Kelly
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs