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CHECHNYA: IMPLICATIONS FOR RUSSIA AND THE CAUCASUS

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CHECHNYA: IMPLICATIONS FOR RUSSIA AND THE CAUCASUS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1999

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m. in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Gordon H. Smith presiding.

Present: Senators Smith, Lugar and Wellstone.

Senator SMITH. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We will convene this hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee today. I will announce at the outset that we are going to start before some of my other colleagues arrive because at 11:20 we have to conclude this hearing because of the swearing in of Lincoln Chafee. All Senators are under command of the majority leader to be in their seats by 11:30.

So we will begin and be joined by other colleagues who will have statements, but I will begin this morning by talking about our subject today. We will take up the very pressing question of why the United States should care about Russia's recent military campaigns against Chechnya.

Let me first say that yesterday I had the opportunity to have lunch with the Russian Ambassador to the United States. He is a very nice man. He is a man with whom I believe we can do business, to whom we should listen, and I appreciated that opportunity.

So our purpose this morning is not to discuss issues of Russian sovereignty or to take unnecessary shots at Russia, but to gain a better understanding of what exactly is happening in Chechnya and how it affects the United States' interests. It is a part of the world far away. Many of our citizens do not understand the conflict, the ethnicities, the hatreds that are in play there. But we want to learn.

I am particularly concerned, though, as all people who have examined this conflict, by the catastrophic loss of life of innocent Chechen civilians in this current military campaign and an earlier one as well. Earlier in the year some radicalized elements in Chechnya led incursions into neighboring Dagestan and allegedly were behind the bombings of several apartment buildings in Moscow. In the name of rooting out terrorists, Russia is using force against Chechnya in an apparent effort to undo the military defeat it suffered there some 4 years ago, a defeat which left the region effectively autonomous from Russia.

Whether this latest struggle over who rules Chechnya is solved by brute force or by negotiation, which Chechnya's President Maskhadov has called for, is certainly of great concern to the United States. The events unfolding this autumn in Chechnya are of interest to American policy in three respects. They have implications for Chechnya itself, for Russia, and for the Caucasus region in general.

First and foremost, the bloodshed in and around Chechnya is appalling. The shelling of civilians and the tens of thousands of refugees who have fled Chechnya threaten to make this current military campaign as devastating as the Russian onslaught between 1994 and 1996. Over 100,000 Chechens were killed during that period, and I can only hope that we will not see history repeat itself in the current operation.

Second, this military campaign raises a number of troubling questions about Russia's future. The apparent freedom with which the Russian military has set about occupying the northern one-third of Chechnya, bombing its capital city Grozny, and poisoning itself to lay siege to that city prompts a question: Is Russia's civilian leadership really in control?

If President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Putin are not in control of this military operation, then the United States should be alarmed about what this means for our stability and our security. If they are in control, then the United States should hold them responsible for the brutality that has been unleashed.

Moreover, this military campaign is important to understand the state of Russia's civil society today. Almost a decade since the end of the cold war, why is the campaign against the Chechens, a campaign that has resulted in the death of hundreds of innocent civilians, so popular among the Russian people, that is much more popular than the war in Chechnya between 1994 and 1996? This could be taken as a sign that tolerance and pluralism in Russia are on the decline.

Local leaders, like the Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov, have taken steps in the wake of urban bombings tied to narrow radical groups to discriminate against those who look like Chechens, or who look like Muslims. Ethnic hatred seems to be on the rise in Russia.

Finally, the Russian campaign in Chechnya has implications for the Caucasus in general. Islamic fundamentalism obviously affects the stability of the region as a whole. Yet suppression of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists may be a very convenient pretext for Russia to pursue its designs in the Caucasus.

I hope today to explore what Russia's military designs are in that republic, and in the republics of the former Soviet Union to its south. In the Caucasus, the events unfolding in Chechnya are important not just to areas from which refugees are fleeing. When Russia masses tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery in Chechnya, neighboring states certainly take note. The visibility of the independence and democratization of nations like Georgia are indeed at stake if Russia's leaders and military have ambitions throughout the Caucasus similar to those exhibited in Chechnya.

Today we have three witnesses extraordinarily well suited to explore this humanitarian disaster at the hands of the Russian mili-

tary and its broader policy implications. Representing the administration, Steven Sestanovich, Ambassador at Large and Special Advisor to the Secretary of State on the New Independent States, will testify in our first panel.

On our second panel, we are honored to have Elena Bonner, a veritable heroine in the struggle to be free from the Soviet Union and to free the Russian people from repression. Dr. Bonner now chairs the foundation named after her late husband, the dissident leader Andrei Sakharov. She is a prominent voice on human rights in Russia and was an impassioned and eloquent critic of the first military campaign to quash Chechnya's ambition for autonomy.

Dr. Bonner, we consider it a special pleasure to have you here today.

Also on our second panel, we are pleased to have Paul Goble, the Communications Director at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. In recent weeks Mr. Goble has raised the question about the state of Russia's democracy, given the abridgment of human rights in Chechnya and throughout Russia.

Now, when Senator Biden joins us we will hear from him. But Ambassador Sestanovich, we are honored to have you here and we turn the mike to you.

STATEMENT OF HON. STEPHEN R. SESTANOVICH, AMBASSADOR AT LARGE AND SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE NEW INDEPENDENT STATES, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the chance to discuss the conflict in Chechnya and our response to what you appropriately call a humanitarian disaster there. As the questions that you have posed in your statement indicate, this is a complex topic with a long history and important implications for Russia's domestic politics, for the stability of the region, and for Russia's standing in the world, including its relations with the United States.

Since my remarks involve strong criticism of Russian policy, I want to emphasize at the outset that we recognize Russia's territorial integrity and its right to respond to threats to its security. The Russian Government has a responsibility, indeed an obligation, to protect its citizens. But it also has a responsibility to avoid using indiscriminate force against them and to take steps aimed at a peaceful settlement.

Mr. Chairman, I hope it is clear that in speaking of threats to Russian security I am not referring to abstract or hypothetical threats. There are real terrorists and violent insurgent groups in the North Caucasus. Chechen insurgents are receiving help from radical groups in other countries, including Usama Bin Laden's network and others who have attacked or threatened Americans and American interests.

The Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev led a raid on neighboring Dagestan, as you noted, last August that aimed to set up an Islamic state there. That attack and the series of apartment bombings that killed nearly 300 innocent people spurred the Russian Government to step up its fight against terrorism and to launch the present military campaign.

President Clinton and Secretary Albright condemned the apartment bombings as acts of terrorism. The President offered the Russians technical assistance with their investigation and the FBI will send a team to Moscow shortly to follow up.

But while we share Russia's outrage over terrorism and respect its right to defend itself, the manner of the Russian Government's response is deeply troubling. I know from your statement that you agree with that. Let me note three problems in particular.

First, the indiscriminate use of force. The Russian military offensive in Chechnya that was launched on October 1 has steadily escalated. A relentless bombing and artillery campaign has been carried out in nearly all parts of the republic. This use of indiscriminate force against innocent civilians is indefensible and we condemn it. We have publicly and privately urged Russia to exercise restraint and to open Chechnya's borders to allow civilians to escape the fighting.

The 1994 to 1996 war in Chechnya left 80,000 dead, the overwhelming majority of them civilians. That tragedy must not be repeated. Like other countries, Russia has assumed obligations under the Geneva conventions and commitments under the OSCE Code of Conduct on Political-Military Aspects of Security. Russia's current campaign does not match these commitments.

Second, a second issue that concerns us has to do with refugees. The conflict in Chechnya has created a growing humanitarian crisis that requires immediate attention. Neighboring Ingushetia lacks the resources to care for nearly 200,000 displaced Chechens and Russia's efforts have also been inadequate.

Americans do not stand idly by in such cases and, through the International Committee of the Red Cross and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, we are providing emergency aid. We recently provided \$4.5 million to help support UNHCR and Red Cross programs in the region, and the administration will quickly answer the Red Cross' specific appeal for funds to help civilians displaced by the conflict in Chechnya. In the past week, three air shipments of U.S. humanitarian supplies arrived in the North Caucasus to support these Red Cross efforts.

As winter approaches, the international community will almost certainly have to do more, and I hope that we can count on your support for the resources to do the job. Russia too must devote significantly more resources to addressing this humanitarian crisis, which it created. We have made that point repeatedly to Russian officials.

Third, let me address the question of human rights. In the wake of apartment bombings in Moscow and other cities, the Russian Interior Ministry launched what was called Operation Whirlwind to root out terrorists nationwide. Police have detained over 2,000 individuals in Moscow and deported many of them, evidently because the color of their skin suggests they might have Chechen or other Caucasus origins.

Ethnic-based roundups of the "usual suspects" are wrong and have no place in a country that aims to provide equal treatment to all its citizens, as the Russian Government has said it wishes to do. The Russian Government is obliged to do so as a signatory

to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We have said repeatedly, Mr. Chairman, that there cannot be a purely military solution to the conflict in Chechnya. A durable solution requires dialog and the participation of regional leaders. Unfortunately, neither the Russian Government nor Chechen leaders have shown much interest in such a dialog, and the military escalation that is under way obviously makes it very difficult to open talks.

In these circumstances, we believe that the OSCE may be able to help. During the first war in Chechnya, after all, the OSCE mission to Grozny brokered many rounds of negotiations and monitored cease-fires. On Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov invited an OSCE mission to visit the North Caucasus. This is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, like you, we are particularly concerned that the violence in Chechnya could spread beyond Russia's borders and pose threats to the independence and security of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. Deputy Secretary Talbott and I visited the South Caucasus last week and we made clear at every stop that the U.S. supports these three countries during this time of turmoil in the region.

Azerbaijan and Armenia have made progress in addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a way of further stabilizing the region. They have done so with support from us and other OSCE Minsk Group countries, including Russia. We need to do more.

As for Georgia, the single largest element of our assistance program to that country has been to strengthen the Georgian Government's ability to control its own borders, including with Chechnya.

The international implications of the conflict in Chechnya extend beyond the Caucasus region. To conduct their operations in Chechnya, Russian armed forces have deployed more weapons and military equipment in the North Caucasus than they would be allowed under an adapted CFE treaty. On Monday Prime Minister Putin pledged that this situation is only temporary and that all excess weapons and equipment from the so-called CFE flank areas will be withdrawn as soon as possible once the situation in Chechnya is under control. This commitment is especially important now since Russia, the United States, and the other CFE treaty member states hope to sign an adapted CFE treaty at the OSCE summit in Istanbul in 2 weeks.

Mr. Chairman, let me repeat that the Russian Government has an obligation to protect itself and its citizens from terrorists and other attacks. But this obligation does not and cannot justify indiscriminate attacks on civilians, the closing of borders to prevent civilians from fleeing, or other violations of human rights. How Russia resolves these issues, how it counters the insurgency, how it treats its own people, will determine what kind of country it will become and what kind of relationship we have with it. That will be Russia's challenge and ours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to our discussion.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Sestanovich follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR STEPHEN R. SESTANOVICH

THE CONFLICT IN CHECHNYA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the chance to discuss the conflict in Chechnya and our response to the humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding there. This is a complex topic with a long history and important implications for Russian domestic politics, for the stability of the region, and for Russia's standing in the world, including its relations with the United States.

Since my remarks involve strong criticism of Russian policy, I want to emphasize at the outset that we recognize Russia's territorial integrity and its right to respond to threats to its security. The Russian government has a responsibility, indeed an obligation, to protect its citizens. But it also has a responsibility to avoid using indiscriminate force against them—and to take steps aimed at a peaceful settlement.

Mr. Chairman, I hope it is clear that in speaking of threats to Russian security, I am not referring to abstract or hypothetical threats. There are real terrorists and violent insurgent groups in the North Caucasus. Chechen insurgents are receiving help from radical groups in other countries, including Usama Bin Laden's network and others who have attacked or threatened Americans and American interests. The Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev led a raid on neighboring Dagestan last August that aimed to set up an Islamic state there. That attack and a series of apartment bombings that killed nearly 300 innocent people spurred the Russian Government to step up its fight against terrorism and to launch the present military campaign.

President Clinton and Secretary Albright condemned the apartment bombings as acts of terrorism. The President offered the Russians technical assistance with their investigation, and the FBI will send a team to Moscow shortly to follow up. But while we share Russia's outrage over terrorism and respect its right to defend itself, the manner of the Russian government's response is deeply troubling. Let me note three problems in particular:

First, the indiscriminate use of force. The Russian military offensive in Chechnya that was launched on October 1 has steadily escalated. A relentless bombing and artillery campaign has been carried out in nearly all parts of the republic. This use of indiscriminate force against innocent civilians is indefensible, and we condemn it. We have publicly and privately urged Russia to exercise restraint and to open Chechnya's borders to allow civilians to escape the fighting. The 1994–96 war in Chechnya left 80,000 dead, the overwhelming majority of them civilians. That tragedy must not be repeated.

Like other countries, Russia has assumed obligations under the Geneva Conventions and commitments under the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions states that “in armed conflicts not of an international character, persons taking no part in the hostilities . . . shall be treated humanely.” Article 36 of the OSCE Code of Conduct states that “if recourse to force cannot be avoided in performing internal security missions, each participating State will ensure that its use must be commensurate with the needs for enforcement. The armed forces will take due care to avoid injury to civilians or their property.” Russia's current campaign does not match these commitments.

Second, refugees. The conflict in Chechnya has created a growing humanitarian crisis that requires immediate attention. Neighboring Ingushetiya lacks the resources to care for nearly 200,000 displaced Chechens, and Russia's efforts have also been inadequate.

Americans do not stand idly by in such cases, and, through the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, we are providing emergency aid. We recently provided \$4.5 million to help support UNHCR and Red Cross programs in the region, and the Administration will quickly answer the Red Cross's specific appeal for funds to help civilians displaced by the conflict in Chechnya. In the past week, three air shipments of U.S. humanitarian supplies arrived in the North Caucasus to support these Red Cross efforts. As winter approaches, the international community will almost certainly have to do more, and I hope that we can count on your support for the resources to do the job.

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Third, human rights. In the wake of apartment bombings in Moscow and other cities, the Russian Interior Ministry launched Operation Whirlwind to root out terrorists nationwide. Police have detained over 2,000 individuals in Moscow and deported many of them—evidently because the color of their skin suggests they might have Chechen or other Caucasus origins. Ethnic-based roundups of “the usual sus-

pects” are wrong and have no place in a country that aims to provide equal treatment to all its citizens, as the Russian government has said it wishes to do. The Russian Government is obliged to do so as a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We have said repeatedly that there cannot be a purely military solution to the conflict in Chechnya. A durable settlement requires dialogue and the participation of regional leaders. Unfortunately, neither the Russian government nor Chechen leaders have shown much interest in such a dialogue, and the military escalation that is underway obviously makes it very difficult to open talks. In these circumstances, we believe the OSCE may be able to help. During the first war in Chechnya, after all, the OSCE mission to Grozny brokered many rounds of negotiations and monitored cease-fires. On Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov invited an OSCE mission to visit the North Caucasus. This is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, we are particularly concerned that the violence in Chechnya could spread beyond Russia’s borders and pose threats to the independence and security of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Deputy Secretary Talbott and I visited the South Caucasus last week, and we made clear at every stop that the U.S. supports these three countries during this time of turmoil in the region. Azerbaijan and Armenia have made progress in addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with support from us and the other OSCE Minsk Group countries, including Russia. We need to do more. As for Georgia, the single largest element of our assistance program has been to strengthen the Georgian government’s ability to control its borders, including with Chechnya.

The international implications of the conflict in Chechnya extend beyond the Caucasus region. To conduct their operations in Chechnya, Russian armed forces have deployed more weapons and military equipment in the North Caucasus region than they would be allowed under an adapted CFE Treaty. On Monday, Prime Minister Putin pledged that this situation is only temporary, and that all excess weapons and equipment from the so-called CFE “flank” area will be withdrawn as soon as possible, once the situation in Chechnya is under control. This commitment is especially important now, since Russia, the United States and the other CFE Treaty member states hope to sign an adapted CFE Treaty at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in two weeks.

Mr. Chairman, let me repeat that the Russian government has an obligation to protect itself and its citizens from terrorist and other attacks. But this obligation does not and cannot justify indiscriminate attacks on civilians, the blocking of borders to prevent civilians from fleeing or other violations of human rights. How Russia resolves these issues—how it counters this insurgency and how it treats its own people—will determine what kind of country it will become and what kind of relationship we have with it. That will be Russia’s challenge and ours.

Senator SMITH. Steve, do you expect that Russia will occupy Grozny or do you think it will just surround it and strangle it, bomb it? What do you think the intention is of this military operation?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Senator, you may have seen the statement by Defense Minister Sergeyev on this question yesterday, which did not answer your question entirely, but did say that they did not intend to storm Grozny. He said at the same time they intend to be in Chechnya forever and to retake the entire province.

I would guess that as a matter of military tactics they are still resolving this planning question. The fact that they have not—that the defense minister would indicate that they are not going to storm the city may mean that they have heeded some of the criticisms that they have heard even internally about the wisdom of doing that and repeating the calamitous invasion of the city that took place in the previous war. But this is conjecture.

If they wait outside Grozny they could try to lay siege to it, and some Russian officials have suggested to us that this is an alternative that they may be looking at.

Senator SMITH. I think it is clear from all I have seen and read that the Russian people do support this action, whereas they did

not support as much what happened between 1994 and 1996. I wonder, what is that telling us? What can we learn from that?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Well, I think the first thing it tells you is something that is political commonplace: When a government can define a problem as one of a terrorist threat to the country or as a threat of a violent insurgency that may lead to the breakup of the country, political support from the population is not hard to generate. Threats of that kind typically generate strong political support, and it is clear that the Russian Government has been able to define this problem in those terms.

It is also clear, I think, that they have tried to deal with some of the problems that led to the unpopularity of the war last time around. In particular, they have acknowledged that they are trying to keep casualties, on their side at least, to a minimum. That has neutralized one of the sources of criticism, although I do not think we can be sure what the true level of casualties has been.

This leads me to indicate and to suggest one of the other ways in which the government has been able to maintain a higher degree of popular support for its actions than it did last time. That is the state of the media. There has been less media openness in this case than there was last time. This has not been a television war that the Russians have watched in the evening.

Senator SMITH. That is by directive of the government?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. The government has kept TV coverage down by keeping television crews out of Chechnya on what they say are security grounds.

Senator SMITH. Do the Russian people generally, have they seen pictures of the square, the market square that was bombed and the 100 people dead?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. I am not sure whether that picture has been on Russian television. There is an awareness of allegations made in the West about events of this kind. The Russian Government has been routinely dismissing such allegations as what they call bandit propaganda.

Let me add one other point about this, Senator, if I might, because you raise an understandable question about whether there has been a change in the state of Russian democracy or Russian civil society in the interim here. We are at an early stage of this war and public attitudes may yet evolve and come closer to what they were in 1994 and 1996. That is particularly likely if the Russian army undertakes the kinds of actions that you were asking about a moment ago, that is trying to seize cities through street to street operations. If that is the case, then much higher levels of casualties will be unavoidable.

With any degree of greater openness, I think there will also be more opportunities for criticism by Russian political leaders. You may have seen that in *Izvestia* yesterday the handling and treatment of refugees was denounced as incompetent. Some Russian political figures have focused on individual elements of the policy as wrong-headed, counterproductive, contrary to Russia's commitments.

That has not yet produced a full-blown critique of the policy and we may not see that. But there is—I think there is every likelihood that with greater information and with the evolution of this war—

going to be, as there is in any system where you have got political candidates holding the policies of the government up to public scrutiny, there is going to have to be some debate on this subject.

Senator SMITH. Steve, I wonder if President Clinton—I do not know that you can speak for him here, but this issue, this conflict, in the United States really has not resonated yet, as did the action of Mr. Milosevic against the people of Albania, the Kosovar Albanians. That resonated to some degree, but at least in this instance I recall President Clinton comparing Russia's actions there as no different than Abraham Lincoln's efforts to keep the southern States in the Union.

I wonder if he regrets that comparison or if he has changed his mind on that, or if that statement has caused the American people to just sort of shrug it off and say, well, you know, this really is internal affairs. Are there some differences there that he would pick a different analogy now?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Senator, you have asked two questions. Let me address them in turn. Why has there been less attention to this humanitarian crisis than there may have been last time? Certainly not because we have failed to speak up on this subject. We have tried to address this from the get-go to make very clear what our view of this matter is and what we consider to be international obligations under which Russia is obliged to conduct a war against terrorism or violent insurgencies. We have used strong language in those statements.

I certainly applaud your effort to get greater attention for this, because I think that will begin to attract the attention of the media. We have also been coordinating closely with other governments, trying to make sure that the international relief efforts here are adequate to the problem. And we have been trying to make clear at all levels, including in meetings that President Clinton himself has conducted with Russian leaders, what our views are.

Now, you asked about President Clinton's comparison of this problem to the American Civil War. It is true that President Clinton used that comparison as a way of making a point about our policy, which is still our policy, and that is that we respect the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.

In that statement, which I looked at again recently, he went on to say we, the United States, believed there is not a military solution and believed that there had to be a political settlement, and we still believe that. He called for a political settlement as the only way of creating permanent stability in the region and respecting the rights of people in the region and of neighboring states. That is still our policy.

Senator SMITH. Do you know whether or not the Russian Government, though, has seized upon that comparison in an undue fashion, so that that still is the currency of their perception of American policy? I wonder. In this country this conflict barely rates a mention. I mean, 100,000 people were killed, Chechens were killed, between 1994 and 1996. That is not Yugoslavia. That is something much larger, much more difficult to understand.

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Senator, I think there is no doubt on the part of the Russian Government as to where we stand and that we are going to continue to speak out on this conflict and state our

views as to what Russia's international obligations are, both of a humanitarian, political, security nature.

I might add that, from a visit to Moscow last week, that there does seem to be one place where our statements are heard and taken rather seriously, indeed criticized and countered, and that is Russia. You and I may express surprise at how thin the media coverage has been of this issue and how little Western disapproval seems to figure into Russian policy. In Russia one actually hears something rather different—a lot of pushing back at what they regard as unfair criticism, double standards.

They are hearing us. I think they are under no illusion about what we think.

Senator SMITH. I am glad to hear that. I do think, whether they see the Civil War analogy as apt, I do think that President Clinton would have trouble making the case of American interests in the area now if Americans remember his comments. I mean, nothing is more "apple pie" in America than the Union victory of Abraham Lincoln that preserved this country, and I think there are, obviously, some very real differences in the two circumstances.

But I think one of my—as you know, myself, Senator Brownback, and others have tried to bring attention to this whole region as America having an interest in it. We call it the Silk Road strategy. If this area of the world is ever going to develop, the rest of the world needs to take an interest in it. Yet, if I were living in Moldova or Georgia I guess I would wonder, based upon our rhetorical efforts as to Chechnya, really how serious the United States was about doing business there, fostering democracy there, if in any way we are facilitating the carnage that is going on there.

I wonder if you can tell me what the Georgians and the Moldovans are feeling, the Azeris and the Armenians? How are they viewing this conflict and America's reaction to it? Then I want to ask you about the flank agreement because that will lead to a different discussion.

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Sure. Senator, I completely agree with you about, from what you have just said and from your opening statement, about the nature of American interests in this region and in this conflict. This conflict raises questions about regional stability and there is an American interest there. It raises questions about the future of Russia and there is an American interest there. It raises questions about the credibility of Russian international commitments and that is an obvious interest of ours. It raises obvious humanitarian concerns.

So I think there is no difficulty in establishing a consensus about the important interests that are at stake here for us and explaining that publicly and developing an international consensus on it.

You asked about the attitudes of other states. I can say a little bit about that because I actually visited all four of the countries you asked about in the past couple of weeks, and some of them twice in that period. There is, as you can imagine, an acute concern on their part. Although the South Caucasus is separated from the North Caucasus by some rather imposing mountains, that does not create as much comfort as these countries need to be sure of their independence over the long term.

I think they understand very well our concern and see our policies in action trying to increase their confidence about their independence and security. I mentioned as one example the efforts that we have made to help the Georgian Government with border security. I mentioned that that is the single biggest assistance program we have provided.

We have also been insistent in the negotiation of the CFE treaty that the concerns of small countries on the periphery of Russia in the flank area be addressed. These are not interests that we consider as peripheral to the CFE treaty, but as central.

In both Azerbaijan and Georgia, which are countries that border Russia, and Georgia, as you know, borders Chechnya and Azerbaijan borders Dagestan, there is a concern as well about the fact that their countries can in fact be used by organizations supporting terrorist activities inside the Russian Federation, and they have made a substantial effort to address that problem.

They understand that their interests are in no way served by becoming transit routes for terrorism. That is an area where we have further offered to provide assistance that may be useful to them in increasing their capacity to control those flows.

Senator SMITH. Let me welcome my colleagues Senator Wellstone and Senator Lugar who are here. As I turn the mike to Senator Wellstone, I would like to make one comment about the CFE treaty. You might realize I am one of the few Republicans who voted for the test ban treaty, and many of my colleagues point out to me that these arms control agreements are often—well, they are of no more value than the signatory nations and are violated routinely when one of the signatories does not feel like they are of interest, and that we should ergo never put arms control ahead of arms.

I do not think—there is no way you can read the CFE treaty and say that Russia is in compliance with that. So I am kind of twisting in the wind here, if you will, based on this. I wonder if the CFE treaty, if you expect it to be complied with, or is this just an international agreement to be discarded as inconvenient?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Mr. Chairman, I would answer your question in two ways. First of all, as Prime Minister Putin's own statement this week indicated, the Russians are above and acknowledge that they are above the limits that would be allowed for them under an adapted CFE treaty. We pushed them to acknowledge this publicly, to provide greater transparency about the levels that they have there in the region, as required under the treaty.

You are absolutely right that a CFE treaty cannot be a viable instrument for increasing the security of all states unless Russian equipment levels come to match the limits that they are allowed under the treaty.

Second, let me address the interests that other states have in this region, in this treaty, because this is not a bilateral treaty. It is negotiated among 30 countries. If this treaty is to be, as I said, a serious instrument for increasing the security of all states, it has got to serve the interests of Georgia, of Moldova, as you noted.

These are countries that are now involved in negotiating the final terms of this treaty with the Russians. If those negotiations are a success, then the treaty will be a success. If it is not, then it will not serve the purposes that we all agree it needs to.

Senator SMITH. Thank you.

I would note to my colleagues that we are supposed to be in our seats on the floor of the Senate at 11:30, so we have another panel. I welcome you. I am grateful you are here. It is a very important issue.

Senator Wellstone, we will turn to you.

Senator WELLSTONE. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that what I might do is thank Ambassador Sestanovich for being here. I want to hear Elena Bonner. I came here to honor her work. So let me just in 1 minute or less make a comment, which, as long as we are talking about arms control regime, I think the whole question of ABM and our anti-missile defense proposal and where this all goes is to my mind a critically, critically important question.

I think Ambassador Sestanovich said this, so I do not know that I need to put a question to him. I am of course sympathetic to people in Russia for the terror that has been unleashed against them and the anguish that they feel. On the other hand—and I look forward to hearing from Elena Bonner—much as I have a hard time, I do not believe that justifies the just indiscriminate killing of innocent people.

I think there is an awful lot at play politically in Russia. I mean, I really want to know the why of this. You know, in whose self-interest is this war? I think perhaps Elena Bonner can do a good job of informing us of that.

I thank you for your work. I have a number of questions, but I have to leave even earlier. So I will not—as you can tell, I keep talking because I want to put the questions to you, but I think I had better finish.

Senator SMITH. Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Mr. Chairman, I am going to have to go to another meeting also. But let me try to incorporate what Senator Wellstone has said, because the testimony that we will hear from Elena Bonner and Mr. Goble is very important in establishing, in their judgment, that there was terrorism in the incidents in Moscow.

Many of us have visited with Russians for many years and indicated that some of their policies might create terror around the world. We even accused them, insofar as non-proliferation is involved, of aiding and abetting this. Now it has come home to roost in Moscow, and the reaction of the Russians to this is obviously very adverse, really extraordinary.

But it seems to me that Ms. Bonner and Mr. Goble are saying that the military in Russia and perhaps even the Prime Minister, Mr. Putin, have found this situation to be to their advantage, that they have extended the authority of the military, suspended some civil liberties for people in Russia, and have used the Chechnya situation in this way.

It has all the ramifications you pointed out, Mr. Secretary, with regard to the neighboring states and the general instability in the Caucasus area. But more importantly, this is clearly a setback with regard to democracy in Russia and the hopes that all of us have of a normal country there, a normal relationship.

Now, what Mr. Goble says, and he references Ms. Bonner's testimony, is that our failure to protest this may have suggested that, not that we are encouraging it, but that we felt President Yeltsin might take hold and push back. And he has not done that. As a matter of fact, from polls that we all read in the papers, Prime Minister Putin is gaining ground the longer this goes on, from a very low, single digit approval to something more substantial, maybe more so than any other political figure now in Russia, with the Presidential election proceeding and the Duma election next month.

Should the United States—the administration, the Congress, all of us—weigh in in ways that indicate stronger disapproval, because of our fears about the evolution toward democracy and, given these elections, which we are deeply interested? Can you answer in advance what we are about to hear on the next panel, which are really substantial charges that we are not doing enough in terms of our protest?

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Senator, let me answer in two ways. I have to take issue with the words “our failure to protest” what has happened. We have really spoken up in the clearest possible way and I think my statement today bears that out. We consider that there are substantial issues involved here, that this is not an affair that Russia can treat as simply an internal matter, but that it has to respond to the international community's concerns about its international obligations and issues of fundamental humanitarian principles, among others.

Senator Smith and I were talking earlier about the need to develop a broader and louder consensus on this issue. I think it is important that the Russian Government hear this as well from our European allies, and on that basis we have been consulting closely with the European Union, the OSCE, and others.

It is partly as a consequence of those consultations and the consultations of those organizations with the Russians that we have seen some movement on the Russian side, some responsiveness to our concerns. It was as a result of this, for example, that the Finish Foreign Minister—the Finns have the EU presidency now—traveled to the region, produced a report that attracted a lot of attention. It is on the basis of the kinds of concerns and protests that we have been lodging that we have seen some movement to open the border now so that people fleeing this conflict can actually escape the violence and put themselves out of harm's way.

So I think we have been speaking up on this and have seen signs that the Russian Government knows it has to listen to this kind of storm of protest internationally.

Let me add a second point to what you have said about democracy. I am not comfortable with the idea of letting the political leadership in Russia off the hook by talking of an assertion of military authority. We do not have any good reason to think that, beyond tactical decisions, the Russian army is doing anything other than carrying out a political mandate that it has from the elected leadership of Russia. That is a source of concern.

Senator Smith asked the question about civilian oversight of the military and said we should be alarmed if it is not there. Also I think he suggested that we should be appalled if it is there. I have

no reason to doubt that there is civilian control of this policy. That is a reason for us to speak even more loudly, as you suggested.

Senator WELLSTONE. Just for 1 second, I would say to both my colleagues, I know that I wonder whether we might join efforts. I have a floor speech and a letter that I was writing. I wonder whether we could not put something together where we in the next couple of days could have as clear a statement as possible coming from the Senate. I think we ought to work on that together and do so.

I would be pleased if the chairman takes the lead. It does not matter to me, but I would certainly like to be a part of that effort. Let us make sure that happens.

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Can I add one comment to that? I think this is the kind of issue that cries out for real contacts between parliamentarians.

Senator SMITH. Absolutely.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you.

Senator SMITH. We thank you, Mr. Secretary, for coming.

We are honored now to call our second panel: Dr. Elena Bonner, chairman of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation; and Mr. Paul Goble, the Director of Communications, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Ambassador SESTANOVICH. Senator, let me say it is always an honor to be Elena Bonner's warmup act.

Senator SMITH. Thank you.

Senator WELLSTONE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Senator SMITH. In the interest of accommodating time and translation, I think what we will do is hear from Dr. Bonner and then question her. Would that be acceptable to you, Senator Wellstone?

Senator WELLSTONE. Mr. Chairman, I want Dr. Bonner to know that I may not be able to stay for all of her presentation, and it is not out of disrespect. I have such great respect for her. My father was from Russia, fled persecution from Russia, and I so admire your work.

Senator SMITH. Dr. Bonner.

**STATEMENT OF ELENA BONNER, CHAIRMAN, ANDREI
SAKHAROV FOUNDATION, BROOKLINE, MA**

Dr. BONNER [speaks through interpreter]. Good morning. At the beginning of my statement I would like to say briefly that I have just received a message from the President of Chechnya Maskhadov. The Chechen President Maskhadov asks me to make it known to the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Chechen government, first of all, condemns all terrorist activity and does not support any extremist groups; and second, emphasizes the need for a negotiated solution.

To save time, I am asking that my prepared statement be just read in English, and afterwards I will be answering questions.

Senator SMITH. That will be fine.

[Interpreter reads the prepared statement of Dr. Bonner which follows:]

INTERPRETER. The main cause of the second Chechen war must be sought in particular features of the current Russia political scene. The first war was needed in order to elect President Yeltsin. This war is needed to raise the standing in the polls of the current

Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, whom President Yeltsin has publicly endorsed as his chosen successor.

For the Russian army the war is attractive because it gives the generals an opportunity to take revenge for their defeats in the Afghan war and in the first Chechen war, 1994–96. They believe that perestroika and Gorbachev prevented their victory in Afghanistan and that in Chechnya Alexander Lebed, Russia's free press and public opinion were to blame.

For the military-industrial complex, in reduced circumstances since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the war means money and new orders.

For the Presidential administration, for government ministers, and for Duma politicians, the war is needed to resuscitate patriotic slogans and divert the public attention from corruption and financial scandals to the enemy, in this situation the Chechens. The regime has not found any way other than war to rally the public, of whom one-third or 51 million persons live below the poverty level.

The frequent replacement of prime ministers this past year—it is noteworthy that the last three have all had KGB connections—has possibly been the result of a conscious or subconscious search for someone capable of deciding for war. Primakov was too cautious. Stepashin's dismissal most likely was the result of his willingness to talk with Chechnya's President Aslan Maskhadov and even to arrange a meeting of Maskhadov with Yeltsin.

Putin took Stepashin's place most likely because he recognized the Kremlin's wish for war, not peace. It is worth recalling that last August in one of his first interviews as prime minister he answered the question about his attitude toward his appointment by stating: "I am a soldier."

Later Putin, not the President, was the first to declare that the Khasavyurt agreement and the peace treaty signed by Yeltsin and Maskhadov were meaningless scraps of paper. Putin falsely claimed that Maskhadov is not the legitimate President, so that there is no sense entering into negotiations with him.

Russian public opinion has accepted that the blowing up of apartment houses in Russia and the hundreds of deaths that resulted, even though a Chechen connection to these explosions remains unproven, and the raid into Dagestan justify the anti-Chechen campaign. The explosions have allowed our Russian politicians to call this war a fight against international terrorism and Russian officers to announce to the whole world that they will prosecute this war to the very end and will not let any civilian casualties stop them.

An unprecedented anti-Chechen campaign has been launched in the mass media, especially on TV. Chechens have been banished from Russian cities, with Moscow leading the way in violating their legally protected rights. Between 100,000 and 130,000 persons perished during the first Chechen war. The fate of more than 1,500 persons who disappeared during purges of the local population and from detention camps remains unknown.

All cities in Chechnya, many of its towns and villages, its whole infrastructure, its institutions of education, medicine, and culture, and its factories and other enterprises were destroyed. After the war, almost the whole urban population of Chechnya was left with-

out jobs. Crime increased. Kidnapping for ransom became an everyday occurrence.

Yet, with incredible effort, after the war ended people somehow repaired their homes, farmers gathered the harvest, and Chechens managed to survive the winter. All this was accomplished without financial help from Russia, which, despite its own poverty, should in all justice have assisted the reconstruction of Chechnya after a peace treaty was signed by Maskhadov and Yeltsin.

Russia could not find any money to ensure peace, but Russia can find the money to make war. In the current budget military expenditures have been increased by a billion dollars, orders to the military-industrial complex have been stepped up, and the prime minister has promised all soldiers involved in the fighting pay of \$1,000 a month. Where will this extra money be found, since even without the war, revenues do not cover the ordinary budget expenditures?

One way is by simply printing more rubles. The resulting inflation will make the poor still more impoverished. Taxes will be raised, which will ruin many small and medium-sized businesses. And then there will be Western loans and money from the IMF and other international agencies, or at least whatever may be left after payment of interest on outstanding loans. The second Chechen war, just like the first war, is being indirectly financed by the Big Seven and other economically advanced countries.

The effects of the war can also be seen in recently adopted decrees and legal matters. The constitutional court has decided that students in private colleges and universities can be drafted before completing their studies. The President issued a decree that draftees can be sent into battle after 6 months of training, violating the principle of using only volunteers to fight wars.

Information about the war is reviewed and edited by the newly created Russian Information Service and by the military censorship. Virtually no Western or independent Russian journalists are allowed in the war zone. The work of humanitarian and human rights NGO's is obstructed. Access of U.N. and NGO observers to the region is restricted.

When they began their military action, the Russian generals stated that their goal was to create a cordon sanitaire along the border with Chechnya. But since mid-October and after the offensive against Grozny and Gudermes, it has become clear that this announcement was made only to appease public opinion.

The rocket attack on the Grozny market where more than 150 persons were killed, including 13 babies in a nearby maternity hospital, signaled the second, even more savage phase of the war. It is typical that in this case, as in all preceding and subsequent instances of ruthless bombardment of civilians, Russian officials, including Prime Minister Putin, have lied and denied that the incidents took place.

President Maskhadov in his October 29 appeal to Pope John Paul II on behalf of Chechnya's civilian population wrote that: "3,600 persons, mostly women and children, have been killed and more than 5,500 wounded by Russian bombing, shelling, and other ordnance." That same day a refugee convoy which included five clearly marked Red Cross vehicles was attacked by Russian planes and,

according to eyewitnesses, more than 25 persons were killed and more than 70 wounded. Every day the casualties increase.

The number of refugees from Chechnya in neighboring regions has passed the 250,000 mark. The majority are in Ingushetia, about 190,000 refugees as of November 1. This influx puts an impossible strain on the infrastructure of a small republic, with a peacetime population of 340,000 people. Nevertheless, Ingushetia's President Ruslan Aushev protested when the Russian army sealed off the border with Chechnya. Aushev declared that Ingushetia is prepared to accept more refugees fleeing from the deadly bombing.

The situation of the refugees is extremely difficult. The assertion that no humanitarian catastrophe exists in Ingushetia is just one more lie invented by the Russian Government so that representatives of international organizations can be denied access to the refugees and prevented from witnessing the mass violations of human rights taking place.

There are not enough tents, stoves, cots, blankets, or warm clothing, and at night the temperature already drops below freezing. There is not enough drinking water and sanitary supplies. The lack of doctors and nurses, medicine and surgical supplies is critical. There is not sufficient flour for the bakeries. Other foodstuffs are in very short supply, including milk and infant formula. Every day dozens of people, primarily infants and elderly, die from cold, disease, and wounds.

The aid from the U.N. and other humanitarian organizations which has reached the refugees so far is insufficient. Moreover, part of the assistance has reportedly fallen into the hands of the military. If the flow of assistance is not promptly and substantially increased, countless deaths from epidemics, malnutrition, and extreme cold weather can be expected. A humanitarian catastrophe already exists and only major international aid can prevent its farther advance.

Carpet bombing and shelling of cities, villages, and refugee convoys attempting to escape the war zone constitute a grave violation of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the additional protocols, and demonstrate the Russian Government's complete disregard for these extremely important international agreements.

The means used to conduct this war demonstrate plainly that it is not a fight against terrorists. The Russian generals are trying to annihilate a large part of the Chechen nation and drive out those who survive from their native land. Their aim is to keep Chechnya as part of the Russian Federation, but without the Chechens. This is genocide. This is not just another routine violation of human rights. This is a crime against humanity, and this can no longer be exclusively the internal affair of Russia no matter how often President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Putin try to assert this point of view.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much.

We are going to turn now to Mr. Goble. But Dr. Bonner, as he gives his testimony, I wonder if you could be prepared to answer a question: What specifically should the United States do to bring this war to a close?

Mr. Goble.

STATEMENT OF PAUL GOBLE, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. GOBLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and for inviting me to appear after Elena Bonner. The two of us appeared before another congressional committee 4½ years ago when Russia was earlier attacking the Chechen people. The situation now is worse and I am very grateful that you are holding these hearings.

Moscow's latest military campaign against Chechnya has not only killed hundreds, wounded thousands, and driven almost a quarter of a million people from their homes; it has created a humanitarian and political crisis beyond the capacity of the current Russian Government to cope. Moreover and still more disturbingly, the Russian authorities' continuing police actions and media attacks against ethnic Chechens and other North Caucasians living across the Russian Federation not only has led to the physical expulsion of many of these people from Russian cities, it has also—and this is important for us—broken the taboo against government-sponsored attacks on individuals in Russia because of their ethnic ties, thus opening the door to attacks against other minority groups in that country.

Neither the Russian military campaign against Chechnya nor police actions against Chechens as a group, however, has broken the will of the Chechen people or lessened their resolve to live in an independent country of their own. If anything, the current Russian assaults against civilians in Chechnya itself and the portrayal of the Chechen nation as a whole as uniquely criminal or terrorist has only redoubled the resolve of the Chechens to escape from Russian domination. Consequently, the Chechens are certain to redouble their centuries-old struggle for freedom, whatever victories Moscow and its supporters there or elsewhere may report or claim.

But this prospect of continuing Chechen resistance is hardly the only feature of the future that Moscow's own policies have made more likely. The Russian Government's recent actions have simultaneously undermined the likelihood that Russia will move in a democratic direction any time soon, threatened the prospects for stability between Russia and her neighbors, and reduced the chances for the development of the kind of cooperative relationship between Russia and ourselves that we had hoped so much for. That spreading collateral damage is to be my subject.

Moscow's actions against Chechnya and the Chechens have seriously reduced the chances that the Russian Federation will continue to move in a democratic direction. First of all, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's decision to use military force rather than political means to deal with Chechnya and the Chechens and, even more, the popularity he has so obviously won by doing so combine to make it more, rather than less, likely that he and his successors will continue to employ that tactic, thus subverting the possibility of democracy.

If the Russian authorities had used police power to track down those individuals they suspected of engaging in terrorist actions, no one would have objected. And if Moscow had argued that it wanted to reassert control over Chechnya as a territory, it is unfortunately

the case that many in the West might have said that was a reasonable, if not especially attractive, step.

But Moscow's use of force was not only disproportionate to either of these goals, but involved the demonization of an entire nation in ways that will make it more difficult, if not impossible, for the Russian authorities to establish a legitimate and democratic form of rule over their country. This demonization of an ethnic community and again the enormous popularity that that demonization now enjoys among Russians forms a second threat to democracy in Russia.

Although the Chechens number only a million and are thus a tiny fraction of Russia's population, the percentage of Russian Federation citizens who are Muslims or who are at least not ethnically Russian is large and growing. Demonizing those groups increases splits in that society that democracy will find it very difficult to take root in.

To give but one example, the government of the predominantly Turkic and Muslim Republic of Tatarstan has denounced what Moscow is doing in Chechnya and ordered that no Tatars should serve in Russian forces there.

But it is the destruction of the taboo against demonizing and attacking an ethnic community as a whole that is the most serious problem. In the past, Russian Governments, in Soviet times as well, exploited popular xenophobic sentiments to win support for themselves. The anti-Chechen campaign and especially the Putin government's open support of the actions of Moscow Mayor Luzhkov and other regional leaders interested in expelling "persons of Caucasian nationality" raise the specter that that will continue.

Despite what was suggested earlier, the efforts to expel persons of North Caucasian and Chechen origin from Russian cities did not begin 2 months ago. It began on October 5, 1993, with the decree by Mayor Luzhkov that was backed up by President Yeltsin.

Worse, we are seeing the people who are involved in attacks on Chechens now thinking about attacking other groups. In Krasnodar there are suggestions that attacks on Chechens should be followed by attacks on Jews, and in Nizhny Novgorod, one of the more reformist centers of Russia, there are suggestions that the attacks on Chechens should be followed by attacks on Kurds.

Third, under the cover of the bombing of Grozny and the attacks on Chechens in Russian cities, Moscow has moved to reinstitute the kind of controls over the media that remind one of the late Soviet period. That is one of the reasons that Russians now appear to support their government, because the Russian people are not given access to much information. There has been an extremely tough media policy instituted, controlling news, hacking Internet sites, threatening journalists, and so forth.

That has offended some Russians and, as one of the leaders of the Russian Soldiers Mothers Committee put it 2 days ago: "All official statements about Chechnya are lies." But unfortunately, not all Russians have the access to the kind of information which allows them to make that judgment and that is a big problem.

I am very proud that the organization I work for, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, has had reporters on the ground to cover what is going on in the North Caucasus and elsewhere and to give the

Russian people a more accurate picture of what is going on. It is a measure of the times and something I personally think we can take pride in that Russian media outlets now are attacking RFE-RL and its Russian language service in precisely the ways those services were attacked in Soviet times. I believe many Russians will come to see what is going on as very frightening.

The second major threat of Russia's behavior is that Russia's campaigns against Chechnya and the Chechens are having an impact far beyond the borders of the Russian Federation, because Moscow is now in violation of internationally agreed to CFE limitations. It is nice that they admitted it, but they are still in violation even if they have.

The Russian authorities have put enormous pressure on Georgia and its neighbors to yield some of their equipment quotas to Moscow so that Moscow will not be held accountable for breaking the limits. To date, Tbilisi and other capitals have resisted doing that, but, as Moscow has demonstrated in the past, it has a variety of means at its disposal to put pressure on the leaders of these very weak countries.

Moreover, Russia's neighbors cannot help but be nervous that Moscow's latest turn to the use of violence presages a greater willingness to employ force implicitly or directly against them. That is a concern across this entire region and can be found by reading the press, if not talking to the foreign ministers of these countries.

Such feelings are especially likely to become strong in those countries which are either Turkic or Muslim and who may see Russian policy about the Chechens as ultimately applying to them. That will make at least some of these states think about distancing themselves from Moscow still further, possibly leading to a new crisis if Russian authorities try to prevent them from doing that.

But it is for us perhaps the most concerning that this Russian retreat from democracy and the likelihood of greater instability in the post-Soviet region as a whole has an impact, a serious impact, on the United States and its interests in developing a more cooperative relationship with the Russian Federation. Because hopes for such a relationship were so high, many counseled against criticizing Moscow either for its attacks on Chechnya in 1994-96 or for the October 1993 introduction by Mayor Luzhkov of his order to expel Chechens from the Russian capital.

During the first Chechen war, if I may use the periodization Elena Bonner has employed, most Western leaders were either silent or supportive, in the hopes that President Boris Yeltsin would soon turn again toward democracy. But the events of recent months suggest that that hope was misplaced. Indeed, some have suggested that the reason Moscow has acted in the way it has against Chechnya and against the Chechens is precisely because in the past the West appeared to be so willing not to object.

It is difficult to know for sure that that is the correct analysis. But the absence of vigorous criticism the last time certainly encouraged some in Moscow to think that they could do something like this again and at little or no cost. Consequently, we can only welcome the much tougher statements that have recently emanated from Washington, from the EU, from the United Nations, from the

Holy Father, from the OSCE, and from particular governments and human rights organizations.

Putting ourselves on record against evil is always the right thing to do. Putting ourselves on record against an evil that will ultimately threaten our own society and its interests is an imperative. Unfortunately, Putin and other Russian leaders have made it clear, at least in public, that they think they can safely ignore such criticism and may even benefit at home and abroad from being seen to ignore it.

That unfortunate attitude raises the stakes. Western governments in general and the United States in particular naturally and justifiably have been reluctant to impose real penalties on Russia by restricting aid, loans, and other assistance, lest such a cutback lead Moscow to turn away from reform elsewhere. But Moscow's recent actions and especially its recent reactions to Western and American criticism, something we have not talked about before, suggest that the United States and other Western governments will soon have to revisit this issue, possibly reducing or at least making contingent any future assistance to Russia on better behavior toward Russian citizens and the principles of democracy. Failure to do that will not only further lower our moral influence in Russia and that region, but it could very well encourage Moscow to behave even worse in the future as the absence of criticism in 1994 and 1995 and 1996 did now.

Should that happen, and I very much hope that hearings like that will make it impossible, those who now argue against any tough penalties would eventually face, along with the rest of us, a Russia with which most Western countries would find it difficult if not impossible to cooperate at all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Goble follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAUL A. GOBLE¹

COLLATERAL DAMAGE: THE SPREADING CONSEQUENCES OF MOSCOW'S CAMPAIGN
AGAINST CHECHNYA AND THE CHECHENS

Moscow's latest military campaign against Chechnya has not only killed hundreds, wounded thousands and driven almost a quarter of a million people from their homes: it has created a humanitarian and political crisis beyond the capacity of the Russian government to cope. Moreover, the Russian authorities' continuing police actions and media attacks against ethnic Chechens and other North Caucasians now living in the Russian Federation not only has led to the physical expulsion of many of these people from Russian cities: it has also broken the taboo against government-sponsored attacks on individuals because of their ethnic ties, thus opening the door to attacks against other minority groups in that country.

Neither the Russian military campaign against Chechnya nor police actions against Chechens as a group, however, has broken the will of the Chechen people or lessened their resolve to live in an independent Chechnya. If anything, the current Russian assaults against civilians in Chechnya itself and the portrayal of the Chechen nation as a whole as a uniquely criminal or terrorist community has only redoubled the resolve of the Chechens. And consequently, the Chechens are certain to continue their now centuries' old struggle for freedom—whatever victories Moscow and its supporters may report or claim.

But this prospect of continuing Chechen resistance is hardly the only feature of the future that Moscow's policies have made more likely. The Russian government's recent actions against Chechnya and the Chechens have simultaneously undermined the likelihood that Russia will move in a democratic direction, threatened the

¹The views expressed here are Mr. Goble's own.

prospects for stability between Russia and her neighbors, and reduced the chances for the development of the kind of cooperative relationship between Russia and the West that so many people on both sides had hoped for. This spreading collateral damage is my subject here.

UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY

Moscow's actions against Chechnya and the Chechens have seriously reduced the chances that the Russian Federation will continue to move in a democratic direction. Indeed, as several observers have put it, Russia's advance on Grozny has been accompanied by Russia's retreat from democracy. There are at least three reasons for this unpleasant conclusion.

First of all, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's decision to use military force rather than political means to deal with Chechnya and the Chechens and even more the popularity he has won domestically by doing so combine to make it more likely rather than less that he or his successors will continue to employ this tactic. By its very nature, such use of force and even more its popularity will make it more difficult for Russia to move toward democracy and its precondition, the rule of law.

If the Russian authorities had used police power to track down those individuals they suspected of engaging in terrorist actions, no one would have objected. And if Moscow had argued that it wanted to reassert control over Chechnya as a territory, many in the West might have said that was a reasonable if not especially attractive step for the central government there to take. But Moscow's use of force was not only disproportionate to either of these goals but involved the demonization of the Chechens and other minorities in ways that will make it far more difficult for the Russian authorities to establish a legitimate and democratic form of rule over much of their country.

This demonization of a particular ethnic community and again the enormous popularity of it among many Russians to judge from the polls together form the second threat to democracy. Although the Chechens number only a million and are thus a tiny fraction of Russia's population, the percentage of Russian Federation citizens who are Muslims or who are at least not ethnically Russian is large and growing. Demonizing one of these groups with the apparent backing of the dominant natality raises the possibility that others will be demonized, a prospect that has already offended some non-Russians and may offend still more. To give but one example, the government of the predominantly Turkic and Muslim Republic of Tatarstan has denounced what Moscow is doing in Chechnya and ordered that no Tatars should serve in the Russian army there.

But it is the destruction of the taboo against demonizing and attacking an ethnic community as a whole that is the most serious aspect of this challenge to the future of democratic governance in Russia. In the past, Russian governments have exploited popular xenophobic sentiments to win support for themselves by blaming so-called "outsiders" for their problems. The anti-Chechen campaign, and especially the Putin government's open support of the actions of Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and other regional leaders interested in expelling "persons of Caucasian nationality," raise the spectre that some Russian leader of political group might seek power by turning to the same base prejudices. That is all the more likely because there is some evidence that many of those in Russia now attacking the Chechens and other North Caucasians are prepared to attack Jews—as in Krasnodar—or Kurds—as in Nizhny Novgorod.

And third, under the cover of the bombing of Grozny and the attacks on Chechens in Russian cities, the Russian government has moved to reinstitute the kind of controls over the media that are reminiscent of the late Soviet period and thus avoid the anti-regime sentiments generated by Russian media coverage of Moscow's last intervention in Chechnya in 1994–96. Earlier this year, Moscow established a new ministry to manage the media, and its leader has sought to keep the press from playing what he calls "an aggressive role" against the interests of the state. The Russian army has instituted extremely tight battlefield censorship and restricted the access of reporters to Chechnya. And the Russian authorities have struck out at Chechen-related Internet sites, threatened journalists who want to get the truth out, and otherwise sought to restrict the flow of information.

This has offended some Russians. As one of the leaders of the Russian Soldiers' Mothers Committee put it this week, "all official statements about Chechnya are lies." But unfortunately, not all Russians have the access to the kind of information which allows them to make that judgment. Indeed, such actions by the Russian government have exacerbated the collapse of the Russian regional media, thus making Moscow's official voice often the only one many people here. I am proud that Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has had reporters on the ground to cover what is going

on in the North Caucasus and elsewhere and to give the Russian people a more accurate picture than their press and electronic media now are supplying. It is a measure of the times and something I believe we can take pride in that Russian media outlets are now attacking RFE/RL and its Russian language service in ways that also recall the late Soviet period.

Fortunately, many Russians are increasingly aware of this danger as well and beginning to protest what their government is doing. But as of now, they are still few in number and isolated one from another. As a result, the Putin government clearly believes that it can not only get away with the management of the news but that it will be the primary beneficiary of doing so. None of this bodes well for the future of democracy in Russia.

THREATENING REGIONAL STABILITY

The impact of Russia's campaigns against Chechnya and the Chechens is not limited to the borders of the Russian Federation, whatever the Russian government may claim. Because Moscow is now in violation of the internationally agreed to CFE limitations, the Russian authorities have put enormous pressure on Georgia and its neighbors to yield some of their equipment quotas to Moscow so that the Russians will not be held accountable for breaking the limits. To date, Tbilisi and the others have been unwilling to do so. But as Moscow has demonstrated in the past, it has a variety of means—economic, political, military and others as well—at its disposal to pressure the leaders of the neighboring countries.

Moreover, Russia's neighbors cannot help but be nervous that Moscow's latest turn to the use of violence presages a greater willingness to employ force implicitly or even directly against them. Most of the post-Soviet states in the CIS have Russian military forces on their territories. Most of these regimes are relatively weak and do not yet have the domestic stability or outside support to resist successfully any Russian pressure of this kind. And most have seen dramatic events in at least a few of these countries that leaders like President Eduard Shevardnadze have laid at the feet of Russian special forces. At a time when such forces appear to be on the march within Russia, their concerns about the use of these agencies abroad will only grow.

Even if these perceptions are incorrect in whole or in part, their existence will have the effect of raising the level of tensions among these countries, thereby making political resolution of differences more difficult and increasing the temptation of the stronger party to employ threats to get its way.

Such feelings are likely to become especially strong in those countries which are either Turkic or Muslim and who may see Russian policy about the Chechens as ultimately applying to them. (At the same time, Moscow's approach may give aid and comfort to more extremist groups within the ethnic Russian communities within these countries out of an expectation that they might enlist Moscow to support them against the local governments.) That will make at least some of these states think about distancing themselves from Moscow still further, possibly leading to a new crisis if the Russian authorities try to prevent that from happening. While Russia's neighbors have been cautious in public about what Moscow is doing lest they further anger Moscow, most are quite concerned about the spread in one form or another of Putin's current approach.

UNDERCUTTING U.S.-RUSSIAN COOPERATION

This Russian retreat from democracy and the likelihood of greater instability in the post-Soviet region obviously has an impact on the United States and its interest in developing a more cooperative relationship with the Russian Federation.

Because hopes for such a new relationship were so high, many counselled against criticizing Moscow either for its attacks on Chechnya in 1994–96 or for the October 1993 introduction by Mayor Luzhkov of his Chechen expulsion policy. During the first Chechen war—if I may use the periodization Yelena Bonner has employed here—most Western leaders were either silent or even supportive, in the hopes that President Boris Yeltsin would soon turn again toward democracy.

But the events of the last two months suggest that hope was misplaced, and indeed some have suggested that the reason Moscow has acted in the way that it has against Chechnya and the Chechens is precisely because the West appeared to be so willing not to object. It is difficult to know for sure that that is a correct analysis, but the absence of vigorous criticism last time certainly encouraged some in Moscow to think that they could do something like this again and at no cost.

Consequently, we can only welcome the much tougher statements that have emanated recently from Washington, from the European Union, from the United Nations, from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and from par-

ticular governments and human rights organizations. Putting ourselves on record against evil is always the right thing to do; putting ourselves on record against an evil that will ultimately threaten our own society and its interests is an imperative.

Unfortunately, Putin and other Russian leaders have made it clear that they think they can safely ignore and may even benefit at home and abroad from being seen to ignore such Western criticism. That unfortunate attitude raises the stakes. Western governments in general and the United States in particular naturally and justifiably have been reluctant to impose real penalties by restricting aid, loans and other assistance to the Russian Federation lest any cutback lead Moscow to turn away from reforms in other areas.

But Moscow's actions and especially its recent reactions to Western and American criticism suggest that the U.S. and other Western governments will have to revisit this issue soon, possibly reducing or at least making contingent any future assistance. Failure to do that will not only further lower our moral influence in Russia and other countries but it could encourage Moscow to behave even worse in the future. Should that happen, those who now argue against any such penalties would eventually face—along with the rest of us—a Russia with which most Western countries would find it difficult to cooperate at all.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Goble. It was an excellent statement. You have already laid out many of the answers to the question I have posed to Dr. Bonner.

Dr. Bonner, what can the United States do to help bring this conflict to an end?

Dr. BONNER [speaks through interpreter]. I will start a little bit from afar by saying that, first of all, you need to evaluate the situation and have a correct picture of both the situation and the state that is Russia that you are dealing with. I would say that the last 10 years can be characterized in terms of the United States position by saying that the United States is taking the desired state of affairs as real.

We did not really move that far toward democratization in the years that Russia existed as a separate entity from the Soviet Union and since 1993 we are steadily moving in the direction opposite to democratization. Today, though it is very difficult and sad for me to state so because I am talking about my country and my people, both of whom I love, but I state it: Today we have not a democratic state, but a criminal-military state.

Now more specifically on the question of what to do about this current Russia-Chechen war. First of all, I think that the diplomatic pressure put on Russia can be more forceful and more specific. I believe that no loans, no aid of any kind, either from the United States directly or from international, any international organization, can be given to a country that is conducting such a war.

Senator SMITH. How about cooperating on restructuring of past loans?

Dr. BONNER. I am not a financial specialist, so it is difficult for me to comment on the specifics of how restructuring is different from other things. But I have heard now for example that South Korea has forfeited some amounts of credits that have been given in the past to Russia. I do not understand why that should be done.

Right now there are negotiations being conducted about humanitarian assistance from the United States in terms of delivery of foodstuffs. That kind of aid, of course, is different in the sense that it is not delivered as money, as finances.

But at the same time I should say that what was done in previous years with this kind of assistance when it was agreed that some funds would go toward the pension fund in Russia, at least

50 percent of that was machinations and lies. I do not want to take up too much time of the committee, but I could have given you examples how some of the food assistance given to Russia in some regions was being sold and the resulting money put in banks controlled by children of members of the government.

I have personally discussed several times with USAID head office here in Washington my opinion that if any aid is delivered to Russia as a whole that includes funds which are supposed to be distributed to the regions, the proportional part of that aid which is supposed to go to Chechnya should be delivered directly to Chechnya, because otherwise it never reaches its destination. I was every time told that such policy is impossible to implement because it will offend Russia.

Also I should note that when a reduction—talking still about the policies of providing financial and other assistance to Russia, when reductions in these kinds of programs were implemented in the past, the specific example last year USAID have gone through a reduction of programs oriented toward Russia, have decided that the first step that they are going to take will be canceling grant support for nongovernmental organizations in Russia. That is precisely those organizations that are concerned with human rights and humanitarian work in Russia.

Now, specifically in terms of the kind of aid that the United States should be giving right now, I think that it should be in the form of financial assistance for international organizations which are currently working in Chechnya or that can get accredited and start the field work.

It is also important that the humanitarian aid, financial assistance for the purpose of humanitarian aid, should be delivered not through the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations and not through the Russian Federation Migration Service which is supposedly taking care of refugees, but only through the political leaders who have a reputation in the region, in the North Caucasus region, for their honesty and financial integrity.

I believe that such leaders in that region are Ingushetia's President Aushev and Chechnya's President Maskhadov.

Senator SMITH. I hate to bring this hearing to a close because you have been so helpful and so valuable, but we are under direction of the majority leader to shut this hearing down and go to the Senate floor for an important Senate ceremony.

You have both been so helpful. Mr. Goble, thank you; excellent testimony. I am going to leave this record open because there may be yet more questions and we would like to get a few more answers from you. So with that, the record will remain open.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:32 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

RESPONSES OF HON. STEPHEN R. SESTANOVICH TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Question. When NATO peacekeepers were being deployed in Kosovo, Russian forces rushed in to occupy the Pristina airport—at the very same time Russian civilian leaders were assuring NATO they would not do so. Is the current military campaign in Chechnya another example of a lack of solid civilian control over Russian military forces?

Answer. Russia's civilian leaders have made their overall objectives in the North Caucasus clear. They have said repeatedly that they intend to destroy terrorist formations inside Chechnya and restore Moscow's central authority to the region.

We disagree strongly with the tactics Russia's military is using in the North Caucasus to achieve this objective, which have led to wholesale death and suffering among innocent civilian populations. We do not doubt, however, that Russia's military is carrying out this policy with the support of Russia's civilian leaders.

Question. How much of the arms going to Chechnya to defend itself is coming from Muslim States? Which States?

Answer. It is difficult to estimate precise numbers of fighters, flows of cash, or the influx of weapons, supplies and equipment flowing into the North Caucasus from outside or the countries where they originate. Under current circumstances—particularly the enhanced border security and the tightening Russian military control in the area—it seems unlikely that large numbers of fighters or large quantities of weapons and funds are still flowing into the Chechen rebels. It is not impossible that small amounts of weaponry could be smuggled into Chechnya, even into areas under Russian control, but we have no evidence to support this.

Nearly all of the weapons used by insurgents in Chechnya are Russian-made.

Question. How much assistance is coming from Islamic fundamentalist states and groups outside of Russia, and even outside the New Independent States (NIS)?

Answer. It is difficult to estimate precise numbers of fighters, flows of cash, or the influx of weapons, supplies and equipment flowing into the North Caucasus from outside. Russian government statements linking Osama Bin Ladin's organization to Chechen fighters Basayev and Al-Khattab are plausible. We are aware of continuing cooperation between Bin Ladin's Al-Qaida organization and Chechen rebels, including Ibn Al-Khattab. It is likely that some of the non-Chechen rebel fighters coming from outside Russia have received training, funding, and other logistical support from terrorist organizations.

Question. From the perspective of the Administration, how can we tell when the United States should discourage Russian military excesses combating Islamic forces in the Caucasus, and when—if ever—should the United States consider collaborating with Russia in fighting Islamic sources of terrorism?

Answer. We are actively cooperating with Russian authorities in the fight against terrorism. As the President said at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul, we want Russia to overcome the scourge of terrorism. We condemned the deadly apartment bombings in Russian cities last August and September in harshest terms. Acts of terror, in all their forms, have no place in a democratic society.

But the fight against terrorism can not be used to justify the intensive artillery and aerial attacks which have caused needless civilian deaths and injuries. We have been sharply critical of the Russian government policy in the North Caucasus, and have consistently called for all parties in the region to refrain from the use of force against civilian populations.

Question. Tens of thousands of Chechens have been forced to flee their homes due to the Russian military campaign there. What is the status of these refugees' health and welfare? Is the Russian government taking any action to care for these refugees?

Answer. We are very concerned about the welfare of more than 200,000 people displaced by fighting in the North Caucasus. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata visited the region in late November and described the situation as very difficult, but "not catastrophic."

Russia bears the primary responsibility for dealing with humanitarian problems in the North Caucasus. It should allow full freedom of movement for displaced persons and provide for their well being. The international community is doing its part. Russia needs to work constructively with international relief organizations and provide adequate security and access for their courageous efforts.

The U.S. has responded urgently and positively to appeals for funds to aid displaced persons in Russia's North Caucasus region.

On November 11, the White House announced that the U.S. would contribute \$3 million in response to an emergency appeal from the International Committee for the Red Cross.

On November 23, the UN issued an interagency appeal for funds to assist displaced persons in the region; we are reviewing this appeal and expect to respond very soon.

In addition to our response to these appeals, the U.S. has given nearly \$6 million in cash and in-kind assistance to the UNHCR and ICRC.

We continue to believe that international organizations like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross are best suited to deliver assistance to this region. Both are already operating in the area and are increasing their assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons. If the ICRC and UN are able to distribute the assistance called for in their appeals, they will deliver nearly 29 million dollars worth of aid in the next three months.

Questions. You mentioned the threat posed by the conflict in Chechnya to the stability of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

1. What, if any, commitments has the Administration made to help safeguard the sovereignty of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia?

Answer. Securing the stability, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia is a key goal of U.S. policy in the Caucasus region. We are committed to providing support where we can to help these countries and the other new independent states of the Former Soviet Union fully realize their sovereignty and independence. A variety of programs support this goal. A good illustration of this commitment is the Georgia Border Security and Law Enforcement Assistance Program. This multi-agency program is designed to help the Georgian Border Guards and Customs Service gain and maintain control over Georgia's borders—a prerequisite for Georgia's development as a stable and sovereign state.

2. Have these countries sought any specific commitments?

Answer. In October Georgia submitted a request to the U.S. for communications and surveillance equipment to support higher staffing levels on Georgian's border with Russia. Georgia also requested additional binoculars, night vision devices, and three man-portable tactical radar sets. The Department of State and U.S. Customs worked with the U.S. Air Force electronic systems command to expedite delivery of the equipment.

Neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia has sought any commitments from the U.S. in connection with the North Caucasus conflict.

3. What specific immediate assistance is the Administration prepared to offer Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia if the conflict in Chechnya reaches a point where it threatens their stability? (Other than the long term project to help Georgia build up its borderguard capability.)

Answer. It would not be useful or appropriate to comment about hypothetical situations. Suffice it to say that our assistance to and support for Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia will continue.

