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**THE WAR IN CHECHNYA: RUSSIA'S CONDUCT,  
THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, AND UNITED  
STATES POLICY**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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MARCH 1, 2000  
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## THE WAR IN CHECHNYA: RUSSIA'S CONDUCT, THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, AND UNITED STATES' POLICY

Wednesday, March 1, 2000

U.S. SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
*Washington, D.C.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:45 a.m., in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Hon. Jesse Helms, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Helms, Wellstone, Feingold, Kerry, and Biden

The CHAIRMAN. I am going to bring the Committee to order. All Committees are meeting this morning, and it is sort of a round robin. Senators who intend to be here are not here yet, but they will be here. And, this is the way it is in the early part of the year, when everybody is trying to get legislation going, including us.

Well, we certainly have a distinguished panel this morning. Mr. Thomas Dine, whom we all know, president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; and Mr. Peter—

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Bouckaert.

The CHAIRMAN.—Bouckaert, an investigator for the Human Rights Watch, Washington D.C.; and here we go with Ms.—Ms. Karen Konig AbuZayd.

Ms. ABUZAYD. AbuZayd.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I—I was not even close, was I?

Well, we are glad to have all three of you. You are very prominent in your fields and uniquely qualified to discuss the war in Chechnya, the reprehensible conduct of the Russian government in that conflict and the implications of this conflict for the United States.

Now, then, Tom Dine, as I mentioned earlier is president of Radio Free/Liberty Radio Europe, which has a substantial presence in Russia. And Mr. Dine has worked tirelessly in recent weeks to ensure the safety and welfare of the distinguished Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporter, Andrei Babitsky. I sure appreciate your coming.

And Peter—I am not—I am going to leave your surname alone. I—we are—we are good friends, so you first-name me, and I will first-name you, and we will both come out ahead.

[LAUGHTER.]

The CHAIRMAN. Peter, who is with Human Rights Watch, just arrived from Russia, where for the past three months he has been in-

vestigating the atrocities committed in the ongoing war in Chechnya. We welcome you, sir.

And, we are pleased to have this delightful lady, who puts up with my mangling her surname, AbuZayd. I did better that time.

Ms. ABUZAYD. That is good.

The CHAIRMAN. Good. She is—and she is the regional representative to the United States and the Caribbean of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The UNHCR has also been examining the tragic state of human rights in Chechnya. And, we welcome you.

Now, before Mr. Dine begins his testimony, he has a brief five-minute film on the Russian assault on Grozny, a horrifying portrait of Russia's brutality against the inhabitants of that city.

And I believe it is important for this Committee to view this film. I wish that the world could see it, because it brings home for us the enormous human suffering caused by Russia's brutal campaign in Chechnya, a war that most of the world seems perfectly content to ignore.

Now, let us just for the record say that more than 100,000 Chechen were killed in the first Russo-Chechnya war of 1994 to 1996—100,000 out of a population of fewer than 1 million.

Today the Kremlin is trying to undo its military defeat of four years ago with indiscriminate use of force that, again, has left countless thousands of innocent men, women and children dead, and hundreds of thousands homeless.

The capital city of Chechnya is Grozny. And it has been subjected to a destruction unseen in Europe since World War II. A photo of that city has been blown up to show precisely what I mean. And indeed, what has been done to Grozny surpasses even the havoc that Milosevic has wrought upon the towns and cities of both Bosnia and Kosova.

At a time when Western governments have turned a blind eye to this conflict, the ability of journalists to report objectively on this war and its horrors has become all the more important.

The Russian acting president, Vladimir Putin, appears to recognize this only too well. Freedom of the press is another victim of his war.

Nowhere has this war against the press been more blatant than in the case of Andrei Babitsky. For his unfavorable accounts of the Russian military's conduct, he was detained by Russian authorities, and then he disappeared. Today, I am relieved that he is alive and now with his family.

Our ability to help Russia evolve into a stable democracy cannot be effective if we ignore such systematic repression of the press and the brutal campaign of terror Russia has conducted.

Nor is it helpful for Western governments to portray this as a legitimate battle against terrorists, and certainly not for the President of the United States to call this a war—and he used the word "liberation," in the recent essay for Time Magazine. This premise was not only extremely misleading. It is morally flawed and short-sighted.

And I am proud that while the rest of the world has sought to ignore or pretend that the war in Chechnya is legitimate, Congress has stepped forward and condemned Russia's brutality there.

Now, let us look at the film.

[Video.]

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that makes me even prouder that this past Thursday, the Senate passed unanimously Resolution 261 condemning the detainment of Mr. Babitsky and called for his safe return and demands an end to the systematic harassment of the press in Russia.

The Senate also passed Resolution 262, authored by Senator Wellstone, to repudiate the notion that the Chechen people are terrorists and underscore their right to defend themselves against the indiscriminate use of force. It also urges President Clinton to promote negotiations between the Kremlin and the Chechen government.

Now, it is no small coincidence that the day after these two resolutions were passed by unanimous consent, the Kremlin suddenly found Andrei Babitsky. I do not know where he was hiding, but they found him.

Now, imagine what could have been accomplished if the administration had addressed this conflict as more than a rhetorical priority in our relationship with Russia.

Now, Senator Biden will make his opening statement when he gets here, but the Senator from—from the distinguished State of Minnesota has asked for a couple of minutes to make a statement too.

Senator WELLSTONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief, and I just want to thank each of you for being here today to testify.

I want to say I am not surprised to see Senator Feingold here, who has been a consistent strong voice for human rights. And I would like to especially thank the human rights community for their concern.

In that film, Mr. Chairman, I noticed that one of the women said, “What is the world doing?” And that just sent chills down my spine. I would like to thank you for leadership on this.

The only reason I asked for one minute is that I was disappointed because—although we did pass these resolutions, we did this work together, and I know it has been important to people in Chechnya, and others have taken this resolution and it has been circulated—I do not feel like there was as much of a focus as I think there needs to be.

And I want to very briefly just repeat some of this resolution, and note especially for the Administration that I am disappointed, very disappointed, that we do not have a panelist here representing the Administration.

I know we asked them to come. My understanding is we will get somebody in a separate hearing, but frankly my view as a Senator is there ought to be somebody here from the administration at this very, very important hearing.

I just want to mention a couple of aspects of the resolution referred to by the Chairman, S. Res. 262. It called on the government of the Russian Federation to “allow into and around Chechnya international missions to monitor and report on the situation there and to investigate alleged atrocities and war crimes; allow international humanitarian agencies immediate full and unimpeded ac-

cess to Chechen civilians, including those in refugee, detention, and so called 'filtration camps' and any other facility where the citizens of Chechnya are detained; and investigate fully the atrocities committed in Chechnya . . . and initiate prosecutions against those officers and soldiers accused."

It called on our President to "promote peace negotiations between the government of the Russian Federation and the leadership of the Chechen government, including President Aslan Maskhadov, through third-party mediation by the OSCE, United Nations or other appropriate parties; endorse the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for an investigation of alleged war crimes by the Russian military in Chechnya; and . . . take tangible steps to demonstrate to the Government of the Russian Federation that the United States strongly condemns its brutal conduct in Chechnya and its unwillingness to find a just political solution . . . ."

Every day the reports are horrifying. And the reason that I mention this is this resolution for—for journalists and others that were here, was passed unanimously by the—the Senate, in part because of your help.

This was meant to be a strong message. And I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that those of us here—Senator Biden and others—may want, next week, to reword this and put together yet another strong resolution, bring it to the floor of the Senate, and have some discussion on the floor of the Senate, because I think we must put a focus on this.

I think we are going to have to speak up, Mr. Chairman, more and more and more so.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Russell, how about some words from you?

Senator FEINGOLD. Just very briefly. And—and the most important thing is to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank Senator Wellstone for the leadership on this.

We have to speak out on these kinds of human rights violations wherever they occur in the world. And I believe this hearing is especially important because I fear that the United States government has accepted a dangerous assumption about the violence in Chechnya.

I fear that the administration believes that in order to pursue a cooperative relationship with a formidable power like Russia, the United States somehow has to accept the terrible human costs of the Chechnya campaign.

And I think that assumption is wrong. And I am sure the Chairman does as well. The assumption is wrong, because the lives of civilians cannot be bargained away in the pursuit of engagement. That is simply too high of a price to pay.

And also it is just as important to say that the assumption offers a false promise. History has proven that there can be no lasting order without justice.

I do share the Administration's desire to see a stable, prosperous, democratic Russia take shape. But that will never happen as long as grave human rights abuses like those perpetrated by the Russian military in Chechnya continue to be a part of Moscow's policy.

It will never happen as long as the Russian government denies international rights groups and non-governmental organizations access to the terrible humanitarian catastrophe of a place like Chechnya. And it will never happen while independent journalists are muzzled and the Russian people are denied the truth.

So what is being done by Russia, Mr. Chairman, in Chechnya is not a liberation struggle. It is not an acceptable or understandable response to domestic terrorism, as terrible terrorism is. It is abhorrent.

And if we seek a mature post-Cold War relationship between the United States and Russia, one that aims at a stable and meaningful relationship, the United States has to speak out and condemn such practices at every opportunity as Senator Wellstone has said, including, I would add, within the international financial institutions.

So I look forward to the hearing. And I, again, thank very much the Chairman and the Senator from Minnesota.

The CHAIRMAN. I will say to my two colleagues that the witnesses and I have agreed that I can first-name them, because I have difficulty with pronunciation.

And before the media gets too interested in that, I will remind them for a year after Kofi Annan became Secretary General of the United Nations, they were still saying "Kofi Annon." Right?

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Karen, you may proceed, ma'am.

**STATEMENT OF MS. KAREN KONIG ABUZAYD, REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE U.S. AND THE CARIBBEAN, UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

Ms. ABUZAYD. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senators.

I am going to concentrate on the humanitarian activities in the north Caucasus, particularly in Ingushetia. This is where UNHCR works with a number of U.N. and voluntary agencies to provide assistance and protection to Chechens outside Chechnya, mainly in Ingushetia, where we have about 200,000 persons, but also in Dagestan and in Georgia.

Seventy percent of these displaced persons and refugees are in host families. Twenty percent are spontaneously settled, and only ten percent in camps set up by the international community. Around 100,000 of those displaced have returned to Chechnya, though many are shuttling back and forth.

At this time, about twice as many people are leaving than those returning each week. And only a quarter of those who go back into Chechnya are remaining there for good.

On the assistance side, emergency needs are being met outside Chechnya, but there are sectoral and locational gaps. Our movements are escorted for security reasons, and at our own insistence, by Russian security forces.

Since mid-September UNHCR has delivered 5,000 tons of aid worth \$4 million on 42 convoys to the North Caucasus, 34 to Ingushetia; 5 to Dagestan, 1 to North Ossetia, 1 to Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and 1 yesterday finally, 29 February, to Grozny itself.



Yesterday's ten-truck convoy provided and escorted by our Russian implementing partner, EMERCOM, arrived in the center of Grozny at midday and offloaded for distribution today through local hospitals, soup kitchens and bakeries.

Three UNHCR local staff, Chechens, accompanied the convoy and will monitor the distribution of the 45 metric tons of food, as well as plastic sheeting, soap, mattresses and blankets.

The convoy is something of a pilot project to allow us to evaluate security and logistic possibilities for a future aid operation. We also hope to get a better idea of how many civilians remain in Grozny, estimated now at between 10,000 and 20,000.

We did have a first report back from our monitors who are having to use the telephone of the Russian general who runs the EMERCOM office in Grozny, and this is as much as he has been able to tell us so far. When we get more information, we will provide it to you as we are updated.

In terms of our protection concerns, our immediate concerns come from the accounts from displaced persons who report widespread displacement from the villages in the Argun Valley, the site, we believe, of continuing military activities.

Some reports say that thousands of villagers are fleeing in advance of the military offensive as it moves southward. Accounts describe direct shelling of some villages and intense fighting around others. There are maps attached to my testimony that you can see.

According to the Ingush Migration Service, some 1,800 new internally displaced people arrived in Ingushetia last week from Chechnya, and 763 returned for good.

Most of the new arrivals are women and children from some of the most heavily destroyed locations in Chechnya. Many say they would like to return home, but are afraid to do so, because of lawlessness and reports that all males are being temporarily detained for identification purposes.

The internally displaced persons told UNHCR monitors that in the Argun district, all males aged 15 and older are detained by the local police, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, for purposes of establishing their identity. And they said that some of these men remain in detention.

Additional protection concerns outside Chechnya for us are the lack of legal status and necessary documentation for IDPs to access state provided assistance and to be able to move about freely; and the continuing fear that in some instances, IDPs are being forced to return to Chechnya against their will. We have been working on this problem, and we think we may have it solved.

Persuasion to leave Ingushetia is accomplished sometimes by refusal to register new arrivals, particularly those from the Russian-controlled areas of Chechnya, for assistance, by de-registering them, or by cutting the levels of assistance provided to them.

Reports by human rights organizations—which we will hear more later—and from journalists about atrocities and gross human rights violations in Chechnya, both in the detention camps set up by Russian troops and in the towns to which Chechens have tried to return, appear to be corroborated, at least in part, by the daily interviews carried out by UNHCR monitors. We are putting some mechanisms in place to check out the reports more systematically.

An officer devoted entirely to what we call protection issues was sent to the area last week and is in the process of training 18 protection monitors to be able to tell us what is really happening.

UNHCR, however, as in similar conflict situations has certain reporting constraints in order to preserve its impartial presence, protect the IDPs, our staff and the assistance program itself.

We deal with this by sharing verified reports with those agencies whose mandated task it is to monitor human rights conditions.

The appointment of the former head of the Federal Migration service to investigate alleged human rights abuses in Chechnya and the opening up of a passport service in Chechnya, which has not been available for the past four years, has given rise to some hope that the situation may begin to improve shortly.

In terms of the future of the operation, following an inter-agency assessment mission to Ingushetia and just inside the northern Russian-controlled Chechnya, in the first week of February, which found conditions in the established camps reasonable, but much below standard in the spontaneous settlements and only slightly better in the host families, an appeal for funds should be issued later today or tomorrow covering the period through 30 June.

Continuing emphasis will be placed on water and sanitation with the intention to upgrade and rehabilitate a failing Ingushetia infrastructure.

Much more emphasis will be placed on shelter, with the main aim being to repair and improve the host family living compounds. In addition, some food assistance will be required for the host families.

For the first inter-agency appeal the first part of this year was for \$16.2 million and we raised a total of \$14.1 million from the United States, Canada, European governments, Japan and the Czech Republic.

Particularly since the fall of Grozny, since when the Russian claim to control the major part of Chechnya, we have been asked whether we have an intention to function inside Chechnya.

Our opinion is that the situation is not safe yet for the majority of Chechens to return and we would, therefore, not encourage them to return at this stage. The recent human rights reports make us even more cautious.

The second concern is that we cannot yet mount an assistance operation of significant scale, since we cannot send international staff into Chechnya yet, even on mission, to ensure proper control of the implementation of such an operation—due to the omnipresent and undiminished security risks, not only as a result of the war, but also from criminals.

For the time being, UNHCR and its partners are setting up a system to provide assistance in Ingushetia for those who elect to return. And we have developed plans to run our convoys across the borders into Chechnya, depending upon the feedback in the coming days from yesterday's first convoy.

The U.N. Office of the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs is also sending a mission to Moscow this afternoon to enter into discussions about setting up a possible assistance operation in Chechnya.

I thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. AbuZayd follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAREN KONIG ABUZAYD  
HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

*Introduction*

UNHCR works with a number of UN and voluntary agencies (OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNFPA, IOM, DRC, ACF, NRC, MSF, Salvation Army, Islamic Relief, World Vision, CARE) to provide assistance and protection to Chechens outside Chechnya, mainly in Ingushetia (200,000), but also in Dagestan (12,000) and Georgia (5,000). Seventy per cent of these displaced persons and refugees are in host families, while 20% are spontaneously settled and only 10% in camps set up by the international community. Around 100,000 of those displaced have returned to Chechnya, though many are shuttling back and forth. At this time, about twice as many people are leaving than those returning each week, but only a quarter of those going back appear to be remaining in Chechnya.

*Assistance*

Emergency needs are being met outside Chechnya, but there are sectoral and locational gaps. Our movements are escorted, for security reasons and at our own insistence, by Russian security forces. Since mid-September, UNHCR has delivered 5,000 tons of aid worth \$4 million on 42 convoys to the North Caucasus, including 34 to Ingushetia, five to Dagestan, one to North Ossetia, one to Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and one yesterday, 29 February, to Grozny. Yesterday's 10 truck convoy, provided and escorted by our Russian implementing partner, Emercom, arrived in the center of Grozny at midday and offloaded for distribution today through local hospitals, soup kitchens and bakeries. Three UNHCR local staff accompanied the convoy and will monitor the distribution of the 45 metric tons of food (flour, millet, peas, sugar, barley), as well as 900 pieces of plastic sheeting, 20,000 bars of soap, 230 mattresses and 1300 blankets.

The convoy is something of a pilot project to allow us to evaluate security and logistic possibilities for a future aid operation. We also hope to get a better idea of how many civilians remain in Grozny, estimated now at between 10–20,000. Some of this information should be available later today, at which time we shall share our updated news.

*Protection concerns*

Our immediate protection concerns come from accounts from displaced persons who report widespread displacement from villages in the Argun Valley, the site of continuing military activities. Some reports say thousands of villagers are fleeing in advance of the military offensive as it moves southward. Accounts describe direct shelling of some villages (Shatoy and Bolshie) and intense fighting around others (ItumKali). (See the maps beginning on page 51.)

According to the Ingush Migration Service, some 1,800 new internally displaced people arrived in Ingushetia last week from Chechnya and 763 returned for good. Many of the new arrivals are women and children from some of the most heavily destroyed locations in Chechnya, including Katar-Yurt and Khikhichu. Many say they would like to return home, but are afraid to do so because of lawlessness and reports that all males are being temporarily detained for identification purposes. IDPs told UNHCR monitors that in the Argun district, all males aged 15 and older are detained by the local police (the Ministry of Interior Affairs) for purposes of establishing their identity. The IDPs said some of these men remain in detention.

Additional protection concerns outside Chechnya are the lack of legal status and necessary documentation for IDPs to access state-provided assistance and to be able to move about freely; and the continuing fear that in some instances, IDPs are being forced to return to Chechnya against their will. "Persuasion" to leave Ingushetia is accomplished sometimes by refusal to register new arrivals (particularly from the Russian-controlled areas of Chechnya) for assistance, by de-registering them, or by cutting the levels of assistance provided to them. (We also are monitoring the situation of around 150,000 IDPs from Chechnya—the majority of whom are non-ethnic Chechens—displaced to non-contiguous provinces, since, although "recognized," they are mostly unable to register and therefore have consequent difficulties such as entering their children in school.)

Reports by human rights organizations and from journalists about atrocities and gross human rights violations in Chechnya—both in the detention camps set up by Russian troops and in the towns to which Chechens have tried to return—appear to be corroborated at least in part by many of the daily interviews carried out by

UNHCR monitors. We are putting some mechanisms in place to check out the reports more systematically. An officer devoted entirely to protection issues was sent to the area last week. UNHCR, as in similar conflict situations, has certain reporting constraints, in order to preserve its impartial presence and protect the TOPs, staff and the assistance program itself. We deal with this by sharing verified reports with those agencies whose mandated task it is to monitor human rights conditions.

The appointment of Mr. Kalamonov, the former head of the Federal Migration Service, to investigate alleged human rights abuses in Chechnya, and the opening of a passport service in Chechnya (none having been available for the past four years) has given rise to some hope that the situation may begin to improve shortly.

#### *Future of the operation*

Following an inter-agency assessment mission to Ingushetia (and just inside northern, Russian-controlled Chechnya) in the first week of February (which found conditions in the established camps reasonable, but much below standard in the spontaneous settlements and only slightly better in the host families), an appeal for funds should be issued today, covering the period through 30 June. Continuing emphasis will be placed on water and sanitation, with the intention to upgrade and rehabilitate a failing Ingushetia infrastructure. Much more emphasis will be placed on shelter, with the main aim being to repair and improve the host family living compounds (sheds, garages, etc. offered as shelter). In addition, some food assistance will be required for host families. For the first inter-agency flash appeal of \$16.2m, a total of \$14.1m has been pledged.

Particularly since the fall of Grozny and the Russian claim to control the major part of Chechnya, questions have been asked about our intention to function inside Chechnya. Our opinion is that the situation does not appear to be safe for the majority of Chechens and we would therefore not encourage return at this stage. The recent human rights reports make us even more cautious. A second concern is that we cannot mount any assistance operation of significant scale, since we cannot send international staff into Chechnya, even on mission, to ensure proper control of the implementation of such an operation—due to the omnipresent and undiminished security risks, not only as a result of the war, but also from criminals. For the time being, UNHCR and its partners are setting up a system to provide assistance in Ingushetia for those who elect to return, and we have developed plans to run convoys across the provincial borders into Chechnya, depending on the feedback in the coming days from yesterday's first convoy.

The U.N. Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs is also planning to send a mission to Moscow this week to enter into discussions about setting up a possible assistance operation in Chechnya.

### *Humanitarian Assistance in the Northern Caucasus (Russian Federation)*

INFORMATION BULLETIN: AS OF 11 FEBRUARY 2000

#### *Visit of the Secretary-General to Moscow*

The United Nations Secretary-General visited Moscow from 27 to 29 January 2000 and had meetings with senior Russian officials. The situation in Chechnya was one of the topics discussed. The Secretary-General reiterated his concerns about the fate of civilians in the Republic. While the international community fully understands the need for States to combat terrorism, the Secretary-General stressed that the use of force should be proportional and not endanger civilians. He noted that for the time being, UN humanitarian assistance is being provided to IDPs outside Chechnya but he looked forward to the day when UN assistance could be extended to those within Chechnya when circumstances permit.

#### *Flash Appeal Review*

The United Nations deployed a team of international staff to Ingushetia during the first week of February to review programme implementation, assess priority needs, and plan future programmes in the region. The findings of the mission will provide the basis for the extension of the United Nations Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal which is being proposed to cover the period 1 December 1999–30 June 2000.

The team comprised representatives from UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNSECOORD, WFP, WHO, OCHA, UNSECOORD, TOM, and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Representatives of the Russian Government (EMERCOM and the Federal Migration Service) accompanied the team. The main findings are cited below:

- There are approximately 185,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ingushetia. (UNHCR/DRC, working in close cooperation the Regional Migration Service and local administrations was in the process of completing a registration exercise during the review mission.) About 70% of IDPs are living with host families, 20% in spontaneous settlements, and 10% in camps. While an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 IDPs have returned to Chechnya, population movements into and out of Chechnya continue.
- On the whole, Emercom of Russia, UN agencies, ICRC and NGOs are meeting the emergency needs although gaps still exist. Agencies are continuing to provide emergency food rations, medicines, warm clothing, water and sanitation. They will also now start to focus on programmes such as education, income generation, and psycho-social rehabilitation. The UN appeal, due to be issued on 1 March 2000, will describe possible scenarios, priority requirements and specific ways to address them.
- The security situation throughout the northern Caucasus continues to hamper humanitarian action. Staff movements and presence has to be limited, complicating management and monitoring of aid operations.

#### *Exploratory Mission to Chechnya*

During the review of the UN flash appeal, the opportunity arose to conduct a one-day exploratory mission inside Chechnya to gain a first-hand indication of the overall situation and to help the UN agencies carry out contingency planning.

The four-person UN team comprised members of UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA and UNSECOORD. Two officials from Emercom accompanied the team. The team visited Garagorsk and Znamenskoye in the Nadtrechnii district (central-northern Chechnya). It has 50,000 residents and an additional 35,000 IDPs. 30,000 IDPs are hosted by residents or live in spontaneous settlements. 5,000 IDPs live in two camps, managed by Emercom and the Federal Migration Service. The security environment in that particular district appeared relatively stable but remains volatile.

While conditions in camps appeared to be reasonably good thanks to the assistance provided by Emercom and the Federal Migration Service, the situation in the spontaneous settlements is grim. The district infrastructure is in deplorable shape but basic services such as electricity, gas and water are working. The team was struck by a fairly steady flow of cars, buses, and trucks along the district's roads. The information gathered by the team will help the UN in its contingency planning activities.

*The Humanitarian Response* In total, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sent 28 convoys to Ingushetia and 5 to Dagestan. The last convoy to Ingushetia comprised 30 trucks which carried more than 300 MTs of food items and 163 double-tier beds. UNHCR's previous convoy included winterized tents and 1,105 double tier beds. Over 4000 MT of food have been delivered.

UNHCR, which has been supplying food commodities to DRC for distribution, has now exhausted its food budget and the last commodities will be distributed next week. UN World Food Programme (WFP) commodities have now begun to arrive to cover food requirements for 150,000 persons. The division of labour between agencies targeting IDPs and agencies targeting host families has been complicated by the fact that population groups are intermingled and are located in over 261 places. The Russian Ministry of Emergencies (Emercom), WFP, UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and DRC are working out new arrangements to address this issue.

UNHCR and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) are working together to improve the water and sanitation situation. On 1 February, UNHCR and the water and sewage organization of Ingushetia signed an agreement on emergency water supply to IDP settlements. The agreement comprises water trucking and installation of UNICEF's 14 water bladders. Other activities in this sector include rehabilitation of the central water distribution station, the laying of new distribution pipes, the provision of water tanks, showers, sewage disposal, and garbage collection.

UNICEF has arranged an air shipment of some 30 MTs non-food items, which are expected to arrive in Vladikavkaz early next week. These items, including cold chain equipment to support the Ingush Ministry of Health to have an adequate immunization infrastructure throughout the Republic, will be distributed to various UNICEF supported assistance projects in Ingushetia.

In addition to programmes implemented by UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and ICRC, some 20 NGOs are now working in Ingushetia. Some, such as the DRC and World Vision (WV) have implementing arrangements with UN agencies in addition to their own programmes.

As of 6 February 2000, DRC had distributed 80,000 winter jackets and boots. Moreover, DRC expects to distribute some 300,000 hygiene items to be supplied by UNICEF.

Islamic Relief is supplying clean drinking water to 8 IDP camps, as well as providing food and non-food parcels to 4,100 families in the camps of Sputnik, Severny and Karabulak. By the end of January 2000, the NGO will have delivered 650 MTs of aid. Islamic Relief is also operating 4 mobile clinics providing primary health care in the three above-mentioned camps. The organization will start supplying its 4,100 beneficiary families with coal in the near future. Plans are under way to expand the programme to additional 4,000 families.

The Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development (CPCD) now has 25 psychologists and trainee psychologists working for the psychological rehabilitation of traumatized children in four IDPs camps located in Severny, Sleptsovskaya and Karabulak. In addition, CPCD has distributed food parcels, clothes, blankets, and hygiene packets in Nazran and Sunzhe (Ingushetia), in Maiskii (North Ossetia) and in Semovodsk (Chechnya). The organization is also establishing a bakery in Sleptsovskaya.

Dorcas Aid International has distributed 109 MTs of food and non-food items to 8,000 beneficiaries in Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia), 4,000 IDPs in Mozdok (North Ossetia), and to TOPs living with host families in Sleptsovskaya and Nazran.

Action Contre la Faim (ACF) started distributing food and hygiene products to 5,700 IDPs in Sleptsovskaya at the beginning of February and plans to expand their distribution to 29,000 beneficiaries in Karabulak.

The Salvation Army has distributed baby food to more than 8,000 children under three in Malgobek, Nazran and Sunzhenski districts. A shipment of medicines will also be distributed shortly to vulnerable population in these areas.

People in Need Foundation is currently providing some 3,000 children with food, school materials and basic medical care in 4 spontaneous settlements of Ingushetia.

*The UN Inter-agency Flash Appeal: 1 December 1999–29 February 2000*

As of end of January, the donor community had pledged US\$14.1 million against the UN interagency flash appeal, compared to the US\$ 16.2 million requested. Whereas UNHCR, UNICEF and OCHA are completely funded, UNFPA, WFP, and WHO still require funds.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bouckaert.

**STATEMENT OF MR. PETER BOUCKAERT, INVESTIGATOR,  
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to be here today. And I thank you for your attention to the deepening crisis in Chechnya.

My name is Peter Bouckaert. And I am the Emergencies Researcher at Human Rights Watch. I have just returned from three months in Ingushetia, the Republic neighboring Chechnya, where I have been documenting war crimes and other abuses in the war in Chechnya.

Human Rights Watch researchers have been on the ground in Ingushetia since the beginning of November, and we have interviewed more than 500 witnesses in great detail about abuses.

Because of our permanent presence in the region, we are able to collaborate eyewitness accounts through independent and consistent testimonies.

Our research findings on Chechnya are publicly available in the form of some 40 press releases and two reports, and provide detailed information about the abuses summarized in my testimony. They are available on—on our website, and I have brought copies with me today.

The evidence we have gathered in Chechnya is disturbing. Russian forces have committed grave abuses, including war crimes in their campaign in Chechnya.

In Grozny, the graffiti on the wall reads, "Welcome to Hell, Part Two," about as good a summary as any of what Chechen civilians have been living through in the past five months.

Russia talks about fighting a war against terrorism in Chechnya, but it is Chechen civilians who have borne the brunt of the Russian offensive in this war, as in the first Chechen conflict.

Most abuses we have documented have been committed by Russian forces, but we have also documented serious abuses by Chechen fighters.

Mr. Chairman, since the beginning of this conflict, Russian forces have indiscriminately and disproportionately bombed and shelled civilian objects, causing heavy civilian casualties.

Russian forces have ignored their Geneva Convention obligations to focus their attacks on combatants, and appear to have taken few safeguards to protect civilians. It is this carpet-bombing campaign, which has been responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths in the conflict in Chechnya.

The Russian forces have used powerful surface-to-surface rockets on numerous occasions, causing heavy death tolls in the hundreds in the Central Market bombing in Grozny and in many smaller towns and villages.

Lately, Russian commanders have threatened to use even more powerful explosives, including fuel air explosives, which could have a disastrous casualty count if used against civilian targets.

The bombing campaign has turned many parts of Chechnya to a wasteland; even the most experienced war reporters I have spoken to told me they have never seen anything in their careers like the destruction of the capital, Grozny.

Russian forces have often refused to create safe corridors to allow civilians to leave areas of active fighting, trapping civilians behind front lines for months.

The haggard men and women who came out of Grozny after their perilous journey told me of living for months in dark, cold cellars with no water, gas or electricity and limited food. The young children were often in shock, whimpering in the corners of their tents in Ingushetia and screaming in fright whenever Russian war planes flew over, reminding them of the terror in Grozny.

Men especially face grave difficulties when attempting to flee areas of fighting. They are subjected to verbal taunting, extortion, theft, beatings and arbitrary arrest.

On several occasions, refugee convoys have come under intense bombardment by Russian forces causing heavy casualties.

Currently, tens of thousands of civilians remain trapped in the Argun River Gorge of Southern Chechnya, stuck behind Russian lines, without a way out from the constant bombardment and rapidly running out of food supplies.

For many Chechens, the constant bombardment was only the beginning of their horror. Once they came into contact with Russian forces, they faced even greater dangers.

Human Rights Watch has now documented three large-scale massacres by Russian forces in Chechnya.

In December, Russian troops killed 17 civilians in the village of Alkhan-Yurt while going on a looting spree, burning many of the remaining homes and raping several women.

We have documented at least 50 murders mostly of older men and women by Russian soldiers in the Staropromyslovski District of Grozny since Russian forces took control of that district—innocent civilians shot to death in their homes and their yards. In one case, three generations of the Zubayev family were shot to death in the yard of their home.

On February 5th, a few days after Secretary of State Albright met with President Putin in Moscow, Russian forces went on a killing spree in the Aldi district of Grozny, shooting at least 62 and possibly many more civilians who were waiting in the street and their yards for soldiers to check their documents.

These were entirely preventable deaths, not unavoidable casualties of war. They were acts of murder, plain and simple.

Refugees are returning to Grozny to find their relatives or neighbors shot to death in their homes. And most disturbing of all, there is no evidence that the killing spree has stopped.

In the past month, the Russian forces have begun arresting large numbers of civilian men throughout Chechnya. These men, numbering well over 1,000, and some women have been taken to undisclosed detention facilities, and their relatives are desperately trying to locate them.

I have spoken to men who have been able to pay their way out of these detention camps, and they have given me consistent and detailed testimony about constant beatings, severe torture, and even cases of rape of both men and women.

One of the men I have interviewed suffered from a back injury after being hit by a heavy metal hammer.

A second man had several broken ribs and suffered from kidney problems from the severe beatings.

The constant attacks by Russian forces against the civilian population have caused more than 200,000 Chechens to flee into neighboring Ingushetia, overwhelming the local population, which numbers only some 300,000.

Many more internally displaced persons are trapped inside Chechnya, especially in the Southern Argun River Gorge, unable to seek safety because of the refusal of Russian forces to create safe corridors.

The conditions in the refugee camps are dire, with inadequate shelter, food, clean water, heating and other essentials. Only a minority of refugees are housed in crowded tent camps or railway cars. The majority live in makeshift shelter, in abandoned farms, empty trucking containers or similar substandard shelter. Many are forced to pay large sums for private housing.

Because the refugees are forced to rely on their own limited resources for survival, they are often forced to return to what is still a very active war zone when they run out of money, putting their lives at renewed risk.

Russia is not allowing humanitarian organizations to operate freely in Ingushetia and is virtually blocking any direct assistance to needy persons inside Chechnya.

Refugee children in Ingushetia are not attending school and medical needs often go unmet.



The contrast with the international response to last year's Kosovo crisis is striking, although the security concerns and Russian obstruction are certainly relevant factors.

Russian authorities have repeatedly attempted to force refugees to return to Chechnya by denying them food in the camps or by rolling their train compartments back to Chechnya.

Russia is attempting to relocate refugee populations to areas of Northern Chechnya under Russian control, which would place them beyond the direct reach of international humanitarian agencies and under more direct Russian control.

The border between Chechnya and Ingushetia is regularly closed, preventing refugees from fleeing to safety and often splitting up families stranded on different sides of the border.

Following the destruction of the capital, Grozny, and many other towns and villages in Chechnya, and the widespread looting and burning of homes, many refugees simply no longer have homes to return to. Everything they owned in this world has been destroyed.

As in all conflicts where we work, Human Rights Watch documents violations by all sides to the conflict in Chechnya. We have uncovered evidence of serious abuses by Chechen fighters in the conflict.

Chechen fighters, particularly those among them who consider themselves Islamic fighters, have shown little regard for the safety of the civilian population, often placing their military positions in densely populated areas and refusing to leave civilian areas even when asked to do so by the local population.

Village elders who tried to stop Chechen fighters from entering their village have been shot or severely beaten on several occasions.

In short, the Chechen fighters have added to their—to the civilian casualty count in Chechnya by not taking the necessary precautions to protect civilian life.

Some Chechen fighters were also responsible for brutal abuses in the interwar years, including widespread kidnappings and hostage takings.

And there is convincing evidence that Chechen fighters have executed captured Russian soldiers in this conflict.

But without minimizing the seriousness of abuses carried out by Chechen fighters, it is important to state that the primary reason for civilian suffering in Chechnya today is abuses committed against the civilian population by Russian forces.

One of the most troubling aspects of the war is that the Russian authorities have failed to—to act to stop abuses perpetrated by their troops in Chechnya.

There is simply no indication that the Russian authorities have taken any steps to prevent these abuses, to investigate them when they do happen, and to punish those responsible.

As a result, a climate of impunity is rapidly growing in Chechnya. Russian soldiers know that they can treat civilian—civilian—Chechen civilians however they like and they will not face any consequences.

Nowhere is the failure of the military authorities to stop abuses in Chechnya more obvious than in the widespread looting which has taken place in Chechnya since the beginning of the war.

Soldiers are systemically looting civilian homes, carting away the stolen goods on their military trucks and storing them at their barracks in plain daylight. The looting is visible to everyone, and it is occurring right under the noses of their commanders. Yet nothing is being done to stop this and other abuses.

The absolute failure of the Russian military command to stop war crimes, particularly summary executions, in Chechnya makes them highly complicit in these abuses. Instead of acting to prevent abuses, the Russian military has continued to issue blanket denials about abuses.

In the face of the overwhelming mountain of evidence about abuses in Chechnya, these blanket denials are unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman, equally worrying is a lack of a strong Western response to the abuses in Chechnya. Instead of using its relationship with Russia to bring an end to the abuses in Chechnya, the Clinton Administration has focused on cementing its relationship with Acting President Putin, the prime architect of the abusive campaign in Chechnya.

Secretary of State Madeline Albright traveled to Moscow while bombs were raining down on Grozny, and chose to focus her remarks on Acting President Putin's qualities as the new leader of Russia, rather than on the brutal war in Chechnya.

U.S. officials continue to understate the level of atrocities in Chechnya, talking about abuses in the war rather than calling those abuses by their proper name, war crimes.

The administration is understating the amount of influence and power it has over Moscow, because the administration wants to continue with business as usual and mend its ties with Moscow in the wake of the NATO bombing campaign in the former Yugoslavia.

To date, the international community has given the Russian government no reason to fear any repercussions for its actions in Chechnya.

The United States and its Western allies could be doing a lot more to stop the brutal abuses in Chechnya.

Starting Friday at the trilateral EU-U.S.-Russia meeting in Lisbon, they must call the abuses in Chechnya by their proper name, war crimes, and must insist that there will be no "business as usual" with Russia while these violations continue.

The West must insist on accountability for the crimes committed in Chechnya, and an end to the rapidly growing climate of impunity developing in Chechnya.

An immediate international monitoring presence should be established to document war crimes and other abuses in Chechnya and to provide the international community with accurate and reliable information about abuses in Chechnya.

The U.S. should push the World Bank and the IMF to explicitly suspend pending loan payments until the Russian Federation takes steps to rein in its troops, beginning a—and begin a meaningful process of accountability for abuses, and fully cooperates with the deployment of an international monitoring presence in the North Caucasus.

The IMF and the World Bank should not be financing a government bent on a policy that is so destructive and contrary to their

institutional mandates as the Russian military operation in Chechnya.

The U.S. should encourage its European allies to bring a case to the European Court of Human Rights, charging Russia with the blatant violations of its International Treaty obligations in the conduct of the Chechen war.

The conduct of the Chechen war and the creation of a Commission of Inquiry should be a prominent item for discussion at the upcoming U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting, and the U.S. should—must insist on a discussion of the Chechen conflict at the U.N. Security Council, because the conflict in Chechnya has major implications for international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me to end my testimony with an expression of thanks and a plea. I will be returning to Ingushetia soon. And I want to bring a message of hope to the victims of this war, the Chechen civilians who had nothing to do with why this war started, yet who are suffering the greatest.

I want to be able to tell them that the West cares about their suffering, and that they have not been forgotten.

I will take copies of the Senate resolution adopted last week. Thank you for that expression of concern. But my plea is that your engagement not begin and end there, but that you exercise sustained leadership towards establishing U.S. policy towards Russia that insists on accountability and an end to violations.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I thank you. And I have tried in the nearly 28 years that I have been here to let politics stop at the water's edge, but I am ashamed of our government in this regard. I am ashamed of comments that have been made in defense of Russia, and that is what it amounts to.

But I—the two of you who have already testified have been great. And Tom Dine is going to be equally great, because I know him. Tom.

**STATEMENT OF MR. THOMAS DINE, PRESIDENT, RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY**

Mr. DINE. Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much for this hearing. I thank the members of the Committee who have been with you in expressing yourselves so forcefully.

Each one of your messages, starting with your letter, Mr. Chairman, with Senator Biden on the 31st of January was a shot across the bow of the Putin Presidency and the Putin policies that have just been articulated here so eloquently. So I join with everyone in thanking you personally, thanking the Committee, thanking the Senate.

The articulation of the centrality of freedom of the press, the articulation of the violations in Russia of the freedom of press, and what has been going on in Chechnya, are critical.

I believe that your letters, your resolutions have had impact. We saw it for sure in your first letter in—in expressing a sense of urgency, and it played a key role, I believe, in Moscow's decision to finally release Andrei Babitsky this past Friday and return him to his wife and family and colleagues in Moscow.

Mr. Chairman, he is still not free, however. He is under a ruling of the Ministry of Interior to stay in Moscow as the charges against him are worked out through the Russian judicial system.

So this odyssey, this illogical, horrible, tragic odyssey in violation of all that we stand for as global citizens, as well as American citizens, is still going on.

The title of the film that you showed excerpts of, "The Dark Side of the World," is an understatement in terms of what is taking place.

The Czech journalists who made this film showed it to us in Prague just a couple of weeks ago, to all of our journalists who assemble every morning at 11:00 o'clock for what is called the editorial board meeting.

And all of us were just horrified. The fact that Andrei Babitsky participated with those who made that film made it even more telling and more stinging for all of us.

Just a little housekeeping—I have a much longer statement. If you would, sir, I would appreciate it if it would be included in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, in the case of all of you, if you have additional statements, we will include those in the printed record of this meeting.

Mr. DINE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. And you may proceed.

Mr. DINE. Across the post-Communist world, media freedom is under attack from governments who do not want a free press, the very press that monitors what governments do and inform their citizens about what governments do. And because media freedom is the basis of all other freedoms, all freedoms that we cherish are now at risk as well.

As you know, over the past six weeks, we have had a dramatic demonstration of this in the Russian detention and mistreatment of our correspondent, Andrei Babitsky.

As you know from the most recent news report, we are elated that he is still alive; and as I have just indicated, he is still, however, is not totally free. So the struggle continues.

Today, I would like to mention three things: First, to tell you about the case and the lessons we have learned from it; to outline some of the broader challenges we face across this region that we broadcast to; and to tell you something about what we at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty are doing to meet those challenges.

First, about Andrei Babitsky. He is an accomplished veteran correspondent. Most of his coverage has been about violent conflict and war.

The CHAIRMAN. Right.

Mr. DINE. He is only 36 years old. During the first Chechen war from 1994 to 1996, and, again, since November 1999, Andrei was on—the scene providing accurate and even-handed reporting about this endless, terrible conflict. He was criticized by both sides, but only one, the Russians—the Russian side took action against him.

The Russian Media Center in the North Caucasus on December 27th lambasted Andrei for his reporting about the large number of

Russian casualties and of the even larger number of civilian deaths Russian forces had caused.

That Russian act of intimidation did not work, nor did the short-term arrest of other journalists or the harassment of Andrei himself. He continued to report honestly and accurately, often at the risk of putting himself in danger.

In early January, Mr. Chairman, his wife was then harassed. He had come home to Moscow for the holiday break and had brought film footage with him that he had taken in Chechnya, gone to the local photo store in the neighborhood he lives in, and then he went back to Chechnya to continue reporting.

His wife, Lyudmilla, went to pick up the film. When she was inside the shop, the entrepreneur picked up the phone and called whomever, probably Ministry of Interior people, and two authorities of the Russian government came into the store, took the film, intimidated Mrs. Babitsky, and that film has never been seen again. Their apartment was then violated as well.

On the 16th of January, Andrei was detained in Chechnya and put into a Russian filtration camp. And we have just heard the horrors of several of those which are in Chechnya and the particular institution Andrei was put into.

And in my prepared testimony that is now part of the record is a chronology of all of what happened to Andrei Babitsky, and—and it is quite graphic.

What have we learned from this case? First of all, media freedom is far from guaranteed in Russia. In fact, what we are witnessing is regression. And in a previous position, I have been before this Committee heralding democracy in Russia. But that that was then, Mr. Chairman. I am afraid to tell you now—I admit what I said then, but I am telling you forthrightly now what I know from our own journalists, that Russia is a country that knows not what its future is and impulsively wants to return to its past.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. DINE. There is intolerance. There is intolerance of an outspoken and critical press. And no society that is worth itself can do without such an outspoken and critical media.

Second, Russia officials under Putin far too easily slip back into Soviet era patterns. We have—we have witnessed on the film, on what Human Rights Watch has reported time after time, what our correspondents—and we have had three in the Chechen war zone, including Andrei Babitsky—all of them report totalitarian tactics, harassment, threats, violation of the human being, the human body, the human spirit.

We have seen the re-centralizing of authority in Moscow, and that is not good for all of us.

Today, Andrei Babitsky held a press conference at Radio Liberty in Moscow. This is the first time he has gone public since he returned from a long stay in Chechnya and a shorter stay in Dagestan.

He opened by thanking his colleagues, the Russian press, so many of whom have been so valiant, so outspoken and so courageous and so much on the side of press freedom. He described in detail his odyssey. I do not have all his words yet. He began his

press conference just as I got out of the taxicab to come inside this building.

If we can get a copy of everything, of what he said and get it translated into English, we will certainly share it with you and your colleagues.

But he made a persuasive presentation that he was in the hands throughout this torturous five and a half weeks of Russia's security services, which includes the FSB (or the former KGB), and the Ministry of Interior, known as the MVD. And he was in the hands of pro-Moscow Chechens.

He described his captivity in many ways. And he said, to make his point at the end of his statement, that on February 23rd when he was taken across borders, he knew he was in the hands of the Russian government authorities, because at a time of great tension and great security along the borders, he was driven right through. So he was in the hands of people who knew what they were doing.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. DINE. Third, about the Russian government, the Putin regime has sent a signal that it is prepared to play fast and loose with the truth. In the Babitsky case, we have only experienced duplicity, tactics that have tried to be confusing to all of us, and to keep us off the scent of where Andrei Babitsky was.

And—and the good news is, of course, we finally caught up with him, and he has returned to Moscow.

Many in both Russia and the West are trying to portray this as an exceptional case, as a bump on the way to a better future. We believe, however, that we know something more factual about that.

The situation in Russia and Chechnya is distressing. Harassment of journalists, playing favorites with newspapers, pressure on the only independent television network, NTV, tightening control over regional media, all of this with little or no regard to legal niceties.

But in other countries it is even worse. For instance, Belarus is a disaster. Belarus is now in the hands of a dictator that wants to be the president of a reunified Russia/Ukraine/Belarus. Ukraine has been pressuring journalists, particularly during the presidential election held in December.

The Caucasus show few bright spots. But the worst situation of all is in Central Asia. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan impose censorship daily in the Soviet style. They arrest and harass journalists.

The case of Nurberdy Nurmamedov this past week is an example. He was assigned to jail for five years. Why? He talked to Radio Liberty's Turkmenistan correspondents in Prague over the telephone. He was critical about the government in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan. So he and his son have now been thrown into the clinker, and God only knows what is going to happen to them.

Tajikistan and Kazakhstan are slipping backwards. And Kyrgyzstan, which was so—for—for many of us, our hope-- and I think I am on record as testifying somewhere on Capitol Hill that it was the oasis of democracy in the Central Asian desert. And now we see Kyrgyzstan going retrograde as well.

One of the lessons about this general picture of the region to which we broadcast to, Mr. Chairman, is privatization did not by itself guarantee media freedoms.

The privately owned press is the object of government intimidation. One of the owners of NTV, the independent—the only independent television network station in Russia—is here this week.

Mr. Guzinsky intimidated by one of his stockholding partners, Gasprom. Two weeks ago, the chairman of Gasprom said publicly that what NTV was showing about the—the horrors of Chechnya, the dark side of the world, was not in the interest of Russia.

Second, post-communist governments in this part of the world control the electronic media on which most depend, far more than the print media, on which these countries are typically evaluated by Western observers.

If you control the television, if you control radio, you do not have to worry about the newspapers in this part of the world. And, third, all of these countries are going to need a lot of help from the outside for a long time to come if they are going to reform their basic institutions and become modern, open societies.

And I would include in my use of the word “help,” the pleas that I have heard from all of you today, that is, “pressure.”

That brings me to my final point, the continuing mission of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Today, we broadcast to 24 countries in 26 languages. These countries are in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Iran and Iraq. All of these areas, in one form or another, are in political and economic trouble.

We broadcast daily. That amounts to 900 hours a week of language programming in the vernacular—we do not broadcast in English—to all of these countries.

Also, Mr. Chairman, we have more than 10 million visitors to our websites every month. And publications such as our daily “Newslines,” which goes to every office on Capitol Hill, and I know is used up here—is something that is worthy and keeps all of us informed.

Overall, the events that we have been through over the last five and half weeks with finding and hopefully freeing finally Andrei Babitsky, demonstrate the relevance of our mission, the promotion of democracy.

The telling of truth as we know it, so that people can make their own decisions in their own way in their own societies. Like so many of you, who are on the front lines of the battle for freedom, we know we have to continue the fight, but we are not going to fall into pessimism.

What is our reason for hope? The response of so many Russians, the response, especially, of Russian journalists. And I believe you have behind this, the horrible picture of Grozny, the blowup of a publication that came out two weeks ago, “Obshchaya Gazeta.”

This is a document of four pages that was distributed on the streets of Moscow, 180,000 copies were distributed. Down the left column, you see the sponsors, 32 of them, from the Russian press. RFE/RL is one of those sponsors.

This was Russia’s journalists showing their solidarity with Andrei Babitsky and their fear of the regression taking place in Russian society about their press freedoms.

On this score, Mr. Chairman, I promise you and others of this Committee that we at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, myself personally, will do everything possible to see Andrei Babitsky fi-

nally, finally freed, to make sure that this horror hopefully never occurs again, and when it does, whether it is in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, or some other place, we are going to do everything we can to get our person out and to uphold the value of freedom of the press.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dine follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS A. DINE

KEEPING THE WINDOW OPEN: RFE/RL AND MEDIA FREEDOM IN POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and for inviting me to appear. Across the post-communist world, media freedom is under ever-increasing attack from governments who fear the free flow of information.

Just as the appearance of glasnost almost 15 years ago helped to spark the drive toward democracy and freedom in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, so now this government-sponsored attack threatens to close the window not only on freedom of the press but to close freedom's windows on the possibility for open societies in places which have known too little freedom in the past.

Over the past six weeks, we at RFE/RL have experienced this renewed government effort to control the media first hand. Russian authorities arrested our correspondent Andrei Babitsky just because he reported honestly about the Chechen war and more recently have claimed to have handed him over to a Chechen group. Even though Andrei is now at home in Moscow with his family, this saga is not over because charges are still pending against him.

This morning, I would like to discuss with you some of the significant lessons we believe that the Russian government's actions have for the future. But before doing that, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and this entire Committee, for the role you played in this case and especially for the Senate resolution you authored and pushed through in support of Andre Babitsky. That document played a major role in the progress we've seen so far, and on behalf of Andrei Babitsky and all of us at RFE/RL, I want to express our gratitude for your efforts.

But my subject is broader than Andrei Babitsky, whose case has received enormous attention from the media and human rights groups around the world and about whose fate I am sure you are broadly familiar. It is also the disturbing pattern we now see in one postcommunist country after another where governments which profess to be democratic are in fact seeking to turn back the clock to a time when rulers decided what those living under their control could know and when they could know it.

But there is another part of this story, one in which we at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty are playing a major part and one that gives some basis for optimism about the future. And that is the struggle of journalists and ordinary citizens in these countries to maintain and expand freedom. As was the case in the worst times of the Cold War, we are helping them to do so. Not only do our programs send a powerful signal that they are not alone as they struggle against post-communist tyrannies, but in many countries, our broadcasts help to provide the information and analysis that the people of these countries cannot yet or can no longer get from their own domestic news outlets.

In that battle to keep freedom's window open, we are winning victories every day over those who would deny to their own people freedom of the press. And because a free press is the guardian of every other right that free peoples prize, this is a fight that we must all wage and that we are confident that we will win.

*Moscow's Mistreatment of Andrei Babitsky*

All of you have heard about the case of Andrei Babitsky, about his detention by Russian authorities, his purported transfer to the Chechens, his reappearance in Dagestan at the end of last week, and his return to Moscow. But allow me to give you some details about what has happened to him throughout this period. (I have attached to my testimony a complete chronology of this saga.)

Andrei is 36 and already a prize-winning war correspondent. He won praise for his accurate and even-handed reporting during the first Chechen war in 1994-96 and won it again for his coverage of the second Chechen war since the fall of last year. Indeed, at the time of his detention, he was virtually the only independent journalist in Chechnya, criticized by both sides for his reporting.



Between January 15 when we last spoke to Andrei before his detention by Russian officials and February 25 when he reappeared in Daghestan, neither we at RFE/RL nor any other independent organization had contact with him. And throughout that six-week-long period, Russian officials regularly issued contradictory, false, and duplicitous statements about Andrei Babitsky's whereabouts and condition.

Initially, Russian officials even denied that they had arrested Babitsky and only acknowledged his detention after we and other media outlets began asking questions. Once they did acknowledge that he was under their control, Russian officials violated Andrei's rights as a Russian citizen by denying him contact with his family and lawyer and repeatedly changed their stories as to why he was being detained.

Then on February 3, Russian officials produced a film clip that purported to show Babitsky being handed over to Chechen fighters, an action that if true clearly violates not only Russian law but the Geneva Convention as well. On that occasion too, Russian officials could not decide what the truth was. Some said that Andrei had volunteered to be exchanged. Others, including Interior Minister Vladimir Rushailo, claimed that the exchange was entirely legal and proper. And still others asserted that with this exchange, Moscow no longer bore any responsibility for Babitsky's fate.

Such Russian claims and the obvious defects in the film itself—defects which suggested to many people that the entire exchange had been staged for the cameras—sparked a firestorm of criticism by media and human rights groups in the Russian Federation and abroad as well as demands by international organizations and some Western governments that Moscow find Babitsky and restore him to his family and colleagues.

Then, the Russian authorities produced another film clip purporting to show Babitsky in Chechen captivity on February 6. But that film too was not without problems and in fact raised more questions than it answered. Obviously, pro-independence Chechen officials, who would have had every interest in producing Babitsky to the world and thus embarrassing Moscow, repeatedly denied that any exchange had taken place or that he was in an area under their control.

In the face of this criticism and mounting fears for Babitsky's life, Moscow changed its line once again, asserting—completely implausibly—that Russian officials knew that Babitsky was alive but they did not know where he was. Obviously, if these officials knew he was alive, they had to know where he was, and if they didn't know where he was, then they could not possibly know whether he was alive. A kind of newspeak that reflects the worst of old times.

On February 15, acting Russian President Vladimir Putin became the latest and most senior official in Moscow to make that claim and to say that he had asked Russia's security services to ensure Babitsky's safety.

Speaking to journalists on that date, Putin said that he was in constant contact with officials in the Russian security services and the office of the prosecutor general, and that these officials were doing "all they can" to ensure that Babitsky remains alive and is set free. But the acting president then undercut his own claims by suggesting that "as far as I understand the situation, [Babitsky] already feels free."

Putin's decision to get involved in the case initially raised hopes that Babitsky might soon be released, but with each passing day, the acting Russian president's words appeared to be nothing more than another example of the Russian government's obfuscation and delay in this case.

Then, last Friday, Andrei Babitsky resurfaced in Daghestan, brought there in the trunk of a car from an unknown location. Russian officials subsequently charged him with passport violations after he used a document that had been forced upon him. He was then flown to Moscow and was released on his own recognizance while Russian government investigators continue to examine his case.

#### *Lights Going Off Windows Being Closed*

We are elated that Andrei is alive and back with his family, and we expect that all of the trumped-up charges against him will be dropped. But we remain concerned about something else: Russian officials and some Western observers have attempted to portray the Babitsky case as an isolated incident, a bump on Russia's road to a better future. That view is becoming ever harder to sustain not only for Russia, but for many of the other post-Soviet states as well.

The situation in Russia itself is distressing enough. In Chechnya, the Russian authorities have harassed and even arrested other journalists throughout the conflict. Moscow has set up a press bureau to ensure that Russian officials and not journalists will determine what Russians read and hear about the conflict. The private owners of the one independent television network have been subjected to pressure

by the government and they in turn have put pressure on NTV to tow the government's line on Chechnya or face the loss of the owners' financial backing.

Russian officials now routinely play favorites among journalists, giving interviews only to those who toe the pro-government line. A Kremlin press officer, for example, said last week that acting President Putin would never give an interview to the editors of "Segodnya" that has maintained some independence in the face of earlier pressure. And Duma deputies in the faction which supports Putin have told our correspondents that they will, no longer talk with us.

Moreover, Russian officials are doing this with little regard for legal niceties. Two weeks ago, the media minister announced that Moscow was moving to put the regional press under the control of the central authorities—even though he publicly acknowledged that there was no law allowing the government to do so. Instead, the minister fell back on the line that he was acting on the basis of secret "internal directives."

Not surprisingly, both the high profile Babitsky case and these other government actions have frightened and even intimidated some journalists and their audiences. The leader of one Russian media watchdog group even said last week that "this is the beginning of a tragic epoch for the Russian press."

But Russian journalists are trying to fight back. Two weeks ago, a special edition of the weekly newspaper "Obshchaya gazeta" featured appeals by 32 editors and writers condemning what the authorities have done to Babitsky and to the media. "This is a fight for a normal climate," one of them said. "I don't expect that after this, [the authorities] will stop pressuring newspapers and magazines. No. But society will at least evaluate the conditions in which it lives."

Most of these recent expressions of concern about media freedom have focused on the printed press, the only portion of the Russian media that had generally gained some real independence from the government. The domestic electronic media "radio and especially television—remain under far tighter central control. And since it is through these channels, rather than via newspapers, that the overwhelming majority of Russians now get their news, the state of press freedom in Russia was already dire even before the Babitsky case. More recently, the Russian authorities have moved to increase their ability to monitor and control the Internet, a channel of communication many had hoped could escape such government supervision.

But if things are distressing in the Russian Federation, they are even worse elsewhere. The director of our Belarusian service—the only Western Belarusian-language broadcaster to that critically important country—told me just before I came to Washington that "the game of press freedom in Belarus is one of few rules and even fewer winners, but the main loser is the audience." Alyaksandr Lukashenka bans state-run firms from advertising in the independent media, the information ministry—a current-day replica of Orwell's ministry of truth—not only tries to regulate content but even the grammar of articles. And Belarusian society is subjected to an unceasing Soviet-era style anti-Western propaganda campaign.

The situation in Ukraine is somewhat better, but in recent months, officials there too have sought to pressure both domestic and foreign broadcasters into avoiding criticism of the country's leadership and of the rising tide of corruption there.

In the Caucasus, all three countries have a mixed record, allowing some freedom but using a variety of means to discourage certain critical reporting. Azerbaijan is almost certainly the worst offender in that region. Its government has sponsored raids on journals and television stations that carry criticism of senior officials. It has confiscated equipment and taken other steps to prevent newspapers and electronic media to do their jobs. And it now has a new press law that imposes draconian penalties on anyone who criticizes the president or his entourage.

But the worst situation in the post-Soviet space is to be found in Central Asia. There are no bright spots there anymore, a sad commentary on the retreat Kyrgyzstan has made from its earlier and much-praised commitment to democracy and freedom. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the governments not only impose tight censorship over all publications but they regularly harass our correspondents and even those who speak with our correspondents. Indeed, a few weeks ago, Uzbek President Islam Karimov lashed out at foreign journalists for their coverage, pointedly suggesting that they were serving foreign masters at high pay.

Tajikistan remains a country torn apart by war. To speak of media freedom there is to speak about something that does not really exist. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan appear to be bellwether countries. The state of press freedom in Kazakhstan is deteriorating rapidly. The government has not only harassed journalists, it has used its financial clout to force newspapers and journals to be sold to those close to President Nursultan Nazarbayev who can then control them even though they remain nominally private.

Over the past year, Kazakhstan's government has prohibited several papers from going to print or bringing in their publications from abroad, thus effectively killing most of them. The offices of some papers even have been firebombed. And at the end of last year, Astana created a new telecommunications billing center to monitor the use of the Internet by Kazakhstan citizens. To support that effort, the government pushed through a new law allowing the KGB successor organization there to monitor email messages, fax transmissions and telephone conversations without any involvement by the courts.

Such arrangements have sent a chill through that society.

Kyrgyzstan, in which so many had placed so much hope, appears to be drifting off in the same direction, President Askar Akayev has appointed a former communist ideology secretary to oversee the country's radio and television corporation. His courts have imposed punitive fines on newspapers and journals which have carried critical articles. And last September, the authorities forced the editor of the independent "Vecherniy Bishkek" to resign after he published interviews with opposition politicians and a series of articles containing restrained criticism of the government.

All of these developments offer several lessons to those of us concerned about this region: First, privatization has not been by itself a guarantee of media freedom. Governments continue to possess the clout to get their views accepted. Second, all the governments in this region continue to have far greater control over the part of the media—radio and television—which the population listens to most. Just because you can find alternative views in the press does not mean that people can afford to buy them if they live in capital cities or that people in the regions ever see such publications. And third, for these countries to have a chance to establish press freedom and democracy, they are going to need a lot of outside help for a long time to come.

That is where our station comes in, and that is what I want to talk to you about next.

For almost 50 years, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has been broadcasting to the nations of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and now for the past two to Iran and Iraq as well. Our 22 services beam more than 900 hours of vernacular language programming to these countries, the largest number ever. More than ten million people visit our website every month. And our publications, including our flagship RFE/RL Newsline, are essential reading around the world. And we do all this with only one-quarter of the staff and one-third of the resources we had only five years ago.

In the aftermath of the collapse of communism in Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many thought that our radio station had lost its *raison d'être*. They believed that with communism out of the way and the Soviet empire in ruins, there was no need for what some called a "relic" of the Cold War. But the last few years and especially the last few months have demonstrated to everyone's satisfaction that our reinvented communications company will have a role to play well into the 21st century. And last fall, I am proud to say, the Congress eliminated 1994 language calling for the end of government funding for our company, and now, as we fight for Andrei Babitsky, we are learning just how many allies we have across the world.

But our role today is both different and larger than it was in the past. Until the late 1980s, we broadcast to a region under tight communist and Soviet control, and we performed the only role many people still think we have to play: as a surrogate broadcaster to countries whose populations lack a free press.

More recently, we have acquired two additional roles: as a kind of insurance policy for countries making the first halting steps toward democracy and a free media and as a model for how journalism should be conducted. With regard to the first, our very existence tends to moderate the behaviour of officials inclined to censorship. They know that if they try to silence someone, he or she can turn to us. And that possibility works against a return to the past. And with regard to the second, our journalists work closely with journalists in many countries, showing them what professional journalism is all about and helping to give them the courage to practice it in the face of enormous odds.

When I became president of RFE/RL just over two years ago, I thought that our surrogate role would decline over time. I still hope that will prove to be the case, but I know now that such a happy future is still a long way off in many countries.

Indeed, the horizon for that is ever more distant in many of the countries we deliver news to. But such retreats cannot be an excuse for doing less; they must be the basis for redoubling our efforts. You on this Committee know that better than most that the path toward human freedom has never been without its twists and

turns, its retreats as well as its advances. And I pledge to you that we at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty will continue the fight.

*A Final Hopeful Thought*

A decade ago, most of us in this room were confident that Russia and her neighbors would move quickly in the direction of democracy and freedom. Indeed, it was the people of these countries who did the most to stand up for these values and to give freedom a chance. But now unfortunately, Russia and her neighbors appear to be retreating from the kind of media freedom that democracy requires. And to the extent that happens, all of us, Russians and non-Russians, will be the losers.

One Russian commentator summed up the situation we now face far better than I ever could. Speaking on independent Russian television, he noted that one of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin's first steps after the failed August 1991 putsch was to allow Radio Liberty to open a bureau in Moscow. One of Moscow's first steps under acting Russian President Vladimir Putin's administration, this reporter continued, was to arrest Andrei Babitsky, a Radio Liberty journalist.

The way the Russian authorities have treated Andrei Babitsky and the way they and other governments are attacking media freedom across this region are very real cause for concern. But the remarks of this Russian commentator, along with the outpouring of support RFE/RL has received from ordinary Russians and from you and others around the world, give a basis for hope—as long as we who enjoy the advantages of media freedom and democracy don't give up the struggle to extend them across the world.

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS SURROUNDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF RFE/RL  
CORRESPONDENT ANDREI BABITSKY

*29 February 2000*

- Babitsky says he was beaten with a truncheon while being held in a Russian detention camp in Chechnya.
- A U.S. State Department spokesman says that Washington continues to urge Moscow to conduct a "full investigation" into the "alleged exchange of a civilian journalist" for Russian prisoners of war in Chechnya.

*28 February*

- An RFE/RL correspondent in Makhachkala reports that Babitsky was put on a special flight from Daghestan to Moscow this evening. Neither Babitsky's wife nor his attorney was informed about this move in advance.
- Acting Russian President Vladimir Putin says he does not believe there is any need to continue holding Babitsky. He says that he believes that Babitsky was "more than covering information" in Chechnya and that his job was to "market a certain type of product."
- Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Rushailo says that pro-Moscow Chechen leader Bislav Gantimirov had "nothing to do" with the exchange of Babitsky for Russian prisoners in early February and that "Babitsky was kept by Chechen terrorists" after that time.
- Ludmila Babitskaya meets with her husband in Makhachkala and says that "Thank God, I found Andrei alive and well, in reasonably good condition." She says he has begun a hunger strike because "he doesn't agree with the decision to detain him."
- Babitsky's lawyer, Aleksandr Zozulia, says that he will challenge the decision or the Russian authorities to continue detaining the RFE/RL correspondent. He notes that Babitsky is in poor health and mentally exhausted.

*27 February*

- Babitsky's lawyer Aleksandr Zozulya says that his client is under arrest on charges of carrying a falsified passport. Zozulya says that Babitsky had this passport "forced upon him." He adds that Babitsky has refused to sign the protocol of charges against him.
- Babitsky is no longer at the interior ministry press center in Makhachkala. He is now at an interior ministry lockup in that city.
- Babitsky's wife Lyudmila arrives in Makhachkala but has not been allowed to see her husband.

*26 February*

- Babitsky tells RFE/RL correspondent Oleg Kusov that he had agreed to be exchanged for Russian prisoners of war but changed his mind when he saw that he was about to be handed over to unknown masked men. Babitsky said this while still in detention in the Daghestani capital of Makhachkala.

- Babitsky is shown on Russian television being interrogated by a Russian officer in Makhachkala.

*25 February*

- Babitsky makes telephonic contact with his colleagues from a Russian interior ministry detention center in Makhachkala, the capital of Daghestan which neighbors Chechnya. Lyudmila Babitskaya then telephones her husband from Prague. She reports that he sounds well but is still under detention. He told her that he hopes to see her in Moscow or Makhachkala on February 26.
- Viktor Kozin, senior advisor to the Russian foreign ministry's European Department, says in "The Moscow Times" that RFE/RL alone should be held responsible for Babitsky's fate and suggests that Moscow should consider whether RFE/RL operations on Russian soil should be ended

*24 February*

- The US Senate passes unanimously a resolution calling on Moscow to provide information on the fate of Babitsky.
- Alberto Mora, a member of the US Broadcasting Board of Governors, proposes the establishment of a new RFE/RL broadcast service to Chechnya.
- Latvian Foreign Minister Indulis Berzins issues a statement expressing concern about Babitsky's fate and noting that "the story of Andrei Babitsky is a plain message. What happened to him could happen to any person who investigates what is really happening in Chechnya."

*23 February*

- Acting Russian President Vladimir Putin tells visiting British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook that Babitsky is alive and in the hands of Chechen civilians. Cook says this is "welcome news, but we would also welcome direct contact."
- In a letter released to the press, Babitsky's lawyers say that the Russian authorities have not allowed them to review written materials in the criminal case initiated against Babitsky or explained why prosecutors continue to claim that Babitsky has lost the right to counsel.

*22 February*

- Nikolai Kovalyev, former Federal Security Service chief and deputy chair of the Duma Security Committee, says that the Babitsky case is "absolutely incomprehensible," adding that "it raises a multitude of questions." He noted that the reported exchange of Babitsky for Russian prisoners "does not fit into the framework of existing legislation."

*18 February*

- "Komsomolskaya pravda" carried a report that Babitsky is alive and "probably" located in the Chechen village of Duba-Yurt with Chechen field commander Rizvan Chitigov.
- US Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Evelyn Lieberman visits RFE/RL's Moscow Bureau "to express once again the United States government's serious concern about the fate of Babitsky."
- Russian Press Minister Mikhail Lesin says that he is not in favor of any limit or ban on RFE/RL broadcast to Russia. "Ban or not ban, they will listen anyway" to that station, Lesin adds.
- Russian human rights activist and Duma deputy Sergei Kovalyev says that Russian actions in Chechnya are "close to a genocide" and that press freedom in Russia is increasingly at risk.
- The Russian PEN Club admits Babitsky as an honorary member.

*17 February*

- State Department spokesman James Rubin cites the United States' "profound concern" about the fate of RFE/RL Correspondent Andrei Babitsky, whose condition and whereabouts in Chechnya are still unknown. He also reiterates that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made clear in recent talks with acting President Vladimir Putin that Russia would be held responsible for Babitsky's fate.
- The U.S. State Department says Russia would be "well advised" to provide the necessary accreditation to journalists to report freely from Chechnya. Rubin says the U.S. regards it as "unacceptable" to treat working journalists as if they were prisoners of war.
- International humanitarian organizations react with scepticism to acting President Vladimir Putin's appointment of an official to safeguard human rights in Chechnya. Amnesty International says naming of Vladimir Kalamanov is un-

likely to result in “investigations and prosecutions” of Russian human rights violations in Chechnya. Human Rights Watch says allegations of torture and indiscriminate bombing by Russian forces should be investigated as war crimes.

*16 February*

- Russian journalists sound alarm over what they say is a growing threat to press freedom following the disappearance of Radio Liberty reporter Andrei Babitsky in Chechnya. They made their statement in a special black-and-white edition of the *Obshchaya Gazeta* newspaper, only published when Russia’s press freedom appears endangered.
- The Russian Interior Ministry says that “no search for Babitsky has been initiated.” Such a search, the Ministry says, will take place “if the investigators issue an appropriate warrant.. But we have not received any document of this kind so far.”
- Oleg Mironov, Russia’s human rights commissioner, criticizes the Russian government for turning over Babitsky to Chechen rebels. “We don’t know” where he is, Mironov says. “The situation with Babitsky causes bewilderment and indignation,” he says. “It comes as a signal that the same thing may happen to every reporter.”
- Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, issues a statement noting that Babitsky’s release “into the hands of people the Russian authorities consider terrorists would be in contravention of the provisions” of the Geneva convention. She calls for increased monitoring of the human rights situation in Chechnya.

*15 February*

- Adrian Karatnycky, president of Freedom House, says that Russia’s treatment of Babitsky is “a litmus test in the way the Dreyfus case was in turn-of-the-century France—a major case involving an individual which reveals all sorts of hidden problems within the broader political system and society.”
- Acting Russian President Vladimir Putin tells journalists that Russian officials handling Babitsky’s case are doing “all they can” to ensure his safety. But Putin adds that from what he knows, Babitsky already considers himself “free.”

*14 February*

- Lyudmila Babitskaya has filed a missing persons report about her husband with the Moscow department of the Russian interior ministry. She asks that the authorities investigate his disappearance. The interior ministry officials accepted her request.
- The Glasnost Fund, a Russian human rights organization, says it plans to file a complaint against Russian presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhemsky over Babitsky’s treatment.

*13 February*

- Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Rushailo defends as “correct and justified” a decision to trade Babitsky for two Russian prisoners of war. Speaking on Russian television, Rushailo says that Babitsky is still alive.

*11 February*

- U.S. Senators Edward Kennedy, Patrick Leahy and Mitch McConnell send a letter to acting Russian President Vladimir Putin asking him to “do all you can to ensure Mr. Babitsky is safety.”
- More than 2,000 people demonstrate in Moscow’s Pushkin Square to demand the release of Babitsky.
- Moscow’s “Dos’e na tsenzuru” launches an Internet appeal for Babitsky’s release.

*10 February*

- Ambassador David Johnson, U.S. representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, calls on Moscow to reveal the truth about Babitsky.
- Amnesty International issues another appeal to the Russian government to “immediately make public the whereabouts and order the release” of Babitsky
- European Commission President Romano Prodi said that the commission wants to send a mission to Chechnya to gather information about missing RFE/RL journalist Andrei Babitsky. The EU commissioner for enlargement, Guenter Verheugen, said the commission supports the demands of the OSCE that acting Russian President Vladimir Putin disclose Babitsky’s whereabouts.

- Bislan Gantemirov, the head of a pro-Moscow Chechen militia, said his group is not involved in the detention or disappearance of Andrei Babitsky, saying such reports are “a total invention.”
- The U.S. State Department demanded a full and candid accounting from Russia about the fate of missing correspondent Andrei Babitsky. Russian officials claim Babitsky is alive and well but they have offered no proof. In another development, at least 20 members of the U.S. Congress demanded Babitsky’s release in a letter to acting Russian President Vladimir Putin.

#### *9 February*

- Russian television broadcasts a second video showing Babitsky who is heard saying that it is February 6 and that he wants to go home. The clip provides no information about his exact whereabouts. Meanwhile, a former spokesman for Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov says that Chechens are holding Babitsky, an assertion Maskhadov’s current spokesman reiterates is not true.
- Reporters sans Frontiers again appeals to “all actors in the Chechen conflict to guarantee the safety of journalist Andrei Babitsky.”
- State Duma today voted down a proposal to summon the Interior Minister (Vladimir Rushailo) and the acting Prosecutor General (Vladimir Ustinov) to discuss the Babitsky case.
- The Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists has faxed an open letter to acting Russian President Vladimir Putin saying Babitsky’s alleged exchange for POWs is unacceptable and a violation of the Geneva Conventions.

#### *8 February*

- RFE/RL Moscow bureau purchases a video tape late at night from an unidentified man that shows Babitsky expressing wish to go home. In it, he says the recording was made on Sunday, February 6. That is after he was purportedly turned over to the Chechens in exchange for two Russian soldiers.
- The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe demands that Russia give proof by tomorrow that Babitsky is alive.
- The Foreign Correspondents’ Association in Moscow calls for Babitsky’s release, describing his treatment at the hands of the Russian authorities as “a gross violation of human rights” and a clear threat to all journalists working in Russia.

#### *7 February*

- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says that the United States is “very unhappy” over the Babitsky case and that it “holds the Russians responsible for what happens to him.”
- The International Federation of Journalists called on the Russian government to “come clean” on the fate of Babitsky and noted in its statement that there were serious problems with the film clip Russian officials released that purports to show Babitsky being handed over to the Chechens.
- Russian Federal Security Services chief Nikolai Patrushev said Babitsky is “alive” but that he does not know where Babitsky is staying. “That is not our business.”
- Sergei Prokopov, a spokesman for the office of the Russian prosecutor general said that a summons had been issued for Babitsky to appear and answer questions about new evidence in his case.

#### *6 February*

- John Podesta, White House chief of staff, said that the United States was “very concerned” about Babitsky’s fate. “We have made our view known to the Russian government; we’ve pressed them on this issue.”

#### *5 February*

- Russian human rights activist Yelena Bonner issues a public appeal to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) asking it to meet in extraordinary session to discuss the Babitsky case.
- Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov tells RFE/IRL in a telephone interview that his government has no information about the fate of Andrei Babitsky.

#### *4 February*

- Ludmila Babitskaya says that she has not heard from her husband for more than 24 hours after the Russian authorities said they released him or alternatively said they handed him over to Chechen forces in exchange for Russian prisoners of war.

- Chechen Foreign Minister Ilias Akhmadov says that no exchange of Russian prisoners of war for Babitsky took place and that the Chechen leadership has no news of Babitsky's whereabouts.
- Russian General Valery Manilov says at a press conference that "everything would be all right or even good, and maybe we could even speak of gratitude [to Babitsky] and even of an award, if it weren't for the shady side of the question—Andrei's efforts to return to the embrace of the bandit formations and to be with them."
- Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Broadcasting Board of Governors Chairman Marc Nathanson, and the World Press Freedom Committee add their names to the growing list of individuals and groups calling on the Russian government to provide information about the fate of Andrei Babitsky.

### *3 February*

- Russian news agency APN Novosti accuses Babitsky of "intimate relations" with a Chechen field commander.
- Russian Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky says that Russian officials have exchanged Babitsky for three Russian prisoners of war. Later Yastrzhembsky says that a film of the incident is making its way to Moscow.
- RFE/RL issues a press release condemning this reported exchange.
- US State Department spokesman James Foley says that if these reports prove to be true, it "would raise very serious questions" about Moscow's commitments to the rule of law.
- Vladimir Ustinov, acting Russian prosecutor general, says Babitsky was exchanged, then changes his story and says Babitsky was released and went over to the Chechens.

### *2 February*

- Committee to Protect Journalists expresses alarm at Babitsky's detention and concern about his current condition.
- Russian forces detain London Times bureau chief in Chechnya.
- Acting Russian Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov travels to Chechnya to probe the Babitsky case.
- Moscow's Rublev Museum contacted by prosecutors to evaluate icon reportedly in the possession of Babitsky at the time of his arrest.
- Moscow officials said that Babitsky would be transferred from Naursky district to Gudermes and then to Moscow. Once in Moscow, these officials said, he would be released on his own recognizance.

### *1 February*

- Ryazan committee to defend Babitsky issues an appeal on Babitsky's behalf. Other organizations across the Russian Federation issue similar statements.

### *31 January*

- US Senators Jesse Helms and Joseph Biden send a letter to acting Russian President Vladimir Putin calling for Babitsky's release.
- Reporters sans Frontiers calls on Russian Federation justice minister to explain the Babitsky case.
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says that she discussed Babitsky case with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.
- RFE/RL issues a press release saying that Moscow is dragging its heels on releasing Babitsky and thus raising questions about his physical well-being.
- Andrei Korotkov, chief of the Russian government's information department, says in Davos that he hopes Babitsky will be released. He blames Babitsky's detention on local officials and says Moscow was not involved.
- Russian Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky says that Babitsky is being held in pretrial detention in Chechnya's Naursky district.

### *30 January*

- Evgeniy Kiselev says on NTV's Itogi program that one of former Russian president Boris Yeltsin's first acts after the August 1991 coup was to give RFE/RL permission to open a bureau in Moscow while one of current acting Russian president Vladimir Putin's first actions was to arrest an RFE/RL correspondent.
- Prosecutors call Ludmila Babitskaya in Moscow to say that her husband is alive and well in the Naursky district of Chechnya.



*29 January*

- Yuri Biryukov, head of the main department for the North Caucasus of the Russian Federation prosecutor general's office, goes to Chechnya on acting President Vladimir Putin's behalf to clarify the case of Babitsky.
- Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky says that he first learned of Babitsky's arrest from a news story on 28 January. "Before that moment, nobody knew Babitsky's whereabouts."
- ITAR-Tass reports former RFE/RL staffer Vladimir Matusevich's statement that the entire Babitsky story was "a fabrication" by RFE/RL to attract attention and keep the station in operation.

*28 January*

- Russian media officials tell RFE/RL that Babitsky will be released with apologies.
- Russian Federation Interior Ministry spokesman Oleg Aksyonov says that Babitsky had been arrested on 23 January for lacking accreditation.
- Russian security officials told Interfax that Babitsky had been charged with participating in "an illegal armed formation" under the terms of Article 208, par. 2 of the Russian criminal code.

*27 January*

- OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Freimut Duve sends a letter to Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov on behalf of Babitsky.
- US State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin notes Babitsky's disappearance, expresses "concern," but notes that reporters had been warned of the dangers of going into an area where military actions were taking place.
- Babitsky reported by RFE/RL reporters to be in detention in Urus-Martan
- Wire services break story that Babitsky is missing.
- Babitsky reportedly formally charged on this date.

*26 January*

- Russian Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky says that Babitsky "left Grozny and then disappeared. As far as we are concerned, his security is not guaranteed."
- Russian security services say they, have no information on Babitsky's whereabouts.
- Russian Union of Journalists issues an appeal for Babitsky's release.
- Ludmila Babitskaya says she believes her husband is in the hands of the Russian authorities.

*25 January*

- RFE/RL receives reports that Babitsky has been detained.

*24 January*

- Russian officials return photographs they had confiscated to Ludmila Babitskaya.

*18 January*

- Babitsky reportedly detained. Other reports suggest he was detained on 16 or 17 January. But later reports say he was not formally arrested until 27 January.

*15 January*

- RFE/RL has last telephone contact with Babitsky.

*13 January*

- Babitsky files report on heavy Russian bombing of Grozny.

*8 January*

- Russian security agents raid Babitsky apartment in Moscow and confiscate several items. Earlier, Ludmila Babitskaya is called to militia station after she tries to pick up photographs that had been developed.

*29 December 1999*

- Russian forces detain seven international journalists near Grozny in Chechnya.

27 December

- Russian Information Committee in Chechnya accuses Babitsky of “conspiracy with Chechen rebels” after Babitsky broadcast a story the day before on Russian military actions there that the RIC found objectionable.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. First, I want to get Andrei Babitsky here to testify before this committee, and I have an idea that these gentlemen with the television will not be the only ones here to cover that.

Mr. DINE. I wish I could produce him right now, but he went from the press conference to the hospital, so he can have a thorough medical examination—

The CHAIRMAN. Right.

Mr. DINE. —which I personally have ordered that—

The CHAIRMAN. We can take him any time we can get him.

Mr. DINE. I will do what I can to get him here as soon as possible.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Secondly, I am instructing, respectfully, the staff for the majority on this committee, and I know that they will be joined enthusiastically by the minority, or the Democrat, I want an updated resolution prepared to be presented to the Senate and to be voted on, and I want it to be complete, with as much information as you can work out from testimony here today.

I would like that to happen as quickly as possible, and I know you will do that.

Thirdly, I want to get a transcript of what each of you has said this morning, and I think we ought to use that every time the Senate has a quorum call, but no business to conduct. I think we ought to read part of the testimony. We would do that with careful selection, of course, and so we will begin on that.

Now, let me ask some quick questions. Most of them are answerable. I was going to ask you about Babitsky, the question of who held him, the Russians, the pro-Russian Chechnya group, or the Chechnya resistance, and I know the answer to that.

How would you assess the Clinton Administration’s efforts to ensure the safety and release of Andrei Babitsky?

Mr. DINE. From the beginning we tried to keep the U.S. embassy in Moscow informed, as well as the embassy in Prague. Almost everyday I was on the phone to our ambassador in Prague, John Shattuck, who is very helpful keen on human rights issues. We welcomed those times that the administration met Russian officials and spoke out about the regression taking place in that society and by the Putin administration.

There were times when I urged more, and I am not bashful, as you know, and I have said that several ways and in several phrases. But overall, the good news is, the man was found and is nearly free. I do report to you, sir, that your letter of the 31st of January, the two Senate resolutions that passed on the 24th of February, had an impact in Moscow.

I am the only one on our Prague staff who has had experience on Capitol Hill; and I tried to tell them that this is a co-equal branch of government, and take every word seriously.

The CHAIRMAN. Good.

Mr. DINE. So those were shots in the arm, if you would like. I’ve switched my medical words, because I had said earlier it was a

shot to the bow of Russia's policymakers, but in our bureau in Moscow, in our Prague headquarters, this was seen as real encouragement—

The CHAIRMAN. Good.

Mr. DINE. —and it counts. It counts.

The CHAIRMAN. I want Mr. Bouckaert to comment on that same question.

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Well, I am not as familiar with specific actions that the U.S. government took in the case of Mr. Babitsky, but I do think that in terms of the more general abuses in Chechnya the administration should know that the Russian media pays a lot of attention to what the U.S. says, and when Ms. Albright was in Moscow, and when Clinton spoke out here about the abuses in Chechnya, about their general relationship with the Russian government, it would certainly seem as an endorsement for the Russian government, or for Mr. Putin in particular.

The administration has to be careful about what it says, because oftentimes their comments get interpreted as support, not just for Mr. Putin, but also for this war in Chechnya, and the fact that they have not spoken out stronger makes that an easy message to pass on.

The CHAIRMAN. By the way, let us do seven minutes, and then, of course, set it for—so I will not overrun the seven minutes. Ms. AbuZayd, your comments on that.

Ms. ABUZAYD. Well, from the humanitarian side, I have to say that we have very good support from the U.S. government, both in terms of the things that they give us for our program, but also the pressure that they put on the Russian government for us to have access in Ingushetia and inside Chechnya.

That being said, I think we should acknowledge that this is often the easier part, and something that we have to go beyond, because we often feel, as the humanitarian actors, we are put out in front to say we are doing something, salving the conscience of people who want to do something, so that they do not have to attack the real political problems and the real root causes of the problem.

So we very much appreciate what we are able to do, but it is not enough. It is addressing the symptoms, and the other actors have to be there to solve the other problems.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bouckaert, do you think the United States government has adequately addressed the need to stop the indiscriminate killing and atrocities in Chechnya?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. That is an easy question. No, I do not think they have. They mince their words oftentimes when they talk about abuses, they talk about abuses by both sides, suggesting that this is kind of a very cruel conflict, but the fact is that the vast amount of abuses in this war have been committed by Russian forces.

The U.S. government has not spoken out strongly enough about the abuses in this war, and it certainly has not taken the actions needed, the actions it can afford to take to stop these abuses.

Mr. DINE. Mr. Chairman, can I just add one more thing to that?

The CHAIRMAN. Sure. Sure.

Mr. DINE. There is an assumption in this city that during the first Chechen war and during this one, that somehow or another Yeltsin, and now Putin, was what Lincoln was during our par-

ticular civil conflict. This has nothing to do with South Carolina or nothing to do with our Civil War. This is an uncivil war.

I just want to reinforce what these two have said today. We are dealing with the most venal of behavior that we have seen in a long, long time, and it has to be addressed in those terms, and those terms only.

The CHAIRMAN. Right. Now, I want to ask you, how many civilians do you think have been killed in the conflict over there?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Well, that is a very difficult question to answer, because the human rights watch is not allowed to go into Chechnya, and neither are international journalists.

We know that the Russian government has understated the number of civilians as well as the number of Russian soldiers killed, but it is certain that the number of Russian soldiers killed is somewhere in the region of 3,000, and I would imagine that the number of civilians killed is at least—

The CHAIRMAN. How about resistance, how many have they killed?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. I think that the number of Chechen fighters killed is probably smaller. We have not documented any large-scale killings by the Chechen fighters, but we have documented many other abuses committed by them.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you think the Russian commanders are involved to whatever extent, or any extent, in the atrocities that have been documented thus far?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. I have interviewed many people who informed the Russian generals of ongoing abuses, including ongoing killings, and we have no evidence that those Russian generals took any steps to stop those killings. At the very least, their failure to act in the face of these vast abuses in Chechnya makes them complicit in the abuses.

In terms of the bombings that are taking place, the indiscriminate and disproportionate bombings, that certainly is a decision made by the military command.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, how about your investigation, has there been any interference with those investigations?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Well, we have to be very careful about our security. We are not allowed to go into Chechnya itself. We are denied access to Chechnya by the Ministry of Defense, and in the face of what happened to Babitsky, we have to be very careful.

My Russian colleague has repeatedly been interrogated by the FSB, the intelligence service of the Russian government.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you folks looked into these so-called filtration camps? Have you been granted access to any of them?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. No, we have not been granted access. I interviewed a significant number of people independently from each other about the filtration camps, and we know that there is well over a thousand men in those filtration camps now that have suffered severe beatings, torture, and we have documented several cases of rape from independent witnesses who have given us the identify of the people who were raped in those camps.

There was a visit arranged a few days ago for journalists to one of the filtration camps. We have strong evidence to suggest that that filtration camp was cleaned up for the visit, and it was newly

repainted, and just a few carefully selected prisoners were paraded in front of these journalists, and clearly told what to say.

The CHAIRMAN. How about prisoners of war, what has happened to them?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. It is very unclear what has happened to prisoners of war. We have evidence that Chechen fighters have executed Russian soldiers during this campaign, but there certainly are a large number of men, both prisoners of war, as well as civilians, who are unaccounted for to date.

The CHAIRMAN. My time has expired. We started late, so I am not going to spend any more time on mine.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Senator WELLSTONE. I will defer to the Senator from Wisconsin, because I had to go to a markup in another committee. I apologize. Then I will follow Senator Feingold. Thank you.

Senator FEINGOLD. I thank the Senator from Minnesota.

The CHAIRMAN. You have seven minutes.

Senator FEINGOLD. Yes, sir. I will not even use all of it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bouckaert, we all read reports indicating that the campaign in Chechnya is extremely popular in Russia. Apart from the journalists Mr. Dine was talking about, have any prominent Russian figures, policymakers, intellectuals, non-government activists condemned the violence in Chechnya and the abuses occurring there? What sort of picture of that can you give me?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Well, there are two NGOs which we work closely with, the one is Memor Yau, who is a Russian human rights NGO; the other one is the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, and they have both spoken very strongly about these abuses in Chechnya, and about the conduct of the war in general.

Unfortunately, most of the Russian media has given a very slanted presentation of this war. They have barely documented the kind of abuses that are taking place in the war, and they only contact us when we talk about abuses by Chechen fighters. There is a lot of public support in Russia for this war, partly because the abuses are not being discussed.

Senator FEINGOLD. What about prominent artists, writers, or intellectuals?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. I have been in Ingushetia for the last three months, so I have had limited access to the media there. I will pass that question on.

Mr. DINE. During the Babitsky saga, Elena Bonner, the famous human rights activist and outspoken human rights leader, spoke out, and she also nominated Babitsky for awards for his war correspondence journalism.

Certainly, the democrat, Mr. Yavlinsky has also spoken out, but I think fewer and fewer people are listening to him, and that is part of the problem. So yes, the mainstream is definitely in line, highly approving Putin policies in Chechnya.

Senator FEINGOLD. For any of you, how credible is the investigation into abuses in Chechnya as being conducted by President Putin's representative? Is it adequately staffed by human rights professionals?

Mr. DINE. I have asked the same question, Senator, and everybody tells me that he is just for show.

Senator FEINGOLD. Mr. Bouckaert.

Mr. BOUCKAERT. I think that we should realize that there are stretchers in place in the Russian government who are supposed to address these abuses, such as the military procurator. They have taken no action to investigate the war crimes committed in Chechnya, so we are quite skeptical about this new appointment.

Regardless of what the new appointment does, I think it is important that an independent international monitoring presence is established, and that these abuses are investigated at the international level. The international community must monitor what the Russian authorities are doing, in terms of investigating these abuses, but they also have to establish the body of evidence to make sure that these people are held accountable for their abuses in Chechnya.

Senator FEINGOLD. Ms. AbuZayd, did you want to respond?

Ms. ABUZAYD. I would just add, as I mentioned in my statement, that we have had dealings with the new appointee, who is the director of the Federal Migration Service, which is our main interlocutor in Russia, and we are hopeful that he might do some of the right things, if, as you say, he gets an adequate staff, and the independents still need to be added to this whole process, as Mr. Bouckaert said.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you all for your testimony, as the Chairman said. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator WELLSTONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I want to thank you for your leadership. We were just talking to one another, and I really want to work with you in drafting another resolution, and raising the temperature here, and really putting the focus on this.

I think we can do that together with many other Senators, Senator Biden, and I hope the whole committee.

I am going to use first names as well. Peter, I just think you do heroic work.

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Thank you.

Senator WELLSTONE. I admire the work that you do. You may have said this, but I want to make sure that I understand it, or that it is repeated again: has the infrastructure—homes, schools, hospitals—in Chechnya been specifically targeted?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Yes. We have documented several attacks on hospitals. I remember driving through one town in Chechnya, and the two buildings that were the most destroyed, were the school and the mosque in the one town. There has been a tremendous destruction of the infrastructure in general, but it seems that schools, mosques, and hospitals were specifically targeted on numerous occasions.

Senator WELLSTONE. How difficult is it to collect the evidence and is some of the evidence destroyed?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Certainly, we are concerned that evidence of war crimes in Grozny is being destroyed at the moment. The city has been completely shut off from the local residents, as well as from the international community.

We have been told by witnesses that they have been specifically told not to talk to the international community about war crimes, and because of our lack of access, evidence has been destroyed just because it deteriorates, and it is buried in many cases.

Senator WELLSTONE. Karen, how important is it to get human rights monitors into the area around Chechnya, and is the Russian military capable of investigating itself?

Ms. ABUZAYD. I do not know about the capability of the Russian military. I would say that we need, as Peter has said, independent people looking at this. We have put human rights monitors in, we hope. We hope that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights will now take this on as well, and try to get to these people.

Just to say, though, even with our work, with our humanitarian work, we are truly well escorted at all times, and there are places we never are shown—

Senator WELLSTONE. Because you need to be escorted for your own security and safety.

Ms. ABUZAYD. We have asked for that ourselves, but we are not sure, even in Ingushetia, that we really have reached all the people there, because our movements are controlled.

Senator WELLSTONE. In other words, you have depended on the military, because you cannot go in without them, but on the other hand, by going in with them—

Ms. ABUZAYD. Yes.

Senator WELLSTONE. —it puts some restriction on where you go.

Ms. ABUZAYD. Yes.

Senator WELLSTONE. And then finally, Tom, with the fall of Shatoi yesterday, the Russians claim that the Chechens have been defeated. Do you think that is true, or do you think the Chechens have the capacity for effective guerilla war? In other words, do you think this war is going to continue?

Mr. DINE. I think this is an endless war, as history shows. The Russian–Chechen conflict has been going on for 400 years or so. It took on great intensity with Peter the Great in the early part of the 18th century. There was a general in 1818, Senator, who wrote a letter to the czar and said he would not be at peace until every Chechen was killed. That policy has basically continued up to the present.

Mr. BOUCKAERT. If I could just add to that. It has been a consistent policy strategy by the Russian government to suggest that this war will soon be over, because they are trying to limit international criticism of their mopping-up operation.

After they announced again that they killed the rebel commander Raduyev, there was a headline in the Russian newspaper saying, “Russia Kills Raduyev Again,” because they have claimed three times now that they have killed him. I think that is just one more example of you laugh or you cry. We are laughing, but—

I think it is important to understand that the brutal campaign of the Russian government in Chechnya has led to a radicalization of the opposition. It is much more difficult to bring people back to the table, and there certainly are enough fighters left to continue this war for a long time.

The international community needs to keep its attention. We cannot just say this war is going to be over soon, let us just wait a few more months.

Senator WELLSTONE. Well, I want to thank each of you. I have such respect for your work. Mr. Chairman, I think it was Camus who once said murder is never legitimate.

So I do not defend the actions of all of the Chechens and what has been done, but given now what we now see, this is just a—a human rights question is too mild of a way of putting it. I mean this is really a systematic slaughter and murder of people, and I think it is very important that the Senate depict a profile on this in a major way. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Next is Senator Biden.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for being so late. This is obviously a very important hearing. Unfortunately, we all have more than one duty, and I am on the judiciary committee, and there is a major crime bill that I have introduced. I was asked to speak to the National Sheriff's Association downtown, and I committed to do that, and I apologize for being late.

My staff briefly has told me almost all the questions I would want to ask, and your testimony was graphic and compelling. I have two questions, one of which may not have been asked, I hope. If it has, just tell me, and I will literally read it in the record. I do not want to trespass too much more on your time.

Is there anything that, from a broad policy perspective, the next United States president should read from Putin's pursuit of the war in Chechnya, and does it have implications, if you are prepared to speak to it, for how Russia will deal with other parts of what is still the territory of Russia and former republics of the Soviet Union, where the Islamic faith predominates?

Tell me a little bit about how much of this relates to the attitude of Putin, in your view, and the Russian military, towards Islam. I find an incredible dichotomy between the way in which the Russian agencies, and possibly the Kremlin itself, will promote and deal with Iran in terms of missiles and missile technology, and yet deal so brutally with Chechnya. I do think you are dead right, though, Tom, that these old wounds run centuries deep.

But is it just that? Is there something unique about Chechnya alone, or is there something more that relates to the present Russian leadership's attitude toward Islam? Is that a fair question?

Mr. DINE. I will try to address what you have just said. I like the way you addressed the question, so it allows us to talk about the future.

First of all, I do not think the United States policy should be fitted for just one set of issues. They are complicated issues, such as the future of the ABM Treaty.

I think we have to have a comprehensive policy toward Russia. A comprehensive policy is not just political-military issues, but the very issues we have been discussing here today. As Senator Wellstone just said, we need to start with human rights.

These are issues that are critical to us. If we do not address basic values, then who are we? That is what has been so important for all of us at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.



The issue is not just Babitsky the human being, and a colleague, and a father, and a husband, but it is freedom of the press, and the freedoms that go with the freedom of the press, and it's the future of a relationship of a nation that wants to, as I said earlier Senator Biden, not to deal with the future, that wants to go back to the past. I urge you to think of these things comprehensively.

One other thought. Tolstoy wrote a short story in 1842 about the Chechen war at that time entitled "Haji Marat." Today's war and cruelties are summarized there. There is an intensity in Moscow for Chechens that is not seen towards Uzbeks, Tajiks, or Georgians. There is something about the Russian-Chechen relationship that is offbalance, that brings out the worst in human behavior.

Senator BIDEN. Do you all agree with that?

Mr. BOUCKAERT. Well, I think there is some anti-Islamic element to this war, but I think there is a lot more about the new willingness by Russia to use abusive powerful military options. I am concerned about the rights of this new nationalism in Russia, which has come along with Putin in this war.

Russia feels like a small world power now that wants to regain its role in the world stage, and I hear a lot of people saying in Moscow when I am there that we need a strong leader like Putin to regain our place on the world stage, and suddenly it is not just Chechnya, and Ingushetia, and the other Islamic republics in the region who are concerned about this, but Georgia, a Christian country, which is certainly as much concerned about the new assertiveness and militarialism in Russia.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you. Karen?

Ms. ABUZAYD. Yes. This is outside my humanitarian scope, your question, but I certainly would say that Islam is not the main feature of the problem, and that we all have to watch our governments on satanizing Islam.

I think even when Peter spoke about the Chechen fighters, the ones he was saying were the worst were the Muslim Chechens. Well, they are all Islam Chechens. So it is something we all need to be aware of.

Mr. DINE. There is an issue that we discussed internally at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty about what does this mean for Russia's near abroad policy. Russia's neighbors do have doubts about Putin's foreign policy thinking. It was graphically summarized by one of our Central Asian service directors, when he said, "There is a new man in power. We can see it at the CIS gathering in early January in Moscow that if Putin wears a striped tie today, then all the other leaders of the near abroad countries will wear a striped tie.

There is caution and deep-seated fear about Russian power creating a new sphere of influence over them.

So as I said, human rights is part of our policy approach, so are missiles and arms sales, and how Russia behaves toward its neighbors.

Senator BIDEN. Mr. Chairman, if I could take 30 more seconds.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure. Sure.

Senator BIDEN. Let me tell you the one part that I worry about in terms of the Administration's policy. I am not asking you to comment. I think the way in which, my observation, the State Depart-

ment handled the dramatization of the capture and the disappearance of the press representative was wrong.

I think they were so worried about affecting other aspects of the relationship that are being negotiated now, that they tip-toed around what they should have done.

I will not be overly specific here, but literally, in terms of not letting press in the country know until ten minutes before that they are going to be on. I mean that is malarkey.

But I have seen that sort of thing in every administration, and everybody gets clientized in this process, and their little piece is the piece that they want to make sure does not get rolled, and if there is something else important, they are afraid to act.

I think we have to have a franker relationship with Russia. I predict to you, for what it is worth, my predictions are usually wrong, but I predict to you that Putin is going to cooperate with us more on the big ticket items, but he is going to become more oppressive and anti-democratic as he moves on.

We are going to be faced with sort of a China dilemma here, in a broad sense, where you going to have a circumstance where the Chinese are cooperating with us on trade, there is liberalization, there are a lot of things that make sense for us, and at the same time they are still cracking down on the free press, they are cracking down on any dissidents.

I think the next president is going to be faced with an interesting dilemma here. You may very well get cooperation on nuclear weapons, while at the same time they are crushing democratic movements in other places, or limiting what is thought to be, by the West, democratic institutions.

I think we are in for an interesting ride here, but I think the controlling feature of it, Tom, should be frankness. I do not mean demagoging, I mean just frankness, frank confrontation on the places we don't agree.

Where I might or might not disagree with the other two witnesses, I didn't hear your testimony, so I do not know, is I do not think that the way to respond is to cut off all other intercourse with Russia on, for example, START II. I am not suggesting you said that. I am just trying to make the point that we should be frank.

Let me conclude by—Dr. Haltzel, who is one of the main reasons I love having him on my staff, he is so knowledgeable about history, he passed me the following note. “On the other hand, the 19th century writer Lermontov romanticized the people in the Caucasus.”

So it is nice to have, well, I always kid him, my double PhD behind me here. He does not really have two PhD's, but he has the drawback of having gone to Harvard and Yale, and it worries me, but it is one of these things. So I am going to have to read both to find out where the truth lies.

Anyway, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the good work you are doing, and for not relenting on—

The CHAIRMAN. We all feel that way about it. It has been a stimulating morning, and it has given us some guideposts about what we should do further in the Senate.

This is one time that I am very proud of the Senate for its having undertaken this. We have not gone far enough, but if I have anything to do with it, we will go much farther.

Senator BIDEN. Mr. Chairman, may I ask that my statement be placed in the record?

The CHAIRMAN. You bet.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, it certainly will be.

[An statement by Senator Biden appears in the Appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. The Senators who had to go to other committee meetings and were not able to be here may want to file some questions in writing, and I know you-all will accommodate them to the best of your ability.

If there will be no further business, I thank you very, very much. Have a good day. We stand in recess.

[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

## APPENDIX

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### AN ADDITIONAL STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BIDEN

At the time of the hearing on March 1, 2000, I was unaware of certain actions that the Department of State had taken with regard to the detention of Mr. Babitsky.

In fact, Secretary Albright, Undersecretaries Pickering, Lieberman, and U.S. Ambassador to Russia Collins had repeatedly approached the Russian Government, urging in the strongest terms that Mr. Babitsky be freed.

In addition, Undersecretary of State Lieberman had visited the Moscow office of Radio Liberty, had met with Mrs. Babitsky, and had subsequently made a strong statement to the press.

106TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

## S. RES. 261

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the detention of *Andrei Babitsky* by the Government of the Russian Federation and freedom of the press in Russia.

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### IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 24, 2000

Mr. HELMS (for himself, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. ROTH, Mr. LOTT, and Mr. DODD)  
submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

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## RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the detention of *Andrei Babitsky* by the Government of the Russian Federation and freedom of the press in Russia.

Whereas *Andrei Babitsky*, a dedicated and professional journalist for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) for the last 10 years, reported on the 1994–1996 and the current Russo-Chechen wars;

Whereas on December 27, 1999, the Russian Information Committee (RIC) in Chechnya accused *Babitsky* of “conspiracy with Chechen rebels” after he broadcast a story that shed unfavorable light on Russian military actions in Chechnya;

Whereas on January 8, 2000, Russian security agents raided *Babitsky*’s apartment in Moscow and confiscated several

items and later ordered his wife, Ludmila Babitskaya, to report to a local militia station in Moscow after she attempted to pick up photographs taken by her husband in Chechnya;

Whereas on January 18, 2000, Babitsky was reportedly detained by Russian authorities in Moscow but later reports indicated that he was not formally arrested until January 27, 2000;

Whereas on January 26, 2000, Russian presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said that Babitsky "left Grozny and then disappeared" and declared that Russian security services had no idea as to his whereabouts and that "his security is not guaranteed";

Whereas on January 28, 2000, Russian media officials told RFE/RL that Babitsky would be released with apologies after having been charged with participating in "an illegal armed formation";

Whereas on February 2, 2000, Moscow officials announced that Babitsky would be transferred from Naursky district near Chechnya to Gudermes and then to Moscow where he would then be released on his own recognizance;

Whereas on February 3, 2000, Russian presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said that Russian officials exchanged Babitsky for 3 Russian prisoners of war and on the same day, Vladimir Ustinov, acting Russian prosecutor general, said Babitsky had been released and had gone over to the Chechens on his own accord;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has repeatedly issued contradictory statements on the detention of Andrei Babitsky and provided neither a credible ac-

counting of its detention of Babitsky nor any credible evidence of his well-being;

Whereas United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson stated on February 16 that Russian behavior in Chechnya and the detention of Andrei Babitsky appears to violate the Geneva conventions to which Russia is a signatory;

Whereas on February 16, 2000, Russian Human Rights Commissioner Oleg Mironov denounced Moscow's handling of Babitsky as a violation of Russian law and international law and stated that the situation surrounding Babitsky signals "that the same thing may happen to every reporter";

Whereas the Union of Journalists in Russia declared on February 16 that the case of Andrei Babitsky is "not an isolated episode, but almost a turning point in the struggle for a press that serves society and not the authorities" and that "the threat to freedom of speech in Russia has for the first time in the last several years transformed into its open and regular suppression";

Whereas freedom of the press is both a central element of democracy as well as a catalyst for democratic reform;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has repeatedly violated the principles of freedom of the press by subjecting journalists who question or oppose its policies to censorship, intimidation, harassment, incarceration, and violence; by restricting beyond internationally accepted limits their access to information; and by issuing misleading and false information; and

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has egregiously restricted the efforts of journalists to report on

the indiscriminate brutality of Russia's use of force in Chechnya: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the detention of Andrei Babitsky by the Government of the Russian Federation and the misinformation the Government of the Russian Federation has issued concerning this matter—

(A) constitute reprehensible treatment of a civilian in a conflict zone in violation of the Geneva Conventions and applicable protocols; and

(B) demonstrate the Government of the Russian Federation's intolerance toward a free and open press;

(2) the conduct of the Government of the Russian Federation leaves it responsible for the safety of Andrei Babitsky;

(3) the Government of the Russian Federation should take steps to secure the safe return of RFE/RL reporter Andrei Babitsky to his family;

(4) the Government of the Russian Federation should provide a full accounting of Mr. Babitsky's detention and the charges he may face; and

(5) the Russian authorities should immediately halt their harassment of journalists, foreign and domestic, who cover the war in Chechnya and any other event in the Russian Federation and should



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fully adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares in article 19 that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers".

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106TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

## S. RES. 262

Entitled the "Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict" in Chechnya.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 24, 2000

Mr. WELLSTONE submitted the following resolution, which was considered and agreed to

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### RESOLUTION

Entitled the "Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict" in Chechnya.

Whereas the people of Chechnya are exercising the legitimate right of self-defense against the indiscriminate use of force by the Government of the Russian Federation;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has used disproportionate force in the bombings of civilian targets in Chechnya which has resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and the displacement of well over 250,000 others;

Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has refused to engage in negotiations with the Chechen resistance toward a just peace and instead has charged Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov with armed mutiny and issued a warrant for his arrest;

Whereas Russian authorities deny access to regions in and around Chechnya by the international community, including officials of the United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, and maintain a virtual ban on access to Chechen civilians by media and international humanitarian organizations, including the International Federation of the Red Cross;

Whereas these restrictions severely limited the ability of these organizations to ascertain the extent of the humanitarian crisis and to provide humanitarian relief;

Whereas even limited testimony and general investigation by international organizations credibly report widespread looting, summary executions, detentions, denial of safe passage to fleeing civilians, torture and rape committed by Russian soldiers;

Whereas there are credible reports of specific atrocities committed by Russian soldiers in Chechnya, including the rampages in Alkhan-Yurt where 17 persons were killed in December 1999 and in the Staropromyslovsky district of Grozny where 44 persons were killed in December 1999; and the rapes of Chechen prisoners in the Chernokosovo detention camp;

Whereas these credible reports indicate clear violations of international human rights standards and law that must be investigated, and those responsible must be held accountable;

Whereas United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson proposed on February 20, 2000, the prosecution of Russian military commanders for overseeing "executions, tortures, and rapes"; and

Whereas the Senate expresses its concern over the conflict and humanitarian tragedy in Chechnya, and its desire for a peaceful resolution and durable settlement to the conflict: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the Government of the Russian Federation—

(A) immediately cease its military operations in Chechnya and initiate negotiations toward a just peace with the leadership of the Chechen Government, including President Aslan Maskhadov;

(B) allow into and around Chechnya international missions to monitor and report on the situation there and to investigate alleged atrocities and war crimes;

(C) allow international humanitarian agencies immediate full and unimpeded access to Chechen civilians, including those in refugee, detention and so called "filtration camps" or any other facility where citizens of Chechnya are detained; and

(D) investigate fully the atrocities committed in Chechnya including those alleged in Alkhan-Yurt, and Grozny, and initiate prosecu-

tions against those officers and soldiers accused; and

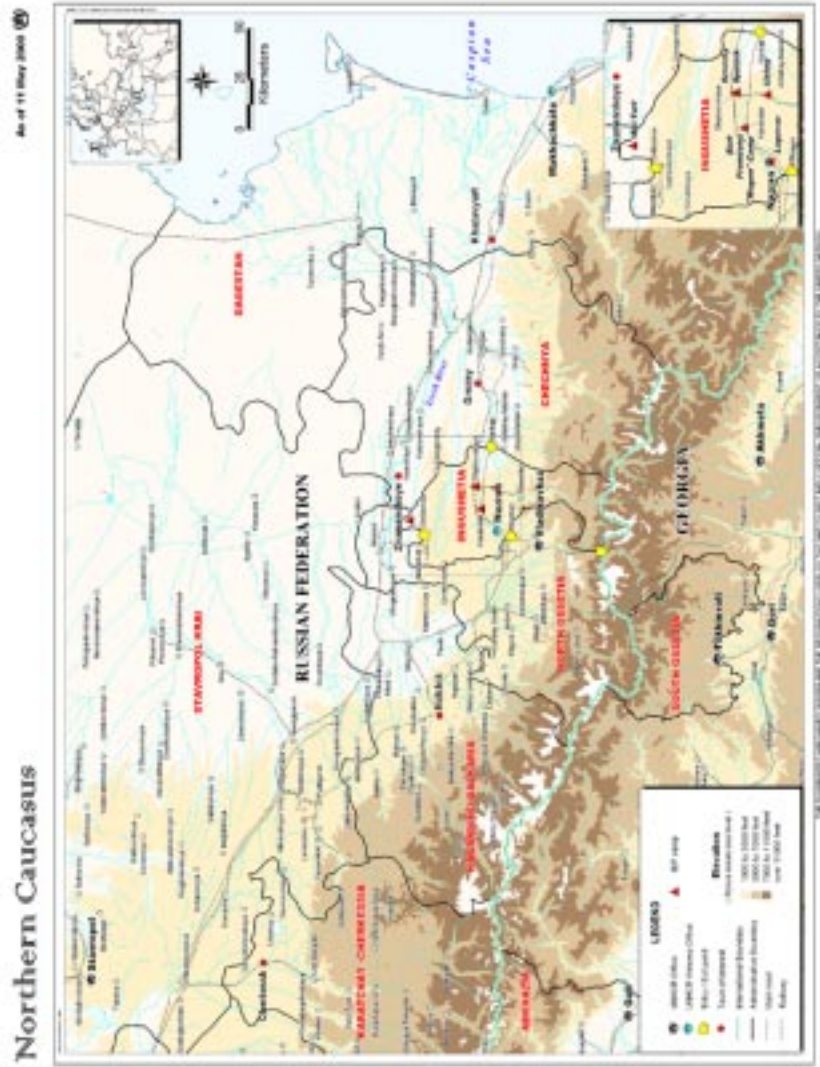
(2) the President of the United States of America—

(A) should promote peace negotiations between the Government of the Russian Federation and the leadership of the Chechen Government, including President Aslan Maskhadov, through third party mediation by the OSCE, United Nations or other appropriate parties;

(B) endorse the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for an investigation of alleged war crimes committed by the Russian military in Chechnya; and

(C) should take tangible steps to demonstrate to the Government of the Russian Federation that the United States strongly condemns its brutal conduct in Chechnya and its unwillingness to find a just political solution to the conflict in Chechnya.

Maps



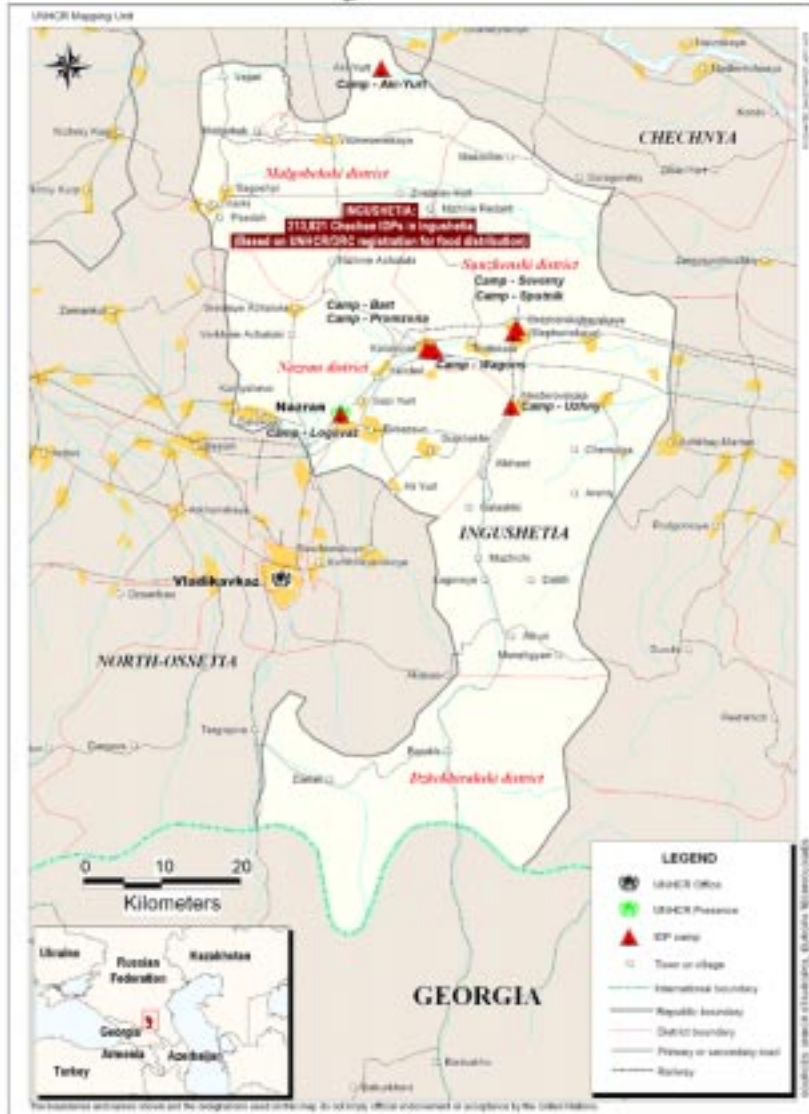
## Russian Federation: Chechnya

As of 1st March 2006



Russian Federation: Ingushetia

As of 31 March 2000 





Russian Federation: Dagestan Republic

As of 7 March 2009

