

That is what we face now. A concerted effort on the part of the Republican leadership in the other body to not let these two bills come to the floor and be passed. It is a shame.

The American people, those who are on the minimum wage need a hike. They have not had one for a long time. Many people would benefit from the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance reform because it would provide portability, the ability to take your health insurance with you when you lose a job or when you transfer jobs.

It would also allow for people to buy health insurance who now cannot because they have a preexisting medical condition.

Now, it is time for this legislation to move and be passed and be sent to the President. We only have a short amount of time here. I do not know, there is maybe 25, 30, possibly fewer legislative days. If the Republican leadership continues to put a hold on these bills—

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must interrupt to repeat her earlier admonition concerning reflections on the Senate.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to, if I could, in the time that remains to me, point out that the minimum wage right now is \$4.25 an hour, which adds up to about \$8,800 a year. It is a disgrace that someone in America can work a 40-hour week for 52 weeks a year and only earn \$8,800. How can we as a country that was founded on principles that we all have the same opportunity to improve our quality of life to pull ourselves up from bootstraps only to deny those dreams to our working poor.

Every day that the Republican majority delays the vote to increase the minimum wage, another American dream is essentially shattered. The Republican leadership has talked about family values for many years, but I think its mere rhetoric when it comes to minimum wage. Minimum wage workers are forced to leave their families far beyond the 8-hour day just to provide a balanced meal for their children.

If a minimum wage earner worked a 16-hour day, they would only earn \$68 for that day. Under the Democratic proposal, which again is really a bipartisan proposal, they would take home over \$82 a day for their efforts, an extra \$14. That means that maybe they can go out and buy a meal for their children or a healthier meal.

Right now many who live on the minimum wage do not have health insurance. They do not have the ability, basically, to provide for their family. My point is that if we increase the minimum wage, we make it possible for a lot of these people to not be so dependent upon government subsidies.

Again, there is going to be a bill coming to the floor next week on welfare

reform. I think most of us on a bipartisan basis would like to see some kind of welfare reform. How can you have welfare reform if you do not have an increase in the minimum wage? You have to provide an incentive for people to get off of welfare, for people to not need government assistance.

If they do not make a fair-share wage that will not be possible. I want to point out that in my own State, on a State level we passed a minimum wage increase a few years ago somewhat similar to the one proposed on the Federal level. The result was that more jobs were created.

There was a study done by two Princeton University economists recently for New Jersey and basically what it pointed out was the minimum wage workers take that extra money and they go out and buy things, whether it is food or whatever it is that they need as basic necessities of life. That creates more jobs. It actually helps the economy. I know some have suggested that raising the minimum wage is going to lose jobs, but that is not the case. It actually increases economic activity. I urge that this bill move in both Houses and go to the President.

TRAGEDY IN CHECHNYA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's headline was "Russia pounds Chechens as election truce unravels." Today's headline tells us the "Chechen war escalates once more." Report after report details a growing number of casualties. Many people, both military and civilian, are being killed each day. No one seems to know exactly how many but the total is growing. So is the number of refugees trying to stay one step ahead of the fighting and destruction; moving like the tide, first here, then there. Fleeing, leaving the fighting and danger behind only to reencounter it up ahead.

The Russian military has taken off the gloves now that Boris Yeltsin has been safely reelected. With tough talking ex-General Alexander Lebed in his corner, President Yeltsin has unleashed an awesome array of brutal military might on tiny independent-minded Chechnya. The apparent goal is to crush the life out of any desire for independence, no matter what the price. The most recent down payment was the death of Russian Maj. Gen. Nikolai Skripnik and a number of other soldiers on one side and guerrilla fighters and innocent civilians on the other. The numbers grown each day now. And no one seems to have the will to stop this carnage.

Certainly no one in our White House. This administration continues to sit on its hands regarding Chechnya. It has not spoken out to condemn the brutality and the havoc. The Clinton policy on Chechnya has been to remain silent. Deathly silent. Webster's defines genocide as "the deliberate, systematic destruction of a group." Chechnya is a textbook example of genocide and we say nothing.

This administration—this President—has walked away from human rights at every turn.

China, for example, where President Clinton delinked human rights from MFN trading status. After resounding denouncements of President Bush's policy to elevate trade matters above concerns for human rights Bill Clinton advanced the identical notion to the point where there are no longer even discussions on human rights with the Chinese. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake just returned from a round of high level talks with China. The topic of human rights was conspicuous by its absence from the agenda.

In Russia itself, anti-Semitism is cropping up more and more. Anti-Jewish rhetoric, if not commonplace, is at least being voiced by some mainstream officials. Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush condemned anti-Semitism and antihuman rights policies to every turn. Today's White House remains silent—to offend no one and thereby offend us all.

I visited Chechnya last year, met the people, Russian and Chechen, soldier and civilian, and saw first hand the results of this horror. I saw the burned out school of Shamanski. Heard about the grotesque and unspeakable acts drug-crazed soldiers committed on old men and women. Since returning, I have urged the President time and again to speak out against this war. I have asked him to offer to help by making available a high level person experienced and wise in diplomacy and negotiation to help both sides search for common ground. To search for a more humane way out. But this administration did nothing. This administration does nothing to advance human rights or to condemn the horrors taking place in Chechnya.

Here are copies of my exchanges of ideas with the President; with the administration. I insert these in the RECORD at this time.

My point in standing here is to advance the notion that America stands for something important. Like it or not we are the sole nation of sufficient stature, strength, and compassion which can, in the world court of public opinion, speak on the side of those with no voice. If we do not, they will not be heard. More will die and suffering will intensify.

But we remain silent. Mr. Speaker, we call on the President to condemn Russian brutality in Chechnya. Condemn those who ignore the basic human rights of others. And urge Vice President GORE to carry this important word to his Russian counterparts during his visit there next week.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 10, 1996.

Hon. ALBERT GORE, Jr.,
The Vice President, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. VICE PRESIDENT: As you prepare for your meeting with Viktor Chernomyrdin this weekend in Moscow, I wanted to share with you the correspondence between the administration and myself on the brutal war in Chechnya. I also have enclosed an op-ed by Georgie Anne Geyer from the Washington Times with which I strongly agree.

It is time for the administration to publicly denounce the fighting in Chechnya and find a fair, honest mediator to help work out the differences between the two sides. The Russian people, the Chechens and, indeed, the world is waiting for a public statement of condemnation from the United States. While I believe it is way overdue, you now have the opportunity, at this, your first post-election meeting with your Russian counterpart, to make such a statement.

Mr. Vice President, this is your opportunity to publicly stand for human rights

and peace in Chechnya. Please use the upcoming meeting to publicly, forcefully and unabashedly condemn the fighting in Russia and urge the Russian government to seek a peaceful settlement.

I also hope, now that the elections are over, that the administration will take a fresh look at offering the use of a tested and proven statesman to help resolve the conflict between the two sides. It would be a sign that the U.S. has advanced beyond a policy of watching the killing to actually doing something about it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, DC, June 25, 1996.

Hon. FRANK WOLF,

House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: I am writing in response to your letters regarding the appointment of a special American envoy to facilitate peace in Chechnya.

As I wrote to you previously, my Administration was prepared to consider a special American envoy had either the Russians or Chechens expressed an interest in such an intermediary; neither side did. In April, the Russians considered possible Russian mediators and expressed interest in the good offices of King Hassan II of Morocco. I spoke to the King about what role he might play.

Appointment of an unsolicited American mediator under such circumstances would have accomplished little for peace in Chechnya. Indeed, it might well have hindered and undercut the OSCE mission's efforts, which led to the May 27 meeting in Moscow between President Yeltsin and Chechen rebel leader Yandarbiyev. That meeting produced a cease-fire agreement and restarted direct Russian-Chechen negotiations. While tenuous, these negotiations appear to be making some progress toward resolving the Chechen situation.

I fully agree on the need to help bring peace to Chechnya. My Administration has pursued various means to promote a settlement in Chechnya and will continue to do so through every available path that does not interfere with or undermine a negotiating process that is ongoing.

I appreciate your concern about this issue.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 3, 1996.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,

The PRESIDENT,

The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Enclosed is a piece on Chechnya from today's Washington Times that I wanted you to see. With Russia's elections less than two weeks away, it may be too late to do anything about Chechnya. If it is not already midnight, we are dangerously close.

Mr. President, with all respect, I fear this country—your administration—has squandered a wonderful opportunity to cement tranquil relations with a Russia searching for peace and economic development. Rather we risk the emergence of a different Russia; a Russia not only disillusioned with unfulfilled promises of a more democratic form of government and a market based economy but now a Russia thoroughly embarrassed and angered by the inability of its military to quell the uprising of tiny Chechnya.

There is a saying about the devil you know being better than the devil you don't know. I sense the Russian people are approaching this point and a return to communism is

looking better and better to them each day. Perhaps it is not too late. Perhaps there is still time for you to offer the services of an American statesman to help the warring parties in the search for common ground. Perhaps there is time to end the killing.

I urge you to try. What more is there to lose in this matter? At least let's get the bat off our shoulder and go down swinging. Mr. President, I do not mean to be disrespectful but this opportunity will not come again. Please.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 23, 1996.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,

The PRESIDENT,

The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Buried on page A-4 of this morning's New York Times was the enclosed article reporting 160 more killed in Chechnya. Dying there has, I suppose become so commonplace as to barely be newsworthy. Won't you at least consider appointing a special American envoy whose sole goal is to bring these two warring parties to the negotiating table to agree to stop shooting one another?

One can try to do good and fail or one can fail to try to do good. They are miles apart. I urge you, Mr. President, make this effort. Thank you.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

160 REPORTEDLY KILLED IN CHECHNYA BATTLE

MOSCOW, May 22 (AP).—Up to 40 Russian troops and 120 separatists were killed today in a fierce battle near Bamut, in western Chechnya, the Itar-Tass news agency reported.

Up to 1,000 rebels have been defending the hills around the village, which lies in ruin, against Russian artillery, tanks and warplanes, a high-ranking Defense Ministry official said.

The Russians suspect that a large rebel weapons cache is hidden at Bamut, a former Soviet missile base 35 miles southwest of Grozny, the capital.

But Defense Minister Pavel S. Grachev still said today that Moscow would reduce the number of regular army troops in Chechnya as part of a peace plan offered recently by President Boris N. Yeltsin.

Speaking to army officers in Yekaterinburg, Mr. Grachev said the withdrawals would be finished by Aug. 1, but he did not say how many units would be pulled out. He has announced withdrawals before that turned out to be only troop rotations.

Tens of thousands of soldiers from the Interior Ministry and the regular Russian Army have been in Chechnya since December 1994 trying to defeat the outmanned separatists.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 7, 1996.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,

The PRESIDENT,

The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am, once again, writing to point out that conditions for the men, women and children in Chechnya continue to deteriorate as hopelessness and hatred battle one another. Did you see the enclosed Washington Times piece reporting the views of Duma Member, Mr. Aoushev, who is also the deputy chairman of their parliament's national security committee? He makes several thoughtful points which should give us pause about a "see nothing—do nothing" policy.

He notes:

... military action could spread from Chechnya to next door neighbor Ingushetia. Not only would this bring senseless killing, destruction, and misery to a new region that is, today, relatively tranquil, it would deny an existing haven to many Chechens who have fled from the daily terrors of their homeland. When I recently visited that region, I went to an Ingushetian refugee camp for Chechens, mostly women, children and the aged. They do not need another turn in a war zone.

... the conflict in Chechnya will not continue at its present level. It cannot get better so it will only become worse. Not only will pain and suffering intensify with continued fighting but the opportunity for reconciliation or consensual peace will recede further into the realm of the improbable.

... the Clinton Administration (Mr. Aoushev's term) is ignoring human rights violations by Russian military and has not done enough to use its influence to end the conflict.

I hope you will consider what Mr. Aoushev has to say and I reiterate my earlier and often made suggestion that you should offer to both sides an American negotiator of principle and stature whose task is to urge and prod the parties to this senseless conflict to stop it. How could it hurt? It might help. Continuing to do nothing is to accept or even to encourage more inhumane acts on helpless people.

Please work to stop this senselessness. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 25, 1996.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,

The PRESIDENT

The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Thank you for your response to my last letter expressing concern over Chechnya. I have been in Chechnya, seen the results of the war, met with the people there and have a sense of their resolve, their bitterness and their anger. They are a hearty, robust and proud people. Chechens are good fighters and will not yield in this situation, not as long as even a few have the means to resist.

I believe more must be done and time is running out. Time has already run out for too many Chechen men, women and children as well as for too many Russian soldiers and their families. Though not intended, each time you meet with President Yeltsin or visit Russia ... with the purpose of propping him up or lending stature to his presidency ... the opposite and undesired outcome results. Before your meetings, he tries, once again, to clean up events in Chechnya with a renewed and vigorous military onslaught causing more Chechens and more Russian soldiers to die, and the two sides become even more deeply mired in the conflict. President Yeltsin's attempt to make Chechnya disappear from the radar screen before you meet has the opposite and unwanted result of more killing, more conflict and a diminished way out of this mess. He has apparently even found it necessary to lie to you. According to the enclosed Reuters report, the Russian military attacks which resulted in Dzhokhar Dudayev's death were occurring even as President Yeltsin assured you that he was pursuing a peaceful resolution in Chechnya.

President Yeltsin's history here is one of reacting badly in Chechnya each time you

and he are to meet. The outcome inevitably is an even more difficult problem for him and may result in his downfall in the June elections. He may not win reelection without resolving this Chechnya situation.

I agree that our interests and Russia's as well are better served with Mr. Yeltsin as president when compared to other likely candidates. If he loses, Russia and their federation of states will take a giant stride backward. So I believe America must do all it can to bring resolution to the Chechen conflict, for them, certainly, but for us as well.

No one, least of all me, wants US involvement on the ground in that region. But America, as no other, is a respected and trusted force standing for freedom and justice. Our leadership alone can drive a peace solution. As I have asked before, and copies of all my earlier letters on this issue are enclosed to refresh your memory, please offer to President Yeltsin . . . and urge him to accept . . . the appointment of an American of considerable stature to negotiate and to search for a peaceful end to this tragedy in Chechnya. I know there are many good candidates, perhaps a retired flag or general officer or a statesman on the order of former Secretary Holbrooke.

Mr. President, when I first wrote on this issue, our interest was one of bringing a humanitarian end to a needless war in Chechnya. With the passing of time and evolving political fortunes in Russia, our own national interests could be also affected by fall-out from this matter, especially if it results in the return of communism to Russia. This would be bad for America and for the world.

I believe we must quickly do something here. I respectfully submit these recommendations and will do anything I can to help. If I can persuade you on this matter, I will come over on a moment's notice.

Please act, Mr. President. Thank you and best regards.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

[From Reuters NewMedia, Apr. 25, 1996]

REPORT: RUSSIAN 'COPTERS ATTACK CHECHEN TOWN

MOSCOW (Reuters).—Russian helicopter gunships attacked rebel positions in the Chechen town of Shali on Thursday, a day after slain separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev was buried. General Vyacheslav Tikhomirov, commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, told Interfax news agency that the gunships had made two "pinpoint strikes" on guerrilla positions in Shali, about 25 miles southeast of the regional capital Grozny. The attacks were in response to rebel fighters firing on Wednesday at Russian helicopters which flew over Shali on a reconnaissance mission, he said.

Interfax said civilians had been killed and wounded in the attacks, though it gave no casualty figure. It said seven people were killed when Russian ground forces opened fire on a civilian convoy trying to flee the town which had been sealed off by Russian troops for six days. A Shali police official, quoted by Interfax, said the Russian attacks had caused considerable destruction. "People have been killed and wounded," he said.

The renewed Russian air raids followed the death of Dudayev last Sunday in a rocket attack from the air at Gekhi-Chu, about 20 miles south-west of Grozny, as he stood in an open field speaking by satellite telephone. Dudayev, 52, unchallenged leader of the rebellion against Russian rule, was buried on Wednesday at a secret location in the south of the territory. Russian military involve-

ment in killing Dudayev, to whom President Boris Yeltsin had offered indirect talks to end the 16-month conflict, was mired in controversy.

Tikhomirov was quoted by Interfax as saying his troops had not conducted any special operation to assassinate Dudayev. But an Interior Ministry source said on Wednesday he had been killed in retribution for an ambush last week in which Chechen fighters killed up to 90 Russian soldiers.

In a more detailed report, Interfax quoted another source as saying Dudayev had been deliberately targeted by a rocket fired from the air which homed in on him by following the signal of his satellite telephone. This source said it was the fifth attempt in the past two or three months to destroy Dudayev by this means. The first four had failed, the source said, because the Chechen leader ended his telephone conversation before the rockets could target him.

Tikhomirov called the report of retribution "madness and an attempt to pass on to the federal troops the blame for a possible disruption of a peace settlement in Chechnya." He said his forces had stuck to Yeltsin's order to halt military operations and only responded to rebel attacks.

Yeltsin ordered troops into Chechnya in December 1994 to crush its independence drive. Over 30,000 people, mostly civilians, are believed to have died and Yeltsin is trying to end the conflict to boost his chances of winning a second term as president in a June poll. He unveiled a peace plan on March 31 which included a halt to Russia's military offensive, partial withdrawal of troops and indirect talks with Dudayev. But the plan allowed "special operations against terrorists."

It was not clear how the killing of Dudayev and his replacement by Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, a hardline pro-independence ideologist, could affect peace efforts.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, May 11, 1996.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR FRANK WOLF: Thank you for sharing the article on Chechnya.

We have made our position on Chechnya clear to the Russians at the highest level. The President raised it with President Yeltsin in their April 21 bilateral in Moscow. He also addressed it in subsequent correspondence and in a May 7 phone conversation. In these exchanges, the President urged the Russians to seek a negotiated settlement and to restrain their military actions; he also made clear that we stand ready to do whatever we can to facilitate a settlement.

We have additionally approached a number of third countries to ask that they press the Russian and Chechen sides to pursue a negotiated solution, and, in a demarche at the Russian Foreign Ministry, our Ambassador expressed in detail at the end of April our concern about ongoing Russian military actions.

President Yeltsin has indicated that he would like to get negotiations underway with the Chechens. Dudayev's death has changed the equation, but it is not yet clear whether this will facilitate or further complicate the search for peace.

I know you share our distress at the fighting. We will continue our strong advocacy for a peaceful end to this tragic conflict.

Sincerely,

ANTHONY LAKE,
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, May 7, 1996.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you for your recent letter on Chechnya. I fully share your concern about the Chechnya conflict.

I discussed the conflict with President Yeltsin on April 21 and urged, as I have in the past, that he seek a peaceful settlement. We have had other high-level communications regarding Chechnya with the Russian government since my return from Moscow and have urged a halt to Russian military actions. We have also approached a number of third countries to ask that they press the Russian and Chechen sides to pursue a negotiated solution.

I have told President Yeltsin that the United States is prepared to do whatever it can to support a peaceful settlement. To date, neither side has asked for an American intermediary, but, if such a request were made, we would certainly consider it. As you know, the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe maintains a mission in Grozny, which has in the past facilitated Russian-Chechen talks. And several prominent Russians, as well as King Hassan II of Morocco, have been approached by the Russian government to provide good offices.

We will continue to urge the Russians to seek a peaceful end to this tragic conflict. Thank you for your continued interest.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, May 7, 1996.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you for your letter on the conflict in Chechnya. I share your concern; the fighting there has been a tragedy—for Chechens, for Russians and for friends of Russian democracy.

We do not believe that use of force can resolve this issue. I therefore welcomed the March 31 announcement by President Yeltsin of steps to halt the conflict and intensify the search for a negotiated solution. Unfortunately, fighting has continued. We have urged both the Russian and Chechen sides to seize the opportunity they now have to reach a peaceful resolution.

I have raised Chechnya regularly in my exchanges with President Yeltsin. I will do so again during my upcoming visit to Moscow, where I will continue to underscore the need for a negotiated settlement.

Thank you for your interest on this issue.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, April 20, 1995.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you for your letter concerning the conflict in Chechnya and my meeting with President Yeltsin. I also understand you have discussed this with Strobe Talbott and Sandy Berger, and I appreciate your views.

I accepted the invitation to participate in V-E Day ceremonies in Moscow and scheduled a bilateral meeting with President Yeltsin based on my conviction that continued engagement with Russia is vital to our own self-interest in seeing Moscow continue along the difficult transitional course it has charted. That engagement takes numerous forms, including the respect we convey to

the Russian people by honoring their considerable sacrifices as our ally during the Second World War. As you have suggested, during my visit to Moscow, I plan to speak directly to the Russian people to underscore the long-term interest we share in building a stable and friendly relationship at all levels—and also to state what we expect from Russia if we are to achieve such a relationship. I also will meet with a range of Russian leaders.

Pragmatic engagement will be the theme of my meetings in Moscow with President Yeltsin and other Russian leaders. Russian and American interests coincide in a number of important areas: continuing the nuclear build-down, upgrading control and protection over fissile stockpiles, containing and resolving regional conflicts like the Middle East, and promoting Russia's integration into the global economic system. High-level meetings help advance our interests in these areas. It is equally important, at the same time, to remain engaged to work through areas where we and Moscow differ, such as European security, reactor sales to Iran, and Chechnya. I have stated my views on the Chechen conflict clearly, in public and in private contacts with Yeltsin: the humanitarian toll of the fighting is unacceptable and the search for a political solution must intensify, ideally through the good offices of the OSCE, with respect for Russia's territorial integrity. As you noted in your letter, continuation of the bloodshed threatens Russia's nascent democracy. However, it is my firm belief that rejecting dialogue with the Russian leadership to protest actions with which we disagree would minimize our chances of effecting a positive outcome, and would deal a serious blow to the forces of reform that find themselves increasingly challenged in Russia today.

I continue to view the maintenance of good relations with a stable, reforming Russia to be among my highest priorities as President. I genuinely value your perspectives on this question and thank you again for taking the time to share them with me and with my advisors.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, March 16, 1996.

Representative FRANK WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you for your letter on Chechnya. I know you have followed this issue closely, and I fully share your frustration at watching this conflict drag on; it is a tragedy for both the Chechens and Russians alike.

We have consistently encouraged the Russian government to end the cycle of violence and seek a peaceful solution to the conflict, including in my own conversations with President Yeltsin. President Yeltsin has said that he needs to end the conflict, and we have followed with interest reports that Moscow is developing a new peace plan. We will certainly do what we can to support such an effort.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, July 5, 1995.

Representative FRANK WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you for your recent letter regarding the report of the House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations Appropriations suggesting that U.S. assistance to Chechnya be channeled through the OSCE and non-governmental organizations.

I understand from Tony Lake that you had a sobering visit to Chechnya several weeks ago. The conflict is a tragedy for all concerned. We hope the talks begun on June 19 under OSCE auspices succeed in bringing a political solution to the conflict and have urged all parties to take full advantage of the talks.

I also noted the report language on Fred Cuny. I raised our concern about him with President Yeltsin in Halifax; he assured me the Russians would do everything that they could.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, February 22, 1995.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you for your recent letter regarding the conflict in Chechnya. I agree that the violence in Chechnya is a tragedy for everyone involved.

While we have publicly stated that Chechnya is part of Russia, we have criticized the toll of death and suffering the military action has inflicted on innocent civilians. In our private discussions and in our public statements, we have strongly urged an end to the violence. We have also supported the positive role international organizations, such as the OSCE, can play in helping to bring about a lasting end to the bloodshed and in providing humanitarian assistance. I have been in close touch with President Yeltsin and am certain he understands these concerns.

The events in Chechnya are a reminder that the processes of reform and democratization underway in Russia—and throughout the former Soviet Union—will encounter setbacks. While no one can predict the final outcome, it is far too early to write off reform in Russia. Indeed, our policy seeks to maximize the chance that reform will be sustained and will succeed. It is important during these periods of uncertainty to recall the profound stake the United States has in promoting Russia's further progress on the path to reform.

Our assistance to Russia serves important U.S. interests: building democratic institutions, contributing to the safe dismantlement of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal, encouraging privatization and private enterprise and vastly broadening the access of the Russian people to Western ideas and methods. I hope I can count on your leadership in the new Congress to continue bipartisan support of the important interests.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 4, 1996.

Hon. WARREN CHRISTOPHER,
Secretary of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I am writing to again raise the tragic situation in Chechnya. Some 40,000 civilians are dead, hundreds of thousands are homeless and, yet, this was not even a topic of discussion during your recent visit to Moscow. Why should the United States step in? Each time a high-level U.S. delegation has visited Moscow, President Yeltsin, seemingly in an attempt to put this issue aside, steps up the intensity of the military action and more Chechen civilians get pummeled.

President Yeltsin now seems to be making efforts to establish peace. He has called a cease-fire and the fighting has died down somewhat. We all hope his efforts are sincere, lasting and fruitful. But like a family trying to work out solutions to irreconcil-

able problems, sometimes the issues are too difficult to resolve alone. Feelings run too high and past wrongs have seared too vivid a memory to bring about resolution. Families often need to bring in outside help to provide counsel and objectivity, defuse tensions, arbitrate unresolvable differences and provide a fresh outlook. This is a mediation role only the United States can play in resolving this brutal conflict. I ask that you consider offering to both sides the use of a high-level negotiator of unquestionable stature: someone, perhaps, who has held at least a cabinet position in our government.

When I visited Grozny last May, there seemed little of the town left to destroy. Yet reports of death and destruction continue. What can we lose by offering to negotiate between the parties? Things could grow even worse after the June elections if the winner of the presidential race senses a mandate to end the conflict in Chechnya by any means.

I hope the U.S. will lend its weight to seek a speedy resolution. Please consider appointing a high-level negotiator to shuttle between the sides and push for peace. Our neutrality should cease to be indifference and we should use our voice, our experience and our economic power to stridently work for peace in Russia.

It's not too late. But too many have died. I urge you to take decisive action.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 21, 1996.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
The President,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: As you know, I traveled to Chechnya in May of last year to view the ravages of war in that part of the world. I have enclosed a copy of my trip report.

It has been frustrating to see this conflict drag on for over a year and the fighting and hostage-taking flare up again in recent weeks. The Russians seem to be getting more militaristic, but I understand that President Yeltsin recently acknowledged the importance of dealing with the conflict before the elections. The U.S. should strongly support President Yeltsin in any of his efforts to bring peaceful resolution to the conflict and, if necessary, serve as the catalyst for peace in the region. Perhaps the U.S. could help bring the sides together or serve as a mediator.

The U.S. should use every opportunity to strongly encourage the Russian government to end this conflict peacefully. It's in the best interest of Russia, and ultimately, the best interest of the United States.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, May 15, 1996.

Hon. ANTHONY LAKE,
National Security Advisor, National Security Council, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR TONY: I received the President's most recent letter outlining some actions he has taken to resolve the crisis in Chechnya.

I wanted to share a copy of a Special Order I gave on the House floor last week. We are really not doing enough over there. I think more could and should be done.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 21, 1996.

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The White House, Washington, DC.

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Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, January 26, 1995.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
The PRESIDENT,
The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: The brutal conflict in Chechnya is now in its second month. Gruesome images of the fighting emerge day after day. Thousands of Chechnyans have died in the fighting, including many innocent women and children.

While the U.S. position has been that this is an "internal Russian affair," the American people certainly have an interest in bringing an end to the fighting. Besides the obvious human tragedy occurring as men, women and children continue to die, Russia is a major recipient of U.S. foreign aid. This war is causing many in the Congress to consider whether Russia is deserving of such aid and whether the entire U.S.-Russian relationship should be re-examined, particularly our close ties to President Yeltsin. Continuation of this conflict will have major implications for the future of the Yeltsin government, the Russian economy and Russia's already fragile relationship with its neighbors. I believe our government should use its diplomatic leverage now to help bring peace to the region.

I am writing to propose that you appoint former President George Bush, or possibly former Secretary of State James Baker, as special emissary for this purpose: to go to Moscow, meet with President Yeltsin and other Russian leaders, and present your viewpoint on the importance of quickly ending the Chechnyan conflict. I believe President Bush could be very helpful in ending the fighting and stopping the killing.

Mr. President, I hope you will give careful consideration to this proposal and move quickly in sending an emissary to Russia. Thank you.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

CHECHNYA—TERROR IN PROGRESS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 1996.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: There is a country song in which the singer pleads for one more last chance. Perhaps that is where civilized and compassionate people are with regard to

bringing to an end the killing and destruction that have rained down upon the Chechen people for the past several years. Please read David Hoffman's report for The Washington Post talking about the new direction and the new intensity this 19 month war is taking following Russian President Boris Yeltsin's re-election victory. It is printed on the reverse.

With leadership struggles behind them, there is little reason for the Russian government to pursue a lasting cease fire or even a peaceful end to the conflict. Rather, many would now predict an intensified effort to pound the Chechens into the ground and into total submission.

It didn't have to be this way. Our government has mostly sat on its diplomatic hands as this conflict has raged. At the outset, statements by our officials likening this clash to our own civil war and setting forth a "hands off" policy were ill advised, provided Russian hard-liners with more backbone and destroyed the hopes of Chechens.

Each time the President, Secretary of State or other high official scheduled a meeting with President Yeltsin or his leadership, the Russian military would renew the fighting in hopes of ending the war before the issue could be raised between our governments thereby having the unintended effect of killing more people and ratcheting up the pain and suffering of everyone in that terrible place. They were never successful in ending the war but levels of killing, destruction, pain and hatred soared.

We could have . . . we should have pressed Boris Yeltsin and his government to restore peace to Chechnya. We should have encouraged him to negotiate a resolution and offered to provide a high level person, experienced and wise in diplomacy and international affairs, to help the sides find a settlement and end the horrors of war. But we did not. And the hour grows late.

Now the killing and destruction have resumed. And President Yeltsin does not feel pressed to end it. If nothing is done, more will die. But we have one more last chance. Vice President Gore soon leaves for high level meetings in Moscow. He can speak out against the continuation of this senseless slaughter. He can label these acts for what they are: genocide. He can offer to help bring about a negotiated peace; provide a top level negotiator to help both sides search for common ground.

Congress should expect the administration to stand firm on ending this havoc. Please encourage President Clinton and Vice President Gore to put America on the just side of this matter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

[From the Washington Post]

RUSSIA POUNDS CHECHENS AS ELECTION TRUCE UNRAVELS

(By David Hoffman)

MOSCOW, July 10.—Russia's pre-election truce with Chechen separatists continued to unravel today as Russian helicopter gunships and ground troops pounded two Chechen villages in the heaviest fighting since cease-fire agreements were reached on May 28 and June 10.

The strikes came against rebel positions in the villages of Gekhi, 20 miles southwest of the capital, Grozny, and Mahkety, 22 miles south of Grozny. The Chechen rebel leader, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, reportedly has a headquarters in Mahkety, and several hundred of his fighters are in Gekhi, which was attacked Tuesday and today. Russian troops were reported pulling back from Gekhi tonight.

Casualties were reported among Chechen civilians and Russian soldiers. The Interfax news agency said 15 to 30 civilians were killed in the assault on Gekhi; the Russian military said 20 were killed. Hundreds of villagers fled the assault on foot. Russia lost eight servicemen, news agencies said, and television reports said another 20 had been captured by the rebels. There were no reports on rebel casualties.

Interfax quoted a Russian military spokesman, Maj. Igor Melnikov, as saying that Russian commanders have ordered the capture of Yandarbiyev, but the report was later denied. Melnikov said the strikes were in response to the rebels' ignoring an ultimatum by the Russian commander, Gen. Vyacheslav Tikhomirov, who threatened to wipe them out if they failed to release all soldiers held captive by Tuesday night.

The cease-fire agreement included a deadline for Russia to remove its checkpoints in Chechnya and for an exchange of prisoners. Each side has accused the other of failing to honor its commitment, and they have been in a war of words since late June. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which brokered the peace talks, issued a statement in Grozny today warning that fighting could spread.

According to Interfax, the OSCE statement said that despite the ceasefire agreements, the "political settlement in Chechnya has practically been suspended." However, the organization's chief representative in Chechnya, Tim Guldimmann, said a new meeting between Chechen and Russian negotiators is still possible.

The cease-fire was an important factor in Russian President Boris Yeltsin's victory, since it pointed toward an end to the 19-month-old war, which has claimed at least 30,000 lives, most of them civilians. The swift degeneration of the truce into another armed confrontation raised hackles in the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, which voted today to ask Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to explain the surge in fighting.

Sergei Yushenkov, a member of the Duma's defense committee, called on Chernomyrdin, who is head of a special government commission on Chechnya, to explain why the government was making improper use of the army to punish the rebels. "I have to think it over," Chernomyrdin said of the Duma's request. Chernomyrdin told reporters while touring an art exhibit in Moscow that the situation is "under control" and that "there will be no war in Chechnya." Chernomyrdin said the Russian offensive was a response to "insolent" rebel commanders.

Alexander Lebed, Yeltsin's new security chief and a longtime critic of the war, blamed the rebels for the latest surge in fighting. Interfax quoted him as saying the responsibility is that of "Yandarbiyev and other leaders of armed gangs." Lebed is expected to visit Chechnya but said he would not do so until next week at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Yeltsin delivered a nationally televised speech from the Kremlin today after being certified as the official winner of the presidential contest. His inauguration has been set for Aug. 9 in the Kremlin's Cathedral Square.

Although his aides have predicted an imminent government shakeup, Yeltsin's address offered few clues to his second-term plans. He said "the reform course will continue," but he also said economic policy "requires serious correctives."

He added, "The main thing now is to impart a second wind to [industrial] production, to place orders with the enterprises and to give jobs to people." He also promised "full and timely payment of everything the

people have earned," a reference to months-overdue wages and pensions.

Yeltsin has not appeared in public since he became ill before the July 3 runoff election, but he spoke confidently and without any outward sign of illness.

In a separate address to ethnic Russians in former Soviet republics that are now independent, Yeltsin vowed to provide "permanent care and support from your homeland."

UNION MEMBERS DUES USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOKE. Madam Speaker, I think it is interesting with respect to my good friend and colleague who just spoke that in addressing the question as to why when the Members of his party controlled the House, the Senate and the White House during the 103d Congress, which was 2 years ago, they did not, if this was such an important initiative, undertake to in fact raise the minimum wage at that time. He just dismisses it very quickly and briefly by saying: Well, I am not interested in the past; I am only interested in now. I think that is unfortunate and predictable.

I want to address my comments today to the very hard-working rank and file union members of America whose dues are being used for political purposes and activities that they are probably both not aware of an almost undoubtedly do not agree with. Those are dues that should be put to work for those Members in the negotiation of labor contracts, in getting better working conditions, in getting higher wages, in getting better benefits packages and vacation plans. But they are in fact being used to further the political agenda of their labor bosses who are located not, for example, in Cleveland, OH, which I have the privilege of representing, but in Washington, DC.

What is happening is that through a mandatory payroll deduction scheme, union members dues are being used to fund a defamatory and demagogic attack on Members who have one fundamental problem as far as the unions are concerned. That is, as far as the Washington-based union bosses are concerned, and that is that there is an R next to their name. In other words, what this is really about is partisan politics. It is not about principles and the principles which different people believe in.

Mr. Speaker, let me give an example. There was a poll that was taken of over 1,000 union members about 6 or 8 weeks ago. One of the questions that was asked was, do you believe that the budget of the United States should be balanced and that we should have an amendment to the Constitution requiring a balanced budget? About 80 percent of the union members responded positively that we should. That is not surprising.

About 80 percent of all Americans believe that we ought to have an amend-

ment to the Constitution requiring a balanced budget. And yet the AFL-CIO bosses in Washington are opposed to a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. It is funny, I had union reps from Cleveland in my office yesterday. They were talking about the union bylaws. And one of the fellows said very clearly that the bylaws prohibit the union from spending more than it takes in. That is a perfectly reasonable policy which is obviously practiced by American families as well. Yet his leadership in Washington opposes a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, clearly in contravention of what the rank and file members want as well.

Mr. Speaker, I will give another example. The AFL-CIO bosses in Washington are opposed to a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, clearly in contravention of what the rank and file members want as well.

Mr. Speaker, I will give another example. The AFL-CIO bosses in Washington are opposed to a \$500 per child tax credit, and that would fall primarily to the benefit of working families, union families. And yet they are opposed to that \$500 per child tax credit although in polling the AFL-CIO members, the rank and file members are clearly in favor of it.

So here we have got a very similar situation to what is happening right now in a larger sense in America. That is that what we are trying to do with this Congress is send power out of Washington and back to local communities, because the problem that we have got is this massive centralization, bureaucratic centralization of power in Washington.

So one of the primary efforts besides reducing the size and scope of government as well as reducing the tax burden on the American people of this Congress has been to get more decisionmaking back to the local communities and the conviction that you are going to get better decisionmaking process about government.

The same needs to be done with respect to the unions as well. We need to get that power, the unions need to take that power out of Washington and back to their locals.

UNIONS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RIGGS. Madam Speaker, I wanted to follow up on the gentleman from Ohio's comments. I think he makes a very, very important point regarding the unbelievably misleading tactics that are being used by the big labor bosses back here in Washington, DC, in what I think is a desperate and transparent attempt to help the Democratic minority in the Congress regain control of this institution. I think it is very telling and very significant because it is a clear indication of just

how out of touch they are with average working Americans, the very people that they purport to represent.

Let me cite some basic statistical information at the beginning of my remarks. I think we know that the labor bosses here in Washington are opposed to fundamental reforms, the most significant changes that we have been trying to make back here in Washington over the last year and a half, since the Republican Party became the majority party in both the House of Representatives and in the Senate.

These labor bosses, again, I am not talking about rank and file working men and women, but the labor bosses back here in Washington who have become the core constituency of the national Democratic Party and almost the campaign arm of the national Democratic Party. These labor bosses here in Washington are opposed to cutting spending to balance the Federal budget. We all know that we need to put our fiscal house in order. We all know that we need to balance the Federal budget to really preserve the future of our kids and our grandkids and to give them a future with more hope and opportunity than we have enjoyed.

I think it is important to remember the legacy that we do not inherit the world from our parents. We borrow it from our children. We are obligated to create a more promising future for our children and future generations. Yet those labor bosses are opposed to cutting Federal spending to balance the Federal budget, something that would, by virtue of simply bringing Federal revenues and expenditures into line, lower interest rates in this country and produce long-term economic benefits for every single American family and business.

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Now, why are they opposed to cutting spending to balance the Federal budget? Well, because the only sector, the only segment, of the union activity that has been growing in recent years is Government employees. In fact, union membership in the public sector has been increasing while union membership in the private sector has been declining over the last several years. So they are opposed to cutting Federal spending to balance the budget because that means that we may have to eliminate a certain number of positions, governmental employee positions, as we go about the process of consolidating and streamlining the Federal Government and eliminating those agencies which are duplicative in nature or which duplicate a function better performed or currently performed by State or local government.

These labor bosses are also opposed to welfare reform. They are opposed to tax cuts for families with children. But what makes their opposition so, I think, significant is that they are opposing the very changes that their own members want.

A recent poll of union members in America indicated that 82 percent of