

global war against terrorism demands that we work with many governments willing to help. In building these partnerships, it is our moral duty and in our national interest to advance democratic principles.

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STOPPING THE ROT—USING WESTERN
INFLUENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

CENTRAL ASIA: DEMOCRACY AND THE SPORT OF
GEOPOLITICS

On HIS tour this week of Central Asia, Donald Rumsfeld, America's defense secretary, thanked the region's leaders warmly for their contribution to the war in Afghanistan. They had opened up their roads, railways, air corridors and military bases. And they had been only too happy to help. The Taliban and the armed Islamists they spawned had menaced each one of these fragile new states. Yet fostering new military relationships, important as these are, should not be the only aim of western policy. Development and better government are needed too.

Kazakhstan, for example, looks set to become one of the world's top oil producers. Yet evidence from other places suggests that oil money can badly distort an economy as it travels the short distance between western buyers and the offshore bank accounts of cynical rulers. Outsiders can help guard against that danger by keeping up pressure in these former outposts of Soviet rule for more open societies, where the strains of wrenching change can be absorbed by a healthy degree of press freedom and political debate.

Instead, in Kazakhstan and in Kirgizstan, the two most committed until recently to market economics and multi-party democracy, there have been arbitrary arrests and a crackdown on the independent media. Meanwhile Uzbekistan, which aspires to be the regional cop, has always had an authoritarian tinge. No bad thing, some outsiders would say, when there are unruly borders to guard and a real threat from Islamist extremists. But leaders in all three places have clearly taken their new-found strategic importance as an opportunity to turn the screws on dissenters.

Meanwhile Tajikistan and Turkmenistan offer cautionary tales of the trouble that could infect the whole area if the outside world turns a blind eye. For most of its first decade of independence, Tajikistan was mired in a drug-fueled civil war that still has disastrous effects: Tajiks play a key role in transporting Afghan heroin to Europe. In Turkmenistan, a sterile personality cult has fostered poverty and human-rights abuses; the country at one point flirted with the Taliban, and has failed to exploit or market its huge gas reserves effectively.

Tempting as it might sometimes seem for western governments to shrug off Central Asia's creeping, authoritarianism as a price worth paying in the bigger geopolitical and financial game, that would be short-sighted—for pragmatic reasons as well as for moral ones. Tyrannies with unhappy subjects are unlikely to be reliable economic or strategic partners. Where people conclude—as some already have—that America and its allies care about nothing except oil revenues and military bases, the West can come to seem the source of their travails, and they become easy converts to extremism. Once anti-western sentiment has taken hold, it can then be cynically exploited by local despots (even those with cosy relationships with the West) to distract attention from their own misdeeds.

What can western governments do? They cannot turn the Region's leaders into paragons of democracy. Heavy-handed pressure,

applied to tough rulers still jealous of their newly-won independence, can be counter-productive.

Western governments would do better to give a helping hand to those courageous individuals who are working to keep the flame of independent thought flickering. Often the best deliverers of such help are not embassies or visiting politicians, but non-governmental agencies. Tiny amounts of money—a printing press here, an internet-linked computer there—can make the difference between survival or extinction for a local party or lobby group.

ENCOURAGEMENT WHERE IT COUNTS

To advocates of cold realism in foreign policy, such concerns may smack of sentimentalism. As long as Central Asia's rulers open their airfields to western military planes and their oilfields to western corporations, does it matter very much if they lock up their rivals or use electrodes on their dissidents?

Such arguments were once used to justify America's unconditional support for the monarchy in Iran. When opposition there finally burst into the open, it was not inspired by western models but was driven by anti-western rage. These days technology makes it even harder to maintain repressive regimes and stamp down dissent. Ideas cross frontiers more easily, no matter how hard tyrants try to prevent this. Another good reason for western governments not to collude with creeping authoritarianism in Central Asia, but to use their influence to stop the rot.

TRIBUTE TO MAX AND OLGA
VENZOR ON THEIR 50TH WED-
DING ANNIVERSARY

HON. SILVESTRE REYES

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the sacrament of marriage by paying tribute to two of my constituents who will be celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary over the upcoming Thanksgiving weekend. Margarito and Olga Venzor have been dedicated to each other for fifty years and we should all be inspired to know that marriage, in this day and age, is very much alive and well. They were married in 1952 and never looked back.

Max and Olga have been examples to their community, church, and family. They have been examples of love, dedication, and sacrifice. They are the parents to eight wonderful and beautiful children: Danny, David, Lionel, Lilly, Rose, Chris, Becky and Bertie. They also have and cherish 17 grandchildren. I won't even attempt to name them. I also hear that they will be adding another grandchild to their *familia* in the Spring. Max and Olga are also blessed to have two great grandchildren. As a new grandfather myself, and also coming from a large family, I know what a blessing it is and a true gift from God to be surrounded by loved ones.

One of the things that has remained constant over the past 50 years, has been the love and dedication that has been felt and shown between Max and Olga. Even when times got tough, as they often did, they were able to keep their marriage strong and their commitment to each other and their children

solid. They sacrificed of themselves for each other and truly lived up to their marriage vows. They sacrificed to make sure that their kids and each other were educated, and clothed, and fed, and happy, and nourished, and safe, and loved. These things, in the grand scheme of things, are the most important successes in life. They have shared life's joys and tragedies together and have been with each other through each other's accomplishments, trials and tribulations. They have shared each other's aspirations, disappointments, fears, and challenges. They have literally grown up together and have beautifully grown old with one another. What a wonderful, spiritual blessing.

I think the place where Max and Olga find themselves as they approach their 50th Wedding Anniversary, is the place and the situation where we all want to be and what so many married couples aspire to achieve. Fifty years of marriage! One of the keys to their success has been keeping God at the center of their marriage, relationship, and family. God is truly the glue that holds the sacred institution of marriage together and Max and Olga are witness to this fact. I know that the Catholic Church continues to be a central and important part of their lives. In fact, for many years, they have served as Eucharistic lay ministers to the family of Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, in El Paso, Texas.

When it really comes down to it, there is no greater accomplishment in life than to have loved fully, your spouse, your children, your God, and your country. Max and Olga have certainly done just that and I applaud them on their 50th Wedding Anniversary. I wish them great happiness, peace, and joy in the upcoming years.

A PROCLAMATION IN MEMORY OF
JOHN E. PLATT

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I hereby offer my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of John E. Platt, who passed away September 24, 2002. John Platt was born on July 11, 1920, in Eastern Ohio. Mr. Platt was a devoted family man. He and his wife, Margeret Esther Morse, raised 5 children and were the proud grandparents of 19 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

Mr. Platt served our country as a member of both the Navy and the Air Force. For his service as a World War II and Korean War veteran, we owe him a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. Following retirement from the armed forces, Mr. Platt generously gave of his time teaching high school history and serving as Principal in the Carrollton Exempted School District. His devotion to the community was impeccable, being a dedicated patriot through his 25 year membership in the VFW and Voice of Democracy Program, as well as his work for the Lions International, POW-MIA's, and the American Legion. He was also involved throughout his life with the Chestnut Ridge United Methodist Church.

Mr. Platt will certainly be remembered by all those who knew him for his personal sacrifices of time and energy to family, friends, and community. His understanding and caring shown

to others will stand as a monument to a truly fine person. His life and love gave joy to all who knew him.

While I understand that words cannot express our grief at this most trying of times, I offer this token of profound sympathy to the family and friends of John E. Platt.

VERIZON LITERACY CHAMPION

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the efforts of Verizon, its employees and its spokespeople who are working to tackle the problem of illiteracy. Last week, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Education Reform held a hearing on "Literacy Partnerships that Work." The hearing featured actor James Earl Jones and Verizon President and Chief Executive Officer Ivan Seidenberg, testifying on Verizon's efforts to improve literacy in America.

Describing his lifelong love of reading, Verizon spokesman and actor James Earl Jones remarked on how, "All of us—lawmakers, reading teachers and tutors, corporate philanthropists, educators, and literacy volunteers—all of us have an important and necessary role addressing this issue."

Testifying about his company's involvement in literacy efforts, Ivan Seidenberg, the President and CEO of Verizon, described how his company's mission is "highly focused." "We work to raise public awareness, create partnerships, and generate financial support for local and national literacy organizations so they can do their jobs more effectively. To use a communications metaphor, we believe that—through our scale, scope, and technology—we can increase the 'bandwidth' of the system and enable more learning to be delivered to more people, more effectively."

For Verizon there is a strategic link between literacy and the future business success of the Nation's largest communications company with upwards of 240,000 employees in technically demanding jobs.

However, it's more than just for their future employees. "Verizon's communications networks comprise a unique platform for sharing resources and forming partnerships," Seidenberg said. "Verizon's enormously committed employees and retirees have a long heritage of volunteerism and community involvement. And more than a decade's worth of commitment to the issue of literacy has given the company both the knowledge and the relationships with the literacy community to be effective."

Also attending the Hearing as Verizon Literacy Champions were CBS Sportscaster Dick Enberg, Mike Kohn, 2002 Olympic Bronze Medal Bobsled Athlete, Chris Thorpe 2002 Olympic Bronze Medal Luge Athlete and Lee Ann Parsley, a resident from the great State of Ohio, the 2002 Olympic Silver Medal winner in the Women's Skeleton competition. All of these distinguished celebrities attended to demonstrate their great commitment, as well as Verizon's commitment, to providing positive role models in the fight for literacy.

Mr. Jones, in his compelling personal testimony, said that: "In my family, we say the

love of reading and book learning is in our bone memory." Jones' great-great grandparents Brice and Parthenia Connolly, "passed on their love of reading to my great-grandfather, Wyatt, who owned a modest library, and encouraged his family to read his books and to revere them."

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the legacies we hope to leave with H.R. 1, "The Leave No Child Behind Act," to build reading and book learning into the "bone memory" of all Americans. In these days when there is so much talk about Corporate Accountability, it is a pleasure to recognize Verizon for the positive work they are doing to help the citizens of our Country.

SANDY MINTZ' TESTIMONY ON AUTISM AND CHILD VACCINATIONS

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 16, 2002

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I call the attention of my colleagues to an excellent statement recently made before a hearing of the Committee on Government Reform dealing with the issue of child vaccinations. The statement was made by Ms. Sandy Mintz of Anchorage, Alaska. For over a decade, Ms. Mintz has been a prominent and forceful advocate for an informed vaccination process and for permitting parents everywhere to have the right, as they do in my home state of California, to decide whether or not vaccination is the best option for their child.

Although Ms. Mintz' statement will be published in the hearing record, it will be some time before it is available to my colleagues, and her testimony is of such interest that I ask that it be put in the RECORD so that it will be more broadly and more quickly available for those who have an interest in the health and well-being of our children.

Mr. Speaker, in her testimony, Ms. Mintz posed a vital, if uncomfortable, question: in some cases, could vaccinating our children actually be doing them more harm than good? Specifically, she was asking whether the National Institutes of Health had investigated the link between child vaccinations and autism. She has found evidence that there may, in fact, be a causal link between childhood vaccinations and autism. The witness from the NIH was not aware of any study exploring any link between those two phenomena. Given the vital relevance of this matter to the health of our nation's children, it would be prudent for the NIH to conduct such a study.

At the crux of this debate lie two competing values, which must always be kept in balance: on the one hand, the right of parents to determine what is best for their children, and on the other the need of society at large to protect itself from a common threat, in this instance the threat of deadly communicable diseases. But it is more than an example of the classic tension between the rights of the individual and those of society, because the issue at hand is one we all care so deeply about—the issue of our children's safety. We would all like to inoculate our children against every disease possible, and mandatory childhood inoculations may indeed be the soundest policy choice for our state governments.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the question raised in Ms. Mintz' testimony needs to be dealt with, because our government should not administer a cure that is worse than the disease. We must first investigate whether vaccinations cause autism in children before we can continue to require them of our children. In the meantime, I believe it would be prudent to allow parents to choose not to vaccinate their children, as is permitted in my home state of California. Again, I thank Ms. Mintz for her bold and illuminating testimony before the Committee on Government Reform.

THE AUTISM EPIDEMIC—IS THE NIH AND CDC RESPONSE ADEQUATE?

Mr. SHAYS. Dr. Foote and Dr. Boyle, let me just say it is our intention to let you get out pretty soon. You haven't had a break or anything. Do you have 20 more minutes in you? Are you OK?

I am going to do something that may seem a little unusual, and I may have to just cut it off if it is not a good idea. But, Dr. Foote and Dr. Boyle, if you can trust me in terms of my ability to control a meeting, it is not lost on me that we have a lot of people in the audience who have a keen direct interest. There may be a question or two that none of us on the panel here have asked that we should have. I am going to ask if there is someone in the audience who may have a question that says we should have addressed this. I will allow you to stand up and tell the committee, and then we may choose, our committee may choose to ask that question.

My motivation is that it would be a shame to have people leave without you having the opportunity to respond and maybe clear something up. Both of you have such a nice, friendly smile. I figured I could get away with it. So we are going to try it out, but I have the counsel—excuse me, the minority counsel would like to ask you a few questions, the majority professional staff would just like to ask a few more, and then I am going to just throw it out to the audience, pick two or three of you and ask you to stand and tell me if there is a question you think we should have asked, loud enough so I can repeat it to our witnesses. . . .

Mr. SHAYS. Now let me state what I would like to do. I would like let our witnesses leave soon. I would like to just say that this is a hearing of the House of Representatives, of Congress, so the decorum needs to be done well.

I am going to first ask how many people would like to ask the question. I am going to invite five people to take each of those five seats. I am going to invite you, Ma'am, in the front row to come up to that seat up there, yes. I am going to invite you in the very back to come up, the very back there. I am going to invite you, sir, to come up. I am going to invite you, Ma'am, in the middle, and I am going to invite you in the very back there.

I am going to have you each take a seat. What I am going to invite each of you to do, the committee is going to invite each of you, you are just going to go down and you are going to identify your name, as you ask the question, where you live. If you have a loved one who is impacted, we are happy to have you share the name of your child, but this is primarily for an opportunity to ask a question. We will just see how it goes.

OK?

You all are nice—thank you—to let us do this.

Just turn the mic on, start at the very end, and ask your question.

Ms. MINTZ. Hi. My name is Sandy Mintz. I am from Anchorage, AK. I am lucky enough not to have a child who has been injured by a vaccine.