

**Statement of the Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin  
Co-Chairman  
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**Hearing: “LOOKING AHEAD TO THE  
MEDVEDEV ADMINISTRATION”**

**May 8, 2008**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, and colleagues. Welcome to this hearing of the Helsinki Commission entitled “Looking Ahead to the Medvedev Administration.”

Yesterday, Mr. Dmitri Medvedev was sworn in as the third President of the Russian Federation. His first official act was to appoint his predecessor, Vladimir Putin, as Prime Minister.

It is expected that Mr. Medvedev will continue Mr. Putin's policies, at least in the foreseeable future. However, Mr. Medvedev is younger and reportedly somewhat more tolerant than Mr. Putin of dissenting opinions. At some point, he may decide to go his own way.

Under Mr. Putin's eight-year leadership, Russia revived its economy and achieved relative social stability. However, the Putin government also restricted civil liberties, exerted pressure on the media, and showed a zeal for suppressing the slightest political opposition.

Beyond its borders, Moscow has adopted a more muscular, if, in most cases, rhetorical, foreign policy that frequently challenges the United States and alarms our energy-challenged European allies. In its immediate environs, Moscow has tried to intimidate those of its neighbors considered insufficiently acquiescent toward its interests.

As a result, relations between our two countries have suffered deep fissures along a multitude of fault lines: Kosovo, NATO expansion, OSCE, human rights, to name but a few; and now the volatile situation in Georgia. Parenthetically, I would suggest that our moral authority to criticize Russia, or any other country, for human rights violations has not been helped by some of the decisions that have emanated from the White House and the Justice Department.

However, it is essential that the United States find a reasonable and mutually acceptable *modus vivendi* with Russia.

We need to build a bilateral relationship that preserves our liberty and security while not abdicating our principles as the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. Our relationship should be cooperative whenever possible, but we also need to y criticize and challenge when necessary. And we should be prepared to defend or even change our position if the occasion calls for it.

Our witnesses today are uniquely qualified to address the issues I've raised today. **Acting Undersecretary of State Daniel Fried** will begin, after which I will have some questions. He will be followed on the second panel by:

■ **Dr. Celeste A. Wallander**, Visiting Associate Professor, Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies, Georgetown University

■ **Dr. Stephen Blank**, MacArthur Professor of National Security Affairs, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, and

■ **Dr. David Foglesong**, Associate Professor, Department of History, Rutgers University

We look forward to their presentations.