

# The Situation in Dagastan



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**Briefing of the  
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COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE,  
WASHINGTON DC.

The briefing was held at 9:45 a.m. in Room 2255, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C., Ambassador William H. Courtney, Senior Advisor of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating.

Amb. Courtney. Good morning. We apologize for the change of the briefing from yesterday afternoon until today. The decision was made based on weather predictions.

Unfortunately, Representative Christopher Smith cannot be here this morning, but he does have a prepared statement. I will read this statement as his statement.

“Good morning, ladies and gentleman. I am Representative Christopher Smith, Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. On behalf of myself and Commission Co-Chairman Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, it is my pleasure to welcome you today to this briefing on the current conflict in Dagestan. The Commission frequently holds briefings on issues that affect human rights, democracy, and security in the participating states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We thank you for your patience as weather forced a delay of this briefing until today. We regret that due to the weather situation, two others of our invited guests, Mr. Enders Winbush and Dr. Rajan Menon, are unable to attend today. We hope that in the future we will be able to avail ourselves of their expertise.

“Three-and-a-half years after Chechen irregulars defeated the Russian army and secured a substantial degree of de facto independence for Chechnya, Russia again faces a security challenge in the North Caucasus. Fighting has erupted in Dagestan, Chechnya’s neighbor to the east. Massive unemployment and rampant crime and corruption have blighted the region. Now Dagestan faces a military threat from Islamic Wahhabi militants from Chechnya. They have staged incursions into Dagestan, a multi-ethnic region heretofore known for not challenging Moscow’s authority.

“At first, Moscow claimed to have repelled the intruders, but these boasts proved premature. The fighting has dragged on, featuring pitched battles and Russian aerial bombardments. In a tragedy that reflects military and strategic ineptitude, Russian aircraft have also bombed Wahhabi-controlled villages in another part of Dagestan that were neither involved in the conflict nor posed a military challenge to central authority.

“The most recent reports have the guerrillas withdrawing back to Chechnya, but it would be difficult to believe that this is the end of it. When Moscow was reeling from its war in Chechnya, it allowed the OSCE to get involved. Through creative and intrepid work, the OSCE mission to Chechnya helped broker the important cease-fire and withdrawal. Perhaps there is a role the OSCE can play to help achieve peace in Dagestan if all sides are willing to accept it.

“Meanwhile, four unexplained bomb blasts within 10 days in Moscow and another city in Russia have taken nearly 300 innocent lives. Russian authorities have blamed Chechen militants. Whoever is guilty, this terrorism is abominable and cowardly. The innocent victims and their loved ones deserve our sympathy. The culprits ought to be brought to justice. We note, however, news reports that Russia’s interior minister claims police have detained more than 11,000 suspects as part of a massive security sweep. This kind of dragnet operation raises concerns about the application of due process and the guarantees of internationally-accepted human rights in Russia.

“Since 1993 in Moscow, persons from the Caucasus have been systematically targeted by Mayor Luzhkov’s police for harassment and eviction from the city. Clearly, this is a violation of OSCE human rights commitments and Russia’s own laws on residency permits. Such discrimination can lead to further tensions, not ameliorate them.

“Who are the combatants in Dagestan and what are their aims? Why is the region such a volatile area? Does Moscow have a coherent broad-based strategy for achieving peace and prosperity in the region? Or is Moscow reaping the whirlwind of its antagonism towards Chechnya and its neglect of Dagestan? What are the implications for the wider region and for Russia? Are U.S. interests involved?

“Our guests today are particularly qualified to address these questions on Dagestan and the Caucasus region. Dr. Robert Bruce Ware, from the Department of Philosophical Studies at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, has written several studies in Dagestan and recently authored *Ethnic Pluralism and Political Stability in Dagestan*.

“Dr. Zulfia Kisrieva-Ware is a native of Dagestan, where she was a practicing physician. She has just returned this week from a visit to Dagestan.”

The Commission staff advisor for Russia, John Finerty, will also make comments and answer questions.

Dr. Ware?

Dr. Ware. Thank you very much, Ambassador Courtney. I have a written statement which I wish to submit; but for the purpose of this proceeding, I will be reading the opening paragraph, the concluding paragraphs, and then merely condensing the body of the statement simply to provide a basis for any subsequent questions that you may wish to pose.

It is my privilege this morning to tell you about a people who, having grown accustomed to the harshest of deprivations, are now engaged in a life and death struggle. Having sustained the stresses of democratic transition and economic collapse, the people of Dagestan are now fighting against a well-financed foreign invasion. The outcome of their struggle will affect international security and the global economy throughout the next century, with extensive repercussions for Europe and the United States.

They are desperately in need of support, some of which can come only from the West, and they are imminently deserving of Western assistance. Indeed, Dagestan is essentially the front of a war that the United States is already fighting elsewhere in the world.

The statement goes on to provide a bit of the historical background to the current conflict and to explain a little about the nature of the political system in Dagestan. I’ll just allude to that very briefly in these opening comments.

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Dagestan has an extraordinary democratic system that is not only absolutely unique but has been quite successful since its constitutional birth in 1994. As I believe everybody probably knows at this point, Dagestan is distinguished not only by its ethnic diversity but also by conditions of economic deprivation.

There are 34 different ethno-linguistic groups in Dagestan in a total population of about 2 million people. The territory is approximately the size of Maryland.

Dagestan is traditionally Russia's poorest republic. The situation has only gotten worse since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the onset of the Chechen war. Indeed, Dagestan was virtually blockaded between 1994 and 1996. There was very little going in and out of Dagestan in that period. The southern border with Azerbaijan was closed. Dagestan was cut off even from telephone and postal communication. Since then, Dagestan has remained relatively isolated.

As a result of all of these conditions, unemployment in Dagestan is now around 80 percent. So Dagestan, in other words, is operating in conditions of virtually complete economic collapse.

Despite these difficulties, Dagestan has nevertheless put together a surprisingly resilient political system that has provided an over-arching political stability to the republic. In other words, given virtually complete economic collapse, given a wide variety of social problems, there is nevertheless a political stability which holds Dagestan together overall.

I will say just a little about what these institutions are like, because they are absolutely extraordinary. As a political scientist, I can tell you that they are in many ways unique, and they are extremely interesting. But I'll leave any detailed information for any questions that you may wish to ask.

First of all, the Dagestanis have a collegial executive body. It consists of representatives from each of its 14 principal ethnic groups, with a constitutionally-mandated rotating chair. Now that chair has not rotated yet. The current Dargin ethnic chair of this executive body, called the State Council, has not yielded the chair and has maneuvered through constitutional and legislative mechanisms to retain his position.

Nevertheless, the State Council underwent its second election in 1998 under conditions that were characterized by a distinctive lack of violence and electoral irregularity. There was not much of either of those.

The legislative body in Dagestan is known as the People's Assembly, 121 representatives who are democratically elected. The Dagestanis have engineered the proportional representation of this body so precisely that the different ethnic groups are represented within the People's Assembly to within a tenth of a percentage point of their representation in the population as a whole.

In other words, they have been very careful to ensure that the representation of ethnic groups within the legislative body almost precisely mirrors that in the population as a whole. It's really an extraordinary achievement. Outside on the table, I have a paper that details the electoral arrangements that they used to get this kind of precise representation.

There is also great attention given to proportionate representation of the ethnic groups in ministry positions that is, in positions in the government. Again, this involves very elaborate and very interesting procedures that they need to go through to maintain this kind of

an ethnic balance.

You can't replace just a single minister in Dagestan. If anyone wants to retire, you have got to replace a whole 'packet' or group of ministers together in order to retain the same kind

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of an ethnic balance. They have gotten very good at this.

So I want to emphasize that it's not only a democratic system, but it is an extraordinary system. It's in many ways unique. It operates and sustains itself under conditions that are extreme, even for the region. Until the recent invasion, democratic political stability in Dagestan exceeded that of many of neighboring republics that were operating under far less harsh conditions.

I would just want to add to that before I move on from the political system that in March of this year, the Second People's Assembly was elected: 121 representatives in about 1,300 polling places that saw virtually no violence and very few electoral irregularities. When electoral irregularities did occur and there were about 6 out of these 1,300 polling places there were observers from both sides to document the irregularities, and the irregularities were made public and quickly investigated by appropriate authorities.

So it was an amazingly good election, and indicative of a growing democratic culture in Dagestan, despite as I say, overwhelmingly harsh conditions.

I will leave the political system there for just a moment in order to keep my remarks brief. We can come back to it in questions. But I wanted to say a little about the nature of the intra-Islamic religious schism that's been developing in Dagestan that is at least marginally behind the conflict that we're now seeing.

Dagestan is about 90 percent Islamic. Ninety percent of the Dagestanis are Islamic either by practice or by heritage. The state is certainly secular. It is not an Islamic state. The society is secular in that it is a highly tolerant society, not only of ethnic differences but of religious differences.

Amazingly, for an Islamic society, the small two percent Jewish population in Dagestan is afforded all of the same opportunities and privileges for political participation and all the same rights as any other ethnic group. In other words, the Jews in Dagestan who have their own ethnic territory just like all of the other ethnic groups in Dagestan are treated like any other ethnic group and accorded all the same rights and privileges. So the issue of any kind of Islamic-Jewish tension in Dagestan is avoided simply by the ethnic arrangements that are already in place to handle all of the other differences.

While I am mentioning that, I shouldn't overlook the fact that there's an extraordinary amount of sexual equality in Dagestan. Not only are women represented on the top executive body (the State Council) and top ministerial positions, but, indeed, seven seats were set aside in the People's Assembly for women apart from any other seats that women might happen to win. This was challenged in the Constitutional Court before the last election of the People's Assembly in March. When the Constitutional Court ruled that these seven electoral districts should be open to male candidates, the electorate was so incensed that they elected women to six of those seven seats despite the ruling of the court.

So there is a remarkable amount of political stability. My wife and I were discussing

this just the other day. I said it approximates sexual equality. She said, no, there is sexual equality in Dagestan. So I think that's very important.

This is because the Islamic schism (that I am coming to) has a lot to do with the role of women in Dagestan. So Dagestan is 90 percent Islamic, it's 8 percent Orthodox Christian, 2 percent Jewish. Most Moslems in Dagestan are traditionally moderate in their practice. Dagestanis tend to be hard drinking, for example. There is not an acceptance of Islamic scriptures on alcohol. Certainly, as I say, we see a very unusual amount of sexual equality in Dagestan for a society that is largely Islamic.

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Most Moslems in Dagestan who would describe themselves as true believers receive spiritual direction from the spiritual board of Moslems in Dagestan described usually by the initials DUMD. The DUMD has close ties to the political establishment in Dagestan. They are traditionally mild and moderate.

The second group of Moslems in Dagestan is the Sufi Tariqat system of 15 Islamic brotherhoods, each operating under the leadership of a sheik. The Tariqat tends to be very scholarly and is responsible for the rapid growth of high Islam in Dagestan, associated with the foundation of Islamic educational institutions. The Tariqat emphasizes high moral principles. They emphasize principles of toleration. They tend not to have a very direct political involvement. It's more of a scholarly group in some ways. They are more a monastic group, perhaps, than a group with a well-defined political agenda.

Now, just since 1990, there has also been the growth in Dagestan of a third Islamic group who have come to be known popularly as Wahhabis. The Wahhabis themselves reject this title. They refer to themselves by names like "Muslims of the dmammam" or "Pure Islamists." But since they are commonly called Wahhabis, I am going to stick to that name in this proceeding.

Wahhabism began in the 18th century in Saudi Arabia. It first turned up in the Soviet Union during the perestroika period in Tajikistan, where there was residing at that time a Dagestani Avar who brought Wahhabism to Dagestan.

It has grown rapidly in Dagestan, although by March only 3 percent of the Dagestanis were Wahhabis. Wahhabism, I have to say at the outset, responds to very clear Dagestani concerns about political corruption and social and economic and moral decay. In other words, the puritanism and the fundamentalism that the Wahhabis bring strikes a chord with people who are concerned about the excesses of the modernization process that Dagestan has been undergoing. Wahhabism in some ways offers people a kind of moral anchor.

It is important to emphasize that Wahhabism is a foreign import. It is not a home-grown Dagestani ideology by any means. Indeed, the puritanism of the Wahhabis is foreign and in many ways offensive to the Dagestanis. The fully veiled women, for example, are completely out of keeping with the kind of sexual equality and openness that characterized Dagestani life.

So for most Dagestanis, Wahhabism is not only foreign but very threatening. This has resulted in a polarization within the Islamic community in Dagestan. Whenever a few members of a Dagestani village become Wahhabis, there is suddenly a dramatic polarization in the village that is usually followed by a kind of a rural arms race. People begin

arming themselves for trouble. The Wahhabis attempt to impose their own approach to Islam on the other villagers. This is violently resisted by the traditional believers in the village. It splits families and it splits villages. It has tremendously polarized the population.

During the Chechen war, some Dagestani Wahhabis fought on the side of Chechen forces against Russian federal troops. After the conclusion of the conflict in 1996, these Dagestani Wahhabis returned to Dagestan with the goal of creating an Islamic state in Dagestan.

They brought with them a Jordanian import by the name of Emir Khattab, who was a field commander on the side of Chechnya in the Chechen conflict, who subsequently married a Dagestani woman and established a blood relationship. He became a leader of a connected group of villages outside the Dagestani city of Bujaksk, and, over a period of years through a series of violent incidents, established a Wahhabi base in this central region of Dagestan that came to be known as a "Little Chechnya."

Now the Dagestani government in Mahachkala worked and negotiated to try to manage these developments in a peaceful way for a long period of time. However, Emir Khattab opened a number of training camps in Chechnya, where he began not only to train Dagestani Wahhabis in military tactics but also to train a growing number of essentially foreign mercenaries—people from Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe—who came to these camps for training, often with considerable financial incentive.

That raises the question as to where the money comes from to finance the camps, to finance the invasion, and to finance the salary for foreign mercenaries. The answer to that is really quite alarming. First of all, as everybody is probably well aware, kidnapping has been a growth industry in Chechnya for several years. Hostages are taken and held for seven-figure ransoms if they are foreigners or six-figure ransoms if they are Russians or Dagestanis. Hundreds of Dagestanis have now been kidnapped and are held under horribly brutal conditions in Chechnya for ransom. A lot of money comes into Chechnya this way.

My wife will tell you in a few minutes about a videotape that she has seen produced by the Chechen kidnappers themselves and sent by way of extortion to the families of the kidnapped victims that shows the torture of these victims. In some cases, children—kidnapped victims as young as three years old—are graphically depicted in the video tape undergoing torture. So it is very disturbing indeed.

So the torture and ransom of hostages is one of the sources of funds for the invasion. Another source of funds for the invasion is the counterfeiting of 100 dollar bills. There is a growing flow of counterfeit 100 dollar bills out of Chechnya. It appears that there is either a sophisticated counterfeiting operation in Chechnya or that some of the hostages are being ransomed with counterfeit 100 dollar bills that are produced elsewhere outside of the Caucasus or both. But there is certainly a lot of counterfeit American money coming out of Chechnya.

Then finally, and perhaps most distressingly, the invasion is being financed by sources outside of the Caucasus, especially in the Persian Gulf. Organizations and individuals in Saudi Arabia, in Kuwait, in Iran, in Pakistan are contributing very large sums of money to support Khattab, to support the Chechens, and to support the invasion of Dagestan.

The problem is that since there is widespread unemployment in Chechnya, if you are

a young Chechen man, the best way to support yourself and your family is to go to Khattab's camps, get some training, get some arms, and then go fight in Dagestan. It's the local industry. As a result, the less committed Russian forces and the poorly armed Dagestani defenders are up against a very dangerous opponent, if for no other reason than the superior financing that opponent has.

What concerns me, moreover, is that since some of this money is certainly coming from Persian Gulf backers and since those same Persian Gulf societies clearly stand to profit from the instability, it worries me that there is more than a strictly religious motive behind the funding.

What I am saying is this. If you are an individual or an organization in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait who is backing the invasion of Dagestan right now financially, you would have to be naive not to have considered that instability in the Caucasus is going to prevent Western companies from realizing their investment in Caspian oil and bringing that Caspian oil to the West. In so far as the West continues to pull away from Caspian oil it's doing now it loses leverage in keeping the price of oil down, and OPEC is in a better position to keep the price of oil up.

So that whether or not you, as a Persian Gulf backer of the invasion of Dagestan, derive your wealth strictly from oil if you are in the construction business in Saudi Arabia, for example you are very likely to see a financial return on your construction business insofar as the price of oil remains high; and the people around you in Saudi Arabia have more money to spend on construction. I pick construction because Osama Bin Laden certainly had a role in the invasion of Dagestan and has certainly been active in Chechnya.

In conclusion, I would like to read a few remarks that I have. I realize that not everyone in the room is in the policy community here in Washington, but I think that there are policy implications for this. I will just conclude if you will indulge me a couple of extra minutes with some thoughts about where we in the West might take this.

Thus far, the fighting has produced 35,000 refugees. Many of these are being sheltered in light housing near the Caspian Sea, which is unsuitable for winter accommodation. It costs a dollar per day per refugee. The Dagestanis simply do not have that money.

It must be emphasized that no international relief agencies have been able to operate in Dagestan since 1997. This is because the Chechens were kidnapping and murdering their staffs. So Chechnya has cut Dagestan off in this respect. There is no international relief at all in Dagestan. The Chechens have seen to that by kidnapping and murdering the staff of the relief agencies until they were all forced to leave.

It must not be overlooked that several hundred Dagestanis have also been kidnapped by the Chechens as well. Yet Dagestan, which was traditionally Russia's poorest republic and now has 80 percent unemployment, is completely unable to deal with these problems caused by the current refugee crisis.

The Dagestanis are particularly deserving of Western support: in part because of their democratic political system operating in the spirit of moderation and tolerance; and they are deserving partly because their enemy is our enemy. The same forces that took American lives in Riyadh, Nairobi, and Dar es Salaam, are taking lives today in Dagestan. The Dagestanis are fighting back, but they need help.

1. The United States and its Western allies must clearly state that they support Russia's defense of its people and its borders against this terrorist invasion.
2. Apply diplomatic pressure upon Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan to persuade their citizens to stop financing the invasion.
3. Offer to assist Moscow in supplying light arms for Dagestani defenders.
4. Encourage international relief organizations such as the UNHCR, the Red Cross, and the World Food Program to renew their operation in Dagestan. This can be accomplished without sending foreigners into this dangerous region. All of these organizations previously employed and trained competent and reliable locals who would be capable of staffing basic operations with guidance from abroad.
5. Dagestan has established a bank account for refugee assistance which could receive Western funds if there were procedures to guarantee that these donations would reach the refugees.
6. Especially in the absence of such procedures, the United States must encourage and support grassroots assistance directly to reputable organizations in Dagestan. In other words, arrangements must be made for American organizations to work directly with their Dagestani counterparts to provide relief. For example, a truckload of medical supplies should be shipped directly to the Dagestan Medical Institute in Makhachkala. On my last visit, the institute was operating without lights due to its incapacity to pay the electric bill. I know the vice president of the institute to be a particularly reliable individual.
6. I propose that the U.S. Congress should help arrange funds to pay for his travel to the United States, where he would be hosted by an American hospital or medical school. The latter would then act to transfer medical supplies to the individual, who would accompany those supplies back to Dagestan.
8. Rescue teams and equipment and medical supplies should be provided to help the city of Moscow respond to terrorist attacks.
9. American intelligence agencies should coordinate with their Russian counterparts against Middle Eastern financiers and well-known international terrorists who are supporting this invasion. In particular, these agencies should follow the money. Much of those large sums that support the insurgents originate in societies that stand to profit from instability in the Caucasus. Increasingly, the West has been backing away from earlier investments in Caspian oil, particularly because the instability of the region renders the transportation of that oil risky and difficult.

Caspian oil reserves may not compare with those of the Persian Gulf countries; but because of the successful transportation of the former, that reduces the capacity of the latter to control the price of oil. Is it therefore merely coincidence that the invasion is being financed by residents of Persian Gulf societies that have acquired that wealth, whether directly or indirectly, through the sale of oil? Those who are financing the invasion would have to be naive to fail to appreciate that instability in the Caucasus will support the price of oil and financially benefit their societies.

Some Dagestanis have argued that a long series of destabilizing events including explosions, kidnappings, and decapitations have coincided with efforts by Western agencies and oil companies to conclude deals with their counterparts in the Caucasus. Such claims

invite responsible inquiry.

The war is likely to be long. A long war is likely not only to devastate Dagestan but to destabilize Russia. It is likely to radicalize Russian politics with serious consequences for the international community. The West cannot afford inaction.

Thank you.

Amb. Courtney. Thank you, Dr. Ware.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware, please.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. Thank you for your interest in Dagestan. I should say that I didn't prepare any written statement because I just came back from Dagestan, and I didn't know that this event was going to take place and that I would be invited.

Let me just give you some insight from Dagestan, how it looks from the perspective of Dagestani people. The disastrous experience of Chechnya after the Chechen war was a very bad example for Dagestan to pursue independence so-called independence from Russia. Their proclaimed goals, such as independence from Russia and a Shariat Islamic state, led to a total collapse of Chechnya economically and politically. They didn't create any institutions. Their president is just a nomination, which means nothing. Probably he has some power in Grozny, but he has no power to stop or to start anything on the border or within Chechnya.

It led also to the tremendous poverty of the Chechen people, the Chechen nation. As a result, we have all this anger which led to this extremism and fundamentalism and trying to find somebody who's guilty from the outside.

Dagestan, in contrast despite all the poverty, all the economic turmoil managed to

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create their own political system. They are the only subjects of Russian federation which created a parliamentary system. In the 3 consecutive referendums, they declined to have presidential government because it would mean that an individual of some certain ethnic group would have all the power. They understood it might be disastrous. Now we see what's going on in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and it would be even worse in Dagestan with this political system.

Dagestan strongly wishes to be with Russia, economically and politically. Dagestan prefers to be secular state. They think that fundamentalism and Islam is something alien for them. They accepted Islam in the 12th century in the form they have it now. They took it from Arabs, but they took it in their own form, which they called traditional Islam. They never accepted a Shariat State. They live by the law of Adat. It's just social agreement to live in peace.

In spite of religion, I should say, the Dagestanis always were very tolerant as Robert mentioned the situation of other denominations. Russians have their churches. It's not a very big population, but they have their own churches. The Jewish population is represented in organs of power. Dagestanis think of Russians, Jews, or Armenian, or Azerbaijani who live in Dagestan, as citizens of Dagestan.

Let me stress that Dagestan means "country of mountains." It's not about mountains what I want to say, it's that they gave the country their own name, its own name, even though everyone else in the Caucasus used their ethnic name for their republics or the institutions. In other words, Dagestan has no titular nationality.

The relationship of Dagestan with Chechnya was historically very difficult. Tension was growing after perestroika. Chechens were not very good neighbors to Dagestan. They robbed trains. They took hostages in exchange for something. They were kidnapping foreigners. They didn't touch any locals until all the foreigners left Dagestan. Since then, they started kidnapping Dagestani men until recently. Now they started kidnapping women and even children for ransom, for exchange for somebody who was captured in Moscow or other parts of Russia.

There are some problems with land between Dagestan and Chechnya. After Stalin's deportation of Chechens in 1944, part of Chechnya Aukhovskiy Raion was given to Dagestan. Now it's called Novolakskiy Raion. One ethnic group was moved to this raion: Laks. They started moving there. Now Chechnya wants this land back.

Dagestan didn't mind. Laks didn't mind. They think it's just, quite just. But there was agreement that there will be some villages built in another place where these people can move before giving up this land. These villages were not some money was given, but these villages never were built. Where is this money? Nobody knows.

Then at the same time the Chechens want to get this land back, but at the same time they don't want to give up land they were given after their return to Chechnya, their historical motherland. They got some land from Osetia (I'm not sure) and I think Ingushetia. They don't want to give up this land. They just demand land from Dagestan.

In the present situation, there are some Chechen Akkins who live in the territory of Dagestan who publicly state that they are on the side of Dagestan; but nobody knows this for certain.

In spite of the last events, the Dagestanis feel betrayed and very angry at Chechens because during the Chechen war the Dagestani people welcomed Chechen refugees. They helped them. They welcomed and accommodated up to 250,000 Chechens.

In addition to this, Dagestani government officials asked Moscow not to use Dagestani territory, Dagestani airports, and any part of Dagestan to start bombing Chechnya or to bring armed forces to Chechnya. They said it's no good. Even though Dagestan didn't support the war, didn't support Chechens because they thought that the war the independence of Chechnya wouldn't achieve anything, they (the Chechens) claim it will. They didn't let Russia use Dagestan.

Now we see that not only did Chechens take part in this invasion of Dagestan but they came to take the same villagers who welcomed their refugees; and they (the Chechens) don't do anything about these military camps where all the terrorists are trained.

So there's an increase of anti-Chechen sentiments in Dagestan. The Dagestanis demand weapons. They say Russians should leave Dagestan but not for the reasons which Chechens demanded the same, but because they don't want Russians to die on their land. They say give us the weapons and we will fight against Chechens ourselves.

The big problem was the position of Moscow, because they never believe there is any difference between any ethnic groups and nationalities on the Caucasus. They thought that there is no difference between Chechens and Dagestanis. So after the Chechen war, Dagestan barely got any support from Russia.

After this invasion, Moscow was very surprised that Dagestan has vastly supported them not only invited but supported them in this war.

Dagestanis don't accept the Islamic slogans of the war, because they understand well

that this is only ideology which serves some other goals of this military event in Dagestan. First of all, it's no secret they used mercenaries in the war. It was many times mentioned that Basayev received \$25 million for the operation. They say that these people used narcotics. As the refugees left, villagers said that first thing they do (terrorists do), they just take syringes and start using narcotics. They said all the houses are full with the syringes.

As probably many know that in Islam killing of other Muslims is one of the greatest wrongs or saying that they are not right Muslims or whatever they use. They kill they leave wounded in the fields. If it's hard to move them back to Chechnya, they just kill their own soldiers. They bring back to Chechnya only their own wounded and their own dead. Foreigners are usually buried not very deep; just covered with the earth. Dagestanis are left open on the ground.

Probably the goal is to show that Chechens don't take part in this invasion and there are Dagestanis. Dagestan is under threat; there's no question about it. The point is that this is international terrorism. This is not that this is Chechnya against Dagestan or something. These people involved people from any nation to do the job they want. There are people from Pakistan, many people from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Slavs, Ukrainians, and Middle Asians. Those blasts in Moscow and Volgograd it was said that they (the Chechens) usually pay money to Slavs to do all the job of planting terrorist bombs. They just pay for this. So we can easily say that this is international terrorism. Nothing to do either with Chechnya or with religion.

Dagestanis argue that religion couldn't be used here as a pretext because there are no conditions for Jihad. First of all, practicing of Islam is not prohibited, so there is nothing to fight for.

I have some numbers here. Now in Dagestan, 2,000 mosques were built or repaired. It's more than half of all mosques in Russian Federation. Before 1989, there were only 27 mosques in the territory of Dagestan. They opened 17 Islamic universities, 97 medreses, 27 schools, Islamic schools for more than 20,000 children. They have 3 Islamic newspapers published in 8 languages. They have their own place where they publish the publishers publish for these newspapers. Annually, 10,000 to 12,000 Muslims can go to Saudi Arabia for Haj. Nothing is prohibited. There are no conditions for Jihad.

The problem is not that Dagestanis didn't want to tolerate Wahhabis. Wahhabis aren't tolerant. They want to impose Wahhabism upon Dagestanis. Dagestani authorities went as far as to let them practically proclaim independence from Dagestan, after which they started being called "Little Chechnya" in Dagestan. But since they want to bring forcefully their own understanding of Islam on the Dagestani people, it's impossible for Dagestanis to accept.

Dagestanis are against the ethnic cleansing. They don't want to send back Russians or any other nationalities from Dagestan.

Refugees in Dagestan. There are approximately 30,000 to 35,000 refugees from these little villages. Maybe on the scale of amount it's not very much, but since sometimes one or two villages are the only place in the world where this little ethnic group lives let's say ethnic Avars they never let them come in. They protected their village themselves. Officially, they are Avars, but they are only 36,000 people of this ethnic group. Their language is unique. Nobody can speak their language. Even though they are called "Avars," they

don't understand the Avar language. They speak their own language.

So that could be disastrous not in terms of scale of the amount of refugees but that little ethnic groups can just become extinct. About videos I saw first on Dagestani TV and then it was repeated in Moscow TV program. They showed four episodes. Three of them were taken from the videos sent by kidnappers to the relatives of their victims just to show how bad the situation is if they won't pay for them.

The last one was about two little children: a girl aged five, a boy over three, not in the process of torturing, but the children will ask to show their heads in the back. There were some bald areas. So as these little kids say, they tortured, just pulled their hair slowly from their heads.

The first episode was just horrific. They showed a man who was talking about that they were captive Russians; I think they were captured somewhere. They gave names, only first names of guys, four or five names. He said so now they are going to execute me, so please just give money to them to free other guys. Next, they showed the process of decapitation. It certainly was shocking.

The second one was a short statement that they should give money. Then right in front of us, this man was asked to put his finger this way and it was shot. I know another the last American citizen, Mr. Gregg I know he lived in Dagestan for four years. I think he was a missionary. He was teaching in the Dagestani Pedagogical University. He was kidnapped. He spent, I think, nine months captured. He came back and is now in America. He came back without his index finger on the right hand. I don't know where he lives, but I just know him.

The third episode was about they showed two men laying down on the floor in some kind of dungeon, I think. There was water on the bottom; it's like a puddle of four to five inches of water. They just laid down there. Somebody from the top, I think they just beat them with some long stick or some kind of fork they had. They were saying something. It's impossible to describe.

They were covering faces of victims. Torturers were wearing masks. So this is about the videos.

These terroristic blasts in Bujaksk I think you all are informed very well on what's going on in Moscow. Moscow is certainly horrified. But the first blast was in Bujaksk, where they killed 64 people. The blast was in 10:00 in the evening. Among the 6423, so more than a third were children, 19 women and 13 military, officers, privates.

I don't know. Maybe some questions. I can answer any questions.

Amb. Courtney. Dr. Kisrieva-Ware, thank you for that informative and moving statement.

Mr. Finerty, would you like to make some opening comments?

Mr. Finerty. Thank you very much.

Actually, I'm more, after listening, interested in questions. I should add too that your statement, of course, will be distributed among the Members of Congress and the relevant committees here. So what you have to say will be read very well.

One thing that concerns me is that this commission has had the pleasure of speaking to some Chechens who have come some who have spoken publicly from various areas of Chechen life, who themselves have expressed to us their concern for the fact that many of their fellow countrymen are being attracted to this what appears to be religious militancy.

They have emphasized as you have alluded to in your statement that it's economic deprivation that drives people this way, that if the teachers are not being paid and there are no schools if your child can go to school in one of the religious schools, you will be attracted in that direction.

Which raises a question that was recently raised at a convocation with RFERL on the situation in the former Soviet Union. One of the speakers said that Russia is reaping the whirlwind here on this because according to the agreement with Chechnya following the war, Russia was supposed to help Chechnya economically. Chechnya saw very little of that aid. Consequently, you have this grinding poverty that drives people toward militancy.

Do you think that's a logical conclusion to make?

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. Yes, certainly, because politically we can talk they always bring some other reasons: oil or interest in pipeline, how it will go politically in Moscow. But I think in reality, we should say it's economic conditions in the Caucasus.

The war in Chechnya was disastrous from both sides. For Russian politics it was disastrous. For Chechen nation, demanding this independence was disastrous, since Moscow really thought that all Caucasians maybe didn't support Chechnya in the war but secretly wanted the same. They never helped after the war any of the republics of Caucasus.

There is no way to earn money. There is no way to support your families unless you are paid for doing something. So young men of Dagestan and Chechnya were interested in going to these military camps to be trained, fed, armed, respected. So it became a profession.

Dr. WARE. I think that the economic factor is the most important incentive for ordinary Chechens. But among the Chechen elite there is a steady progression towards Islamic fundamentalism, in part because of the power struggle that's occurring inside Chechnya. Appeals to Islam mean greater legitimacy. So there is a kind of an escalation of Islamic sentiment in Chechnya tending toward fundamentalism in an effort to acquire legitimacy.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. The same simpler, it's just power to elites to anger. There always will be some sort of ideology which will serve to this anger and some actions.

Amb. Courtney. Thank you.

Let's throw the discussion open for questions and comments.

Mr. Finerty. Unfortunately, we didn't get our stand-up mike. Could you identify yourself. If you care to, if you are with an organization or an agency, let us know.

Questioner. My name is David Hayes. I am with the State Department, Bureau of Research. Given the political stability that you have so well described and the Dagestan willingness to want to stay part of the Russian Federation, but colored by what you describe as Moscow's failure to differentiate between the many peoples of the Caucasus and therein that lack of trust under what conditions and what are the chances of a Dagestan militia, self-defense, home-defense force that Moscow could trust in serving its periphery security needs?

Dr. Ware. It's a really good question. Certainly the early stages of the conflict saw a contingent of about 350 Dagestani volunteers armed and sent out to fight against the insurgents. Evidently there was quite a bit of success. There were reports that they were

very successful in early skirmishes; and at one point, low on ammunition, there was a report that the volunteers had precipitated an avalanche down upon some of the insurgents.

There are a large number of Dagestanis who have presented themselves as willing to go out and fight, but the Russians have been very slow in arming them. My wife came back with the report that within the last couple of weeks, near the border area, 3,000 Dagestani volunteers have presented themselves willing to fight, and only 100 of them were actually furnished with weapons. So I think your point—the point that would seem to be implicit in your question is well taken, which is that Russia seems to be so afraid of Dagestanis eventually turning their guns against Russian federal troops that they are very slow to arm them. At least in my view, that is a policy error. It has to do with the kind of broad and often ignorant anti-Caucasian prejudices that are prevalent in northern Russia and in Moscow.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. I can say that not only Moscow is reluctant to place weapons in the hands of ordinary Dagestanis, but the Dagestani authorities don't want it either. Probably they have the same problem with thoughts of what in the future might happen after this. Who knows, maybe after the war these weapons will be turned against Dagestani authorities.

It's really very complicated to answer this question, because on the one hand Russians cannot protect Dagestan. There is a very difficult geographical situation. These mountains are more complicated than in Afghanistan. Only locals know where to go and where to close some little path, not letting the terrorists come or go back.

On the other hand, if Russia gives them weapons, it could be turned first of all against Chechnya. Chechen- Dagestani war could be very brutal.

Mr. Finerty. Another question? A lady back here, I see.

Questioner. My name is Hedieh Mirahmadi. I am General Secretary to the Islamic Supreme Council of America. Our chairman is actually the representative of the U.S. branch of Nahbandi Tariqat in America. I'm sure it's something you are probably familiar with from Dagestan. It has a very strong legacy in Dagestan, in the Caucasus for moderation and tolerance and peace in Islam and for traditional Islamic values.

We have fought very, very hard to improve the reputation of Islam in America because of the Wahhabi influence, not only going around across the world but here in America. It seems that the impression of Muslims as being geared more by the Wahhabi ideology than it is by traditional Islam.

In this effort, one of our focuses has been the regime of President Maskhadov. In his struggle against Russians, subsequent independence, he is also now facing this struggle of extremism. His people and the majority of Chechens—just like the Dagestanis—do not support the extremists. They do not support the Wahhabis. They don't want to see them in their country any more than the Dagestanis do.

For example, Basayev is an arch enemy of Maskhadov. It was him being kicked out of Chechnya up until being pushed up into Dagestan, because he had nowhere else to go in Chechnya.

Can you comment on because I would hate to think that the majority of people walk away thinking that Chechens, the majority of Chechens, are a bunch of militants too. Because I believe the Chechen people are struggling against poverty, struggling against dif-

faculty, as much as the Dagestanis are. I would hate for people to go away thinking that all of the Chechens are supporting this Wahhabi militant movement and the regime of President Maskhadov.

Dr. Ware. Yes. Thank you. I think that is an important qualification. I certainly endorse your opening remarks about the moderation and scholarly inclinations of the Tariqat Dagestan. Obviously, there have been some disagreements between the Tariqat in the DUMD in the past. But, on the other hand, many of the Tariqat sheiks are themselves members of the Board of Alims of the DUMD. They have an interlocking directorate, as it were. Certainly the Tariqat is a force for high moral principle and toleration in Dagestan. About the Chechens, I think that your point is quite well made. First of all, we won't forget that in 1998 there was a skirmish between the Dagestani Wahhabis based in Karamakhi and Chechen government forces. The Wahhabis bested the Chechen forces at that point. Certainly the schism between Maskhadov and Basayev is part of the power struggle within Chechnya that I was mentioning.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that there is a large number of Chechens perhaps most people in Chechnya; it's hard to say who are just as you say victims of this. Certainly, most Chechens crossing the border into Dagestan prior to the invasion were doing so for purposes of lawful employment. They were trading or whatever. Insofar as the border between Chechnya and Dagestan now looks as if it will be closed or at the very least highly problematic for many years to come, this cuts off the lawful livelihood of those Chechens who might have been gainfully employed in Dagestan. This will only increase the economic pressures inside Chechnya.

So certainly many Chechens should not be lumped together with the invaders and are being victimized themselves by current events.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. Thank you very much for saying what you said. I couldn't say it better, because actually this is the truth. Dagestanis will go against Chechnya is the worst scenario situation.

As we already said, it's economic struggle and the way to survive in modern Chechnya and Dagestan. It's not only Chechens because there are also Dagestanis involved, as I already said, official Alims in Dagestan; they always publish they constantly publish something and talk to their people saying that Islam is a religion of peace, love, and tolerance. These people who take the flag of extremism and Wahhabism just do the worst service for Islam possible. They just create the image of Islam as a synonym of terrorism. This is really very bad.

Mr. Finerty. Thank you.

Ben Tua, you had a question.

Questioner. I'm Ben Tua, a former member of the OSCE assistance group in Chechnya. My question concerns the Wahhabi. You said that they represent 3 percent of the population in Dagestan. Could you say something of the ethnic groups that these people come from? Also, what percentage of the Dagestani population is Chechen?

Dr. Ware. The percentage of Dagestanis that are Chechen Akkin that is, Chechen ethnics living inside the Dagestani border historically is 8 percent. They are accorded representation in the People's Assembly and in the executive body, the State Council, just like any other ethnic group. They have their own ethnic territory within Dagestan.

Wahhabism appeals particularly to the Dargin ethnic group and the Avar ethnic group

in Dagestan, two of the traditionally most powerful ethnic groups. The Avars are most numerous, with 27.7 percent. Because of their numbers and because of their honor-based culture, they tend to be very politically competitive and to have acquired a lot of political power.

The Dargins are the second largest group. They have in some respects a wealth-based culture that also renders them a potent political force inside Dagestan. Presently, the head of the State Council, Magomedov, and the mayor of Mahachkala, Amirov, are both Dargins.

Wahhabism probably appeals least to some of the southern Dagestani ethnic groups like the Lezgins and the Laks, who were in contact with an earlier cosmopolitanism in Baku before the revolution and are less oriented toward the East in terms of their value system and are more sympathetic to Western cultural values, if not Western political policies.

Obviously, the Russian population is not very fertile ground for Wahhabism inside of Dagestan either, nor, of course the 2 percent Jewish population.

So mostly Avars and Dargins and, of course, Chechen Akkins answer to the Wahhabist appeal.

Questioner. So it sounds as if you are talking about 50 percent or more?

Dr. Ware. No, because if you total those ethnic groups, yes, you are talking about more than 50 percent. But remember that it's not the entire Avar community nor the entire Dargin community that supports Wahhabism.

Questioner. I understand that.

Dr. Ware. Because of Avars and Dargins tend to be more oriented toward Eastern value systems and Islam than do say Russians or Lezgins, they are more fertile ground for the Wahhabi appeal; but this is very much an intra-Avar or an intra-Dargin problem. It is in Avar villages and in Dargin villages that you have the polarization between Wahhabis and traditionalists. By far the vast majority of Avars and Dargins are fiercely opposed to the Wahhabis.

Questioner. As are most of the Chechens.

Dr. Ware. Yes.

Questioner. In Chechnya.

Amb. Courtney. Other questions?

Questioner. I'll take another one. If I may ask you to maybe speak outside your areas of expertise, political science and medicine. The opening statement referred to the Russians activities in Chabanmakhi or Karamakhi as perhaps being an overreaction to a threat that was not military in nature.

Could you speak to that issue and speak to what the perception of that threat was in Dagestan, having recently returned? Was there a military threat coming from that conflict?

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. As far as I'm concerned, it wasn't an open threat when there were those invaders in Botlikhsky Raion, the first wave invasion. Officially, all the Wahhabis from Chabanmakhi and Karamakhi didn't support the invasion. Later Basayev complained that Dagestani Wahhabis didn't support it. So the Chechens claimed that the Dagestanis are cowards and weak and just sell out themselves. Officially they (the people of Karamakhi) didn't support the invaders.

So in the beginning there was this kind of sentiment that Russians didn't have to conquer these villages. But after they finally took those villages, they saw that there were enormous military fortifications in those villages. So it wasn't just peaceful. They were not peaceful villages. They were certainly preparing for something.

It was very hard to bomb these villages because they were hidden in some steel pipes between each and every house covered with concrete. So ordinary bombs didn't damage them. It was very seriously an engineering construction. They did prepare for something.

Plus, we know that there was some connection, that these villages there was a blood relationship with Khattab. Some other Wahhabis tried to hide there.

Dr. Ware. I tend to see them as a little more aggressive than that. In December of 1997, there was a raid on the 136th federal division based in Bujnaks that was widely attributed to raiders from Karamakhi. So it seems that they have been involved over a period of years in raids on federal troops, actually going out and looking for the fight.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. And they (the Wahhabis in Karamackhi and Chabanmakhi) were killing militia men, Dagestani militia men.

Dr. Ware. During the day of unrest, May 21st, 1998, when the Khatchalayevs stormed the White House in Makhachkala, the Karamakhi Wahhabis took advantage of the situation to storm the local police outpost the Dagestani police outpost in their village and take it over. When a punitive expedition was sent against them with some 150 police officers, the Wahhabis defeated them in a violent skirmish.

So I would see them as being more of an overt military threat. In some ways, Stepashin might have been a bit overly conciliatory when he went to visit them. I think that may have been perceived as weakness on the part of the authorities that in some ways emboldened the Wahhabis.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. And maybe one more point. Of course it would be better not to do this, but if you ask me about sentiments in Dagestan about this event, Dagestanis mostly support Russian attacks upon Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi.

Amb. Courtney. Questions?

Questioner. You referred to outside funding mostly from the Persian Gulf area. I wondered what evidence you have to support that assertion. Similarly, there have been reports of Osama Bin Laden being in the area and so on. What sorts of evidence is there to support these allegations?

Dr. Ware. Yes, thank you. That is a fair question. I am basing my conclusions on numerous reports from many Dagestani sources that I regard as reliable.

Questioner. Well, concerning Osama Bin Laden, has he been seen or I mean alleged to be seen?

Dr. Ware. Well.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. I don't really think there is any evidence that exists. I don't think that anybody really knows how and why this all happened; because if we talk about who is interested in this situation in Dagestan, we can start from any part of the world and it seems like everybody is interested in this. If we're talking about Russia, it might sound like as it was published Yeltsin is interested in this situation because it will give him a reason to declare a state of emergency to cancel the election.

If you ask about the army, the army might be interested in this because they will get money which they weren't getting and the soldiers will be paid.

If you ask about Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan is very much interested in this because they need to bring their oil to the West for their own prosperity. They need to bring it through Dagestan or through Turkey.

Turkey is very interested in this situation. Dagestan is very strongly suspecting Turkey in this situation as well as Georgia, by the way. They think that this pipeline, which is supposed to bring oil from Azerbaijan to the West, is extremely expensive. The companies are actually reluctant to do this project, because there is an alternative way to bring oil through Dagestan to the pipeline. I forgot the number of kilometers, but it's a ridiculously short distance. It's something like 80 kilometers to put it in their pipeline called Druzhba, I think. It's inexpensive, but it's supposed to go through Dagestan. Questioner. Coming, like, through Chechnya? Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. Well, even not going through Chechnya; just through Dagestan. It's inexpensive and it's easy. But somebody wants to destabilize Dagestan for not bringing oil by this route. Georgia will benefit a lot. Turkey will benefit a lot. Then this story with Persian Gulf countries they might try to keep prices up.

So it's just too hard to say at this point who is really doing it. We just know the way they do it. They provide money. We will know later.

Dr. Ware. I didn't talk to anybody who said, "I saw Osama Bin Laden"; but over the years, I have had an opportunity to learn which Dagestani sources seemed merely to pass on rumors and which have a professional interest of their own in sifting out information and trying to decide which information has some kind of a reliable foundation that goes beyond just repeating hearsay.

The information that I am conveying today is the information that I acquired from sources that I regard as highly reliable and careful about their information.

I grant you that nobody has hard proof. Nobody has shown bank records or anything like that that indicate transfers along these lines. But one of the things that we are asking for is that Western intelligence and Russian intelligence communities coordinate to try to produce that kind of evidence. I don't know that we have it yet. I am hoping that that kind of hard evidence can be produced.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. By the way, Dagestan is saying that America is strongly interested in this too.

Here is the logic, just as an example. They are saying that America is interested in showing Islam as a terroristic religion. This is the way to demonstrate it. Is it right, is it not.

Questioner. My name is Elin Suleymanov, from the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. I couldn't leave without a question. First a comment. You said an interesting thing. You said Dagestanis think that Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan who are Dagestans? There are 140 ethnic groups. Who is that person and who is that group who are thinking? Because I don't know. I have never met a single Dagestani who felt like another Dagestani, and I come from the region.

Second thing. As you know, the position of the government of Azerbaijan has always been extremely to stabilize Dagestan. One of the reasons why Dagestan has not exploded earlier is precisely because what Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey as a matter of fact tried to make sure as strong as possible, nothing happened there.

But this aside, I have a question. I know it will sound like a strange question after all you have said, but what exactly is happening in Dagestan? What exactly is happening in

Dagestan? A lady speaking earlier referred to Basayev versus Maskhodov. But since when Basayev had become Wahhabi? As far as he know, he has never been a Wahhabi. He has always been a convinced as to Sufi, as far as I know. Maybe I am mistaken, but that was the banner he fought under during the war in Chechnya.

When you said Karamakhi, you said they were preparing for something. I have never been to Karamakhi. I am neither Sufi nor Wahhabi. I am not even a Sunni, as a matter of fact. But when we look at that you said they were preparing for something two years after the war in Chechnya. Who in the Caucasus would know they are preparing for something? You said they put some fortifications. In Dagestan, you know, where everyone is fighting each other 80 kilometers on the border of Chechnya I mean, who would not put fortification? At the end of the day their fears had proven to be justified.

What I want to ask you is let's look objectively not Wahhabis against you know, it's very easy to say Dagestanis feel that way, Dagestanis feel that. Who in Dagestan feels that way? Who in Dagestan does not feel that way? Why is Wahhabi appeal which is first of all, they do not even call themselves Wahhabis. They call themselves Salafis. They can't stand other Wahhabis who come in and out. That's also important.

So I mean what exactly is happening there without generalizations? Thank you.

Dr. Ware. Yes, very briefly. Sure, four-and-a-half percent of Dagestanis are Azeri ethnics. It is an important group in Dagestan, especially in southern regions around Derbent and so forth. But having said that, I am not sure I can support all of your remarks.

First of all, it appears to me that there is clearly a Dagestani national identity that extends well beyond the identity of any particular ethnic group. A Dagestani might say, "We are the people that embrace all of these ethnic groups and provide sufficient accommodation and toleration for them all." There is a very proud sense in Dagestan of this being this combination of groups. I think that is the Dagestani identity. I think it does embrace all the ethnic groups in fact.

When we talk about Dagestani opinion, it is based in no small part upon regular polling that we do. We have been doing polling there every six months since 1997. Talking about a Dagestani outlook, we have those polls in view. For example, a poll that was taken while my wife was in Dagestan recently showed that 87 percent of Dagestanis preferred to remain with Russia and zero percent want to become united with Chechnya. So for me, there is no difficulty in talking about a Dagestani outlook or a Dagestani view.

I can't accept your remarks about the fact that there were fortifications in Karamakhi being insignificant or in some ways merely reflective of general instability in the region. I know many Dagestanis, and I don't know anyone with fortifications like that. Most people just live in the apartment blocks that have been there for the last 50 or 60 or more years, with no fortifications whatsoever. I am including there towns that are right on the Chechen border. Most people live without any fortification. The fact that you see a whole village coordinating covert and defensive architecture seems to me to be quite significant.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. Thank you for your question, because it gives me an opportunity to answer some other concerns of Dagestanis. The position of Azerbaijan I am not in a position to criticize or something. I am just telling you how it was taken by Dagestanis. I am a very private person. I visited Dagestan not for the purpose of bringing this report. I visited my mother and my family. So all I know is just from newspapers, television where they interviewed refugees and any other ordinary civilians and what I heard from my con-

versation with people, family members. They are all ordinary people. They don't take any positions in government or anything.

So let me tell you that position of Azerbaijan was very much questioned in Dagestan. The invasion started on the second of August. No phone call, no communication from Azerbaijan up to 24th of August, when your president, Haidar Aliev, finally decided to call. It happened exactly the next day after pushing Chechens back to Chechnya from Botlikh Raion. So when first we finished and it was the mood that everything has finished nobody started even to bomb Chabonmakhi and Karamakhi. Then he called.

Before there were some statements from different organizations, from Islamic groups and some organizations of Azerbaijan; but official Azerbaijan kept silent. Dagestanis are offended by this, as much as they are offended by what Maskhadov did. He didn't do anything either. He didn't call Magomedov to say, "I'm not with them, I'll support you in any possible way. They are terrorists, they are not Chechens."

Your next question was who said that Basayev is Wahhabi. I didn't call him Wahhabi. Moreover, I was telling you that Wahhabis in Dagestan didn't support him. I didn't make any parallel between Wahhabis and the invasion. In fact, I called his men extremists and international terrorists, because they are of all possible nations, including Dagestanis. And Basayev is doing his job. He is earning his money as it says in Chechnya openly.

Maskhadov Dagestan can't understand Maskhadov. I am afraid in this situation which is now in Chechnya not doing anything is the best he can do. If he tries to do something against this Basayev, he will be dismissed or killed or anything. Any dialogue between Moscow and Chechnya will be stopped. If he would be on the side of Basayev, it will be openly proclaimed a terroristic state in Chechnya. So I didn't call Basayev a Wahhabi. No.

Who in Dagestan I'll answer the question. Who wouldn't prepare in this situation? I'll tell you who. Most weren't prepared when Chechens came right straight away. They came in a couple of minutes. Moreover, a couple of months before the invasion despite the fact that there was a huge concentration of these extremists on the border all Russian forces were all of a sudden withdrawn. You are asking who wasn't prepared? Bujnaks wasn't prepared. Khasavyurt wasn't prepared. Novolakski wasn't prepared. As many, many other villages in Dagestan were not prepared for this invasion.

So Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi are really a very special story. This explains why Dagestanis would always prefer not to have bloodshed. But in this situation, they think that if not now, you know if there is a gun on the wall, it will be shot sooner or later.

I think I answered your questions.

Amb. Courtney. Thank you.

Jon?

Questioner. Yes. I have been following this for two years and wrote about the terrible day in Dagestan in May of 1998 when the government house was seized and the villages declared their status. I have been following the Khachiliev brothers. I am little mixed up now as to where they are and what they are doing. I have been hearing contradictory reports as to what side they are on. If you could, for the audience, quickly explain who they are and let us know what you know about where they are and whose side they are on, what they are doing.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. As far as I'm concerned, these brothers, Magomed and Nadir Khachiliev, are leaders of the Lak national movement. One of them is a member of the

Duma, the youngest one, Nadir. The oldest one is Minister of Fisheries, and I think a representative in Dagestani National Assembly.

It is hard for me really to explain, as probably nobody in Dagestan really understands what is going on; but at some point they fell out of the favor of the elites in Dagestan. Nadir Khachiliev was culled like a criminal, and he ran to Chechnya because now anybody can hide from the authorities and from the law in Chechnya. His crime was the raid on the "White House," the preceding shootout with the police, and his collection of a vast arsenal of weapons. I am just trying to answer your question. Everybody expected that he would support Chechens in this invasion, but he didn't, surprisingly, for probably both sides for Chechens and for Dagestanis. He said that he will go and fight against these extremists, for which, it was said, kicked him out from Chechnya; and being outlaw in the territory of Dagestan, he had no other way to survive than to go to Karamakhi.

He hides in Karamakhi and tries to provide some corridor for civilians, to let them out of the village. He was again proclaimed a traitor. Where is he now, nobody knows. I know that his oldest brother was arrested while I was there. I think that it's a politically wrong thing to do. These guys wanted to fight on the side of Dagestan. I think whoever their enemies are, they should accept it, because in the state of war, it would be the best policy.

But at the same time when I was in Moscow, I heard that Nadir is in Moscow, that somebody had dinner with him approximately the same day. So I just don't know. It's just all on the level of rumors and suggestions.

I think I heard one of the suggestions that Khachiliev had someone you know the word kompromat? against some of the highest ranking authorities in Dagestan and brought it to Stepashin. Stepashin promised to support him but then didn't. As a result, this official purge started. But really I don't know.

Dr. Ware. I could just add. It's probably not news to you that obviously the Khachiliev are under criminal indictment, in part for arms violations. They had very large arsenals in their private residences that the police discovered when they subsequently raided, and in part because of their activities on and around May 21st when they occupied the "White House" that is the seat of Dagestani government where the State Council, the Assembly, and many of the top cabinet ministers all have offices.

They looted the building for \$1.7 million worth of currency and materials and did a great deal of damage. So there's all of that.

There was a very encouraging crackdown on the well-placed criminal element in Dagestan last winter, where not only the Khachiliev were pursued but also the Musaev brothers who are sort of understudies to the Khachiliev in some ways and several other key figures.

It looked as if there was to be a real serious crackdown on the interconnection of crime and politics in Dagestan, as I say, during that period, insofar as this coincided with what was in many respects a very successful election of the Second People's Assembly early last spring, was a very hopeful time in Dagestan. However, this crackdown on the well-placed criminal element has since seemed to lighten up. There isn't as much of that, which leads one to worry that maybe the crackdown was itself politically motivated, a way to eliminate some political rivals in Dagestan.

Then, just anecdotally, Magomed Khachiliev is near, if not dear, to Zulfia and me,

because her mother lives within a couple of hundred feet of Magomed Khachilaev. In fact, her mother gets almost no water during summer months. She has to leave pots beneath her dripping faucet in order to collect any water at all, in part because Khachilaev's mansion just a few hundred feet away draws most of the neighborhood's water for its swimming pool, gardens, et cetera. Magomed Khachilaev, interestingly, chose to move back into a very small family accommodation, humble family accommodation, that he was raised in, and then to start swallowing up the neighborhood. So he keeps buying up his neighbors' houses and expanding this very ostentatious compound that he's built outward into the neighborhood.

Questioner. I am Hedieh Mirahamadi of the Islamic Supreme Council of America. I actually wanted to make a comment about the outside funding. I'm sure much like the sources that we receive in Chechnya that it's basically word of mouth, people saying where's the money coming from. I don't think it's necessary rumors. It's just people saying that, you know, we know that the money is coming from outside because of actually talking to people in the country, saying that the money is not coming from inside. We know that because we don't have any money. The money is coming from outside.

Our chairman, Kabani, visited Maskhadov and was a guest in his home for two weeks. Maskhadov himself has said that he has offered his assistance to the United States and Western intelligence to show and to help them to demonstrate that Khattab is looking for a base for some of the movement and that this movement is centered around that ideology, and that this is what they are looking for in the Caucasus especially. If they can't find it in Chechnya, they will find it in Dagestan. If they don't find it in Dagestan, they will find it somewhere.

Have you heard similar rumors?

Dr. Ware. Yes, indeed. Thank you. That, in fact, gives me an opportunity further to state that this is not just rumor and hearsay that we are basing this on. For example, Dagestani government officials at one point declared that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were engaged in a Jihad against Dagestan. So there's more to this than just word of mouth. Yes, we certainly have heard that about Osama Bin Laden and that he's been quite active and that this would, in fact, open up a base for him in the Caucasus. Yes, indeed.

Dr. Kisrieva-Ware. And newspaper in Makhachkala quoted a Kuwaiti newspaper called I'm trying to find it; I think Ash-Shark-al-Ausat. Do you know a newspaper like this? They stated that 37 mercenaries from Arabic countries were killed in Dagestan. In Dagestani newspapers I read the names of some of them, Jordanian citizens. I saw shown on the television an Ethiopian actually citizen of Ukraine 20 years old was a mercenary as well for money. He stated that it was just a way to earn money. By the way, there was mentioned one Arab with an American passport who was there too. I think somewhere in these notes I have given names.

Amb. Courtney. 11:30 has arrived. So let us thank very much Dr. Robert Bruce Ware and Dr. Zulfia Kisrieva-Ware for being with us today, and John Finerty, the CSCE Staff Advisor for Russia, as well. Thank you.

(Whereupon the briefing was concluded at 11:30 p.m.)

## DAGESTAN AND RUSSIA: SUSPICION AND TURMOIL

Submitted BY ROBERT BRUCE WARE

MOSCOW—The comment from the Russian bureaucrat checking passports was intended to be reassuring. “Don’t worry,” he said as we uneasily handed over my American passport, “you don’t look like fruit peddlers.” In other words, we did not look like the kind of people Muscovites fear—Chechens or Dagestanis. Thus, we could feel safe from harassment on the city’s streets. The bureaucrat offered that assurance without realizing the Dagestani background of my Western-clad companion, who was as uneasy as I was in the new atmosphere. Whereas passengers from this internal Russian flight had always filed unrestrictedly from the plane into the terminal, we were suddenly routed under heavy security into an isolated part of the building where we, together with our luggage, were subjected to intensive scrutiny.

Eventually, the Russian authorities waved me through, while my companions were detained with all the other Dagestanis on the plane. Clearly, Dagestan has fallen outside the Russian security zone, and it is now Dagestanis, not Americans, who constitute an alien threat. The twist is as cruel as it is ironic.

Dagestan once exported agricultural products throughout the Soviet Union. It also exported military technology. Much of the Soviet defense industry was sequestered in the remote province.

To support that industry, as well as for ideological and humanitarian reasons, the Soviets brought modern infrastructure, and educational and health systems to the mountains. They provided the pavement, plumbing, electricity, higher education, and widespread technical training that helped bring Dagestan into the 20th century. And they helped foster something roughly approximating sexual equality, not to mention security, regardless of size.

Remarkably for an Islamic society, the 2 percent Jewish population is extended all the protections, rights, and opportunities of: any other group. Women are adamantly included in positions of power in politics, higher education and the professions.

Until a constitutional challenge in the March 1999 election, seven seats in the People’s Assembly were set aside for women, in addition to any other seats that female candidates might win. Dagestanis were so incensed by the decision of the Constitutional Court to open these seven seats to male candidates that they elected women to all but one of them. Women are also prominently represented in the republic’s executive body and in top ministerial positions.

The Dagestani political system has succeeded in defusing a long series of internal crises, yet its fragmentation renders it particularly vulnerable to external pressures.

The war on the Chechen border is viewed by virtually all Dagestanis as a foreign invasion. The invaders are led by the Chechen warlord Shamil Baseyev and a Jordanian named Emir Khattab. They are heavily financed by individuals and organizations in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan.

They are also said to be at least partially supported by Osama Bin Laden, and however incongruously, many Dagestanis believe that they are also funded by the United States. Though the majority of the fighters are Dagestani Wahhabis trained in the Chechen

camps, their ranks also include Chechens and many others, from Afghanistan to a host of African countries. Under present circumstances, the insurgents cannot hope to win. Dagestan is a rugged land inhabited by hot blooded mountaineers equipped with large quantities of weapons and a system of vendetta. No one will rule Dagestan without the consent of the Dagestanis.

The vast majority of Dagestanis wish to remain in Russia because they remember all that they once gained under Soviet rule.' ' They regard their republic as too small to sustain independence, and they reject alliances with Chechnya, or regional powers such as Iran or Turkey. Yet apart from its military presence, and a series of largely empty promises, Russia has rejected Dagestan in virtually all important ways. Hence; Dagestan's predicament. The Soviets also subsidized more than 80 percent of the republic's economy and provided for 95 percent of its trade. Subsidies and trade dropped dramatically with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today 80 percent of Dagestanis are unemployed, living well below the Russian poverty level in the country's poorest republic. As the Moscow bureaucrat sarcastically observed, many Dagestanis attempt to support themselves by peddling the fruit of their gardens in Russia's northern cities.

There they fall victim to the anti-Caucasian prejudices that have driven many Dagestanis from their jobs in northern Russia and Central Asia, back to the economic abyss of their homeland.

By March 1999, desperation had led 8 percent of Dagestanis to a form of Islamic fundamentalism originating in Saudi Arabia, and commonly known as Wahhabism. The Wahhabis have gained adherents insofar as they have opposed social and political corruption, and rejected onerous pseudo-Islamic traditions.

Yet the ways of the Wahhabis are patently not those of Dagestan. Rigid puritanism and the veil are foreign and offensive to the freewheeling, hard-drinking, roughshod egalitarianism of Dagestani Muslims.

Wahhabism is strongest in the republic's central foothills and in the highlands along the Chechen border. However, it has been fiercely opposed by Dagestan's traditional Islamists, who together with its Christian and Jewish inhabitants account for over 95 percent of its population. This split in Dagestan's Islamic community threatens political stability.

Despite current events, political stability to date has been remarkable. For even though conditions in Dagestan are worse than those in the surrounding republics, it has been one of the few administrative units in the Caucasus to avoid ethnic civil war.

That stability has been based upon an intricate and dynamic balance among Dagestan's 84 ethnic groups -a balance that has, since the adoption of its constitution in 1994, resulted in an extraordinary set of democratic institutions. Through elaborate mechanisms, the political system guarantees representation to all its ethnic groups,

If it truly wishes to do so, Russia can retain Dagestan by restoring its support for Dagestan's economy. Pensions and an employment benefits must be paid, and government projects initiated, to rescue the republic and stimulate the local economy. Dagestan's poverty and desperation are Khattab's best recruiters.

The insurgents—who last week pulled out from their front-line positions in a switch to what they called "military-political" tactics—can be permanently dislodged. But the campaign will certainly prove more difficult than Russian leaders publicly allow, leading

to a series of border skirmishes' ` and guerrilla raids. Still, Dagestan remains Russia's to lose.

*Robert Bruce Ware, an assistant professor of philosophy at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, has written extensively on Dagestan.*

## **IT'S THE ECONOMY IN DAGESTAN, AND MOSCOW MUST ACT TO BETTER THE SITUATION. THE WEST CAN PLAY A ROLE, TOO.**

By ROBERT BRUCE WARE

While it is both deeply tragic and highly strategic, the current shootout in the Caucasus is essentially a sideshow. The military aspects of the situation have little to do with the causes of the problem and may even less to do with its solution. The real issues are neither military nor religious. They are economic, and any enduring solution that might bring stability to this strategic region must be economic as well. Though federal troops have an important role to play in the present situation, Moscow's lop-sided military approach is leading it into the trap that was set by the brilliant Chechen insurgent warlord, Shamil Basayev. Basayev knows that while his forces are well-trained, well-armed and admirably financed, they are far too few to achieve a decisive victory in Dagestan.

More important, he knows that no one will rule the Dagestani people against their wishes. Contested areas of Dagestan are in rugged geography inhabited by hot-blooded mountaineers equipped with large quantities of arms, a culture of personal valor and a tradition of vendetta. Ultimately, Basayev can win only if he is able to recruit many Dagestanis to his side.

The majority of Basayev's fighters are from Dagestan, though others are drawn from a host of Central Asian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European and African countries. Most of the Dagestanis fighting for Basayev are members of the Islamic fundamentalist sect commonly known as Wahhabis. The Wahhabis are led by Jordanian-born Emir Khattab. Khattab fought beside Basayev in the Chechen war, then married a Dagestani woman, led a group of central Dagestani villages in a violent, de facto secession from the Dagestani government and coordinated with Middle Eastern supporters to set up a guerrilla - - training base in Chechnya. He knows that his best recruiters, by far, are Dagestan's economic collapse and the deepening desperation of its people, 80% of whom are currently unemployed.

The Wahhabis have attracted adherents because they offer an option to social and political corruption along with onerous pseudo-Islamic traditions. Yet the Wahhabis have long been violently opposed by Dagestan's traditional Moslems, who together with smaller populations of Christians and Jews constitute well more than 90% of the population. By March 1999, only 3% of the Dagestanis were Wahhabi, but their ranks are likely to grow with the increasing misery level of the people. Of course one sure way to make people more miserable is to bring a war to their territory. The invasion has already produced more than 10,000 refugees, whose numbers grow each day. The plight of these refugees is all the more severe since no international relief agencies have been able to operate in Dagestan for more than two years. The hostage industry, which originated in Chechnya after the war and quickly became the region's leading source of revenue, forced out all international agencies before the end of 1997. Moreover, the situation is fraught with ethnic tension that could multiply the conflict among Dagestan's 34 ethnic groups. Hence, with every day that they fight on Dagestani soil, Khattab and Basayev create more potential recruits for their forces.

Brilliantly, Basayev and Khattab are not fighting a war of attrition, but of amalgamation. Even if federal troops are successful in their campaign to dislodge the insurgents, the result is likely to be an indefinite future of border clashes and guerrilla raids that

continue the process of destabilization and rebel recruitment. Moscow would be better advised to recognize that the problem in Dagestan is fundamentally economic and that it therefore requires an economic solution. Moscow must move immediately to ensure that seldom-seen entitlements, such as pensions and unemployment benefits, are paid, and government programs re-established, in order to stimulate the local economy. If it is to regain any measure of stability in this historically strategic, oil-laden region, the West must ensure that relief is provided despite government corruption and adverse conditions. There are three strategies that can be pursued. First, relief agencies that formerly operated in Dagestan must mobilize Dagestani "locals" who previously staffed their offices usually under the supervision of Westerners. These local workers can be organized from afar to receive and distribute aid. Second, Western groups and agencies can work on a grass-roots basis directly with Dagestani groups and organizations. This might also help to relieve the common Dagestani misconception that the United States is supporting the invaders. Finally, diplomatic pressure must be applied to the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Pakistan to persuade their citizens to stop financing the insurgents. The Western media should follow the money. Much of those large sums that support the insurgents originate in societies that stand to profit from instability in the Caucasus. Increasingly, the West has been backing away from earlier investments in Caspian oil, partly because the instability of the region renders the transportation of that oil risky and difficult. Caspian oil reserves may not compare with those of the Persian Gulf countries, but the successful transportation of the former would reduce the capacity of the latter to control the price of oil. Is it therefore merely coincidence that the invasion is being financed by residents of Persian Gulf states who profit from the sale of oil. Perhaps it is, but this is a question that should be investigated.

*Robert Bruce Ware writes extensively on Dagestan.*

## CIVILIZATIONS COLLIDE IN THE CAUCASUS

BY ROBERT BRUCE WARE

The clash of civilizations that has complicated American policy in the Middle East is spreading to the North Caucasus, the region stretching from the eastern shores of the Black Sea to the western shores of the Caspian. Americans familiar with the frictions that result when Islamic traditions meet the modernizing tendencies of Western culture will see these problems compounded by their confrontation with Russia's Slavic-Orthodox civilization in the chaotic aftermath of communism.

With a disturbing mix of desperation and disconsolation, Russia is fighting to retain control of the region to preserve its internal stability and ensure its access to the region's abundant resources. Forces in the Middle East hope to regain control over territories that have been Islamic for more than a millennium while advancing home-grown fundamentalist agendas. At stake for the United States is the stability of this strategic region, the protection of substantial corporate investments and westward flow of oil and natural gas from rich Caspian fields.

Caught in the maelstrom of these opposing forces are the people of Dagestan, Russia's southernmost province. Dagestan has long been distinguished by extremes of ethnic diversity and economic deprivation. Its 34 ethnic groups are all engaged in territorial and cultural disputes under conditions of economic collapse.

Traditionally Russia's poorest republic, Dagestan suffers from 80 percent unemployment. Crime is rampant, kidnaping is epidemic, and corrupt officials routinely siphon the meager benefits to which the people are entitled. During the war in neighboring Chechnya, Dagestan was blockaded. With virtually no connection to the outside world, it was flooded with more than 400,000 refugees. No international relief agency has been able to operate there since 1997.

In the midst of these crises, Dagestan surprisingly has developed a unique democratic system that strikes an intricate balance among its 34 ethnic groups and guarantees representation to them all. Dagestan's 2 percent Jewish population, enjoys all of the privileges, rights and opportunities of any other group.

And women are adamantly accorded a prominent political role. Until a constitutional challenge in the March 1999 election, seven seats in the People's Assembly were set aside for women, in addition to other seats that might go to female candidates. Women are also prominent in the Republic's executive body and in top ministerial positions. Yet democratic progress only underscores the poignancy of Dagestan's predicament, caught among a host of powerful external forces with which it is unable to cope.

Virtually all Dagestanis wish to remain in Russia, rejecting Chechen and Middle Eastern efforts to woo them. They recognize that their republic is too small to sustain independence. Most Dagestanis mourn the Soviet Union because it meant pavement, plumbing, electricity, higher education, widespread technical training and something approaching sexual equality, not to mention security. Yet while Moscow does not wish to lose Dagestan, it has succumbed to its traditional anti-Caucasian prejudices, lumping Dagestanis together with Chechens and viewing them as equally hostile and dangerous.

Chechnya wants an alliance with Dagestan to gain a Caspian seaport and lend economic viability to Chechnya's insolvent bid for independence. Chechens have regularly

appealed to the Islamic heritage that they share with Dagestanis, yet faultlines within this heritage have brought war to Dagestan's border with Chechnya.

An Islamic fundamentalist movement, Wahhabism, has been growing in the region.

Wahhabism originated in Arabia in the 18th century, and spread, with the onset of perestroika, to Central Asia and the Caucasus. It attracts adherents who reject the political corruption, social disintegration and moral decay they associate with Westernizing tendencies in their societies. Yet puritanical Islam proved alien to the free-wheeling, hard-drinking, rough-shod egalitarianism of Dagestan's traditional Moslems, and was violently resisted by those who found the sight of black-veiled Wahhabi women foreign and offensive.

By March 1999 only 3 percent of Dagestanis were Wahhabis, but they were receiving substantial financial support from individuals and organizations in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan who have supported military training camps in Chechnya near the Dagestani border.

In addition to Dagestani Wahhabis, the forces that invaded Dagestan from these camps included many Chechens and fighters from Central Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Eastern European countries.

The insurgents were financed with funds originating in societies that stand to profit from instability in the Caucasus.

Recently the West has been edging away from earlier investments in Caspian oil, in part because of regional instability. Caspian oil reserves may not compare with those of the Persian Gulf countries, but the successful transportation of the former would reduce the capacity of the latter to control the price of oil.

Whether for oil or Islam, the people of the Caucasus are likely to suffer the violent collision of three civilizations for some time to come.

*Robert Bruce Ware, a professor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, writes extensively on the North Caucasus.*

