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RUSSIA: ARE RIGHTS IN RETREAT

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The briefing was held at 2:00 p.m. in Room 2255 of the Rayburn House

Office Building, Washington, D.C., Ron McNamara, Deputy Chief of Staff, United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating

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MCNAMARA: Good afternoon, and on behalf of the Helsinki Commission, I am pleased to welcome you to this briefing on human rights trends in the Russian Federation, on behalf of our commission chairman, Congressman Christopher Smith, and our commission co-chairman, Senator Ben Lighthorse Campbell

It is fitting that we begin with a moment of silence to honor the life of President Ronald Reagan, a stalwart defender of freedom in human rights who matched his rhetoric with concrete deeds

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

MCNAMARA: My name is Ron McNamara. I'm currently serving as the commission's deputy chief of staff. Today's briefing is particularly timely as

President Putin will be visiting the United States this week for meetings at Sea Island, Georgia in conjunction with the G8 Summit meeting. And it is the latest in

a series of commission events focused on developments in the Russian Federation

Most recently, the commission held a hearing on Russia on May 20. The full transcript of that hearing can be accessed on the commission's web site,

www.csce.gov. As is customary, there will be a full transcript of today's briefing

posted on the same web site within 24 hours

As the commission leadership acknowledged at the May 20 hearing, Russia has made tremendous strides in advancing democratic progress, human rights, civil liberties and press freedoms since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Much of this

progress, I would underscore, was made during the 1990s

With President Putin's ascent to power, influential elements in his

government appear determined to reverse Russia's direction and institute a more

authoritarian policy of what some in his inner circle would characterize as managed

democracy

Against that backdrop, I must admit I was somewhat puzzled by some of the

rhetoric in President Putin's May 26 state-of-the-federation address. For example,

he asserts that among his aims are a mature democracy and a developed civil

society. Elsewhere he asserts that, "Fidelity to democratic values is dictated by

the will of our people." Continuing on, Putin insists that, quote, "Nobody and nothing will stop Russia on the road to strengthening of democracy and ensuing human rights and freedoms.

In an abrupt and chilling shift later in that same speech, the Russian

president charges that some NGOs have made a priority of, quote, "obtaining funding

from influential foreign or domestic foundations," end quote. He goes on to chide

such groups for not addressing the most acute problems of the country

Putin's rhetoric must be judged against the concrete deeds of his

administration as they affect pluralistic democracy, human rights and the rule of

law. In this regard, there appears to be some significant gaps, especially as concerns the conduct of recent elections in the Russian Federation

The commission's recent hearing also touched on the bout of spymania that

has recently broke out in Russia with serious implications for some scientists and

academicians. There are also concerns over the actions taken against media outlets,

and of course there are concerns over the situation in Chechnya as the war that propelled Putin into the presidency enters its fifth year

I would also mention that available outside on our documents table is a copy

of a letter from our commission's leadership to President Bush urging him to raise a

number of these concerns with President Putin when they meet starting tomorrow at

the G8 Summit

Amazingly, we are now hearing the term, "political prisoner," ominously juxtaposed with the Russian Federation. As the OSCE and other international organizations work to promote civil society and democratic values in the OSCE participating states, will Russia be part of the solution or part of the problem?

If the latter, what does this portend for the people of Russia and the international

community

As President Bush prepares to meet his Russian counterpart, our panelists, prominent in the Russian human rights movement, are well placed to provide their unique insights into trends in Russia. Is there an overreaction to not only Putin's

words but his deeds? Might these issues be left to the Russian themselves to resolve, as was suggested by one of the witnesses at the commission's May 20

hearing? What is the role of Russian civil society in advancing democracy, human

rights and the rule of law? And, certainly, what is the role of the OSCE and the

international community

It's my pleasure to introduce Ludmilla Alexeeva, chairperson of the Moscow

Helsinki Group and president of the International Helsinki Federation. A political

exile during the Soviet era, she returned to Moscow in 1993 to resume her work with

the reconstituted Moscow Helsinki Group

Arseni Roginsky is chairman of the International Memorial Society,

established in the late 1980s to investigate and publicize Soviet repression during

the Stalin era. Memorial has been very active in reporting on the human rights

situation in Chechnya

Alexei Simonov is president of the Glasnost Defense Foundation, an organization that

supports freedom of the press, trains journalists and works to defend their rights

And, finally, Mara Polyakova is director of the Independent Council For

Legal Expertise, an organization that specializes in analyzing legislation on human

rights and advising lawyers on high profile cases involving rights violations

Before proceeding, I'd also acknowledge the assistance of the National

Endowment for Democracy as our commission staff prepared for today's briefing

As is customary again, there will be a full transcription of today's

proceedings. Should time permit, once all of our panelists have made their

presentations, it would be my intention to open the microphone that we have

available to the floor for questions from the audience. What we would ask is that

you indicate your name and any affiliation that you may have and which of the panelists you would like to address your question

At this juncture then, I would turn to Mr. Roginsky for his presentation

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) My task is to very briefly describe the situation in Russia from the point of view of those who defend human rights. Some

of the theses which I will present now will be then developed by my colleagues

The main tendency in the life of our society over the last few years has been the efforts of the powers that be to destroy the isolated islands of independence and democracy that still continue to exist in Russia. During the elections of last year, a completely governable, or pocket, parliament has been created

It was created -- the parliament was created by presidential forces, but it has become even more conservative than the presidential administration. This gives

the president room for maneuvering. Therefore, because of the conservative attitude

of the parliament, he can sometimes voice more liberal corrective ideas than the parliament desires. Just a tiny little bit. Actually, in principle, nothing is changed, because, basically, these are his initiatives

A good example is the new law on meetings and demonstrations, which in fact

has seriously limited the ability to conduct meetings and demonstrations, the new

law on referendums, which basically destroys any possibility for conducting referendums. And so it is totally governable by the state administration parliament

As to the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, it has totally lost its role, even its decorative role. It has become insignificant

Secondly, elections. Elections have become, and this is from the lowest municipal levels to the highest levels, has become, as we call it, made-to-order elections. They're conducted at the order of and completely so of the powers that

be but also partially influenced by money. Sometimes the two kind of work across

purposes

A typical example is the elimination from contention of candidates, whether they be deputies or governors, that are not desirable from the point of view of the

administration

Let us look back at the last elections in Chechnya, the presidential

elections in Chechnya, in which all, more or less, influential candidates for the

presidential position who were opponents of the one favored by the Kremlin were eliminated. A more detailed description of the Chechnyan elections will be given

by -- the Russian elections will be given by Ludmilla Alexeeva

Freedom of speech, officially it exists. In fact, though, the zone of freedom of speech no longer exists. Television is now formally or informally, directly or indirectly, under governmental control. And as you can imagine, in a

country as large as Russia, television has primary significance

The circulation of independent newspapers and publications, from my point of view, is now 700,000, 800,000, but my colleague, Mr. Simonov, feels that I'm an optimist, that the actual figure is 500,000. And this is for a country of 150 million. Alexei Simonov will speak to this problem in more detail

Point four, the problem of an independent judiciary. As in the case of freedom of speech, it would be incorrect to say that we do not have an independent

court system. In those cases which are no interest to the state, the independence

exists, but if the government is interested in that particular case, there is no freedom, just as there was no freedom during the Soviet times

Also, the court system is under great influence of the nationalistic, patriotic ideology that is flourishing in Russia at this time. You can see it in

the system of jury trials. Recently, a jury found not guilty a group of officers

and soldiers that had murdered a group of civilians in Chechnya. The courts did,

however, the jury said -- the jury and the courts did state that indeed the murder

had taken place, the people were killed. The people who were being tried were those

who perpetrated the killing; however, they were not guilty. Again, more details about this and about the judiciary system, the court system in Russia will be described by Mara Polyakova

I need to speak separately about the problem of Chechnya. The last three years have seen what we call the Chechnyazation of the conflict. What does that mean? At the beginning, the fight against terrorist acts and also against the military actions of the separatists was conducted and the terrorist acts were committed against them by federal military forces. Now this fight is carried out more and more by internal Chechnya military formations

Abductions, disappearances and kidnapping of people continue in Chechnya.

Here is a schedule -- and you will be able to pick this up -- on a monthly basis of

such kidnappings, disappearances and abductions. The Memorial is conducting this

kind of survey, but, unfortunately, we have accessed only 25 percent of the

territory. And still we know by name 500 Chech people who have disappeared over the

last year and already 200 for this year. Some of them are returned eventually, some

of them are found dead, and some of them are missing. You will see this document

If we sum up, what do we have? We do not see any active liberal parties in Russia. We see the more and more limited freedom of speech, but we see a parliament

that is fully under the control of the government, a dependent judiciary and also,

this is something new, an attack against independent business when it attempts to

have a political or social position of its own. In this context, we would mention

the case of Khodorkovsky. The trial, his trial is scheduled to start within the

next few days, and what remains of free Russian society is very encouraged by this

prospect

And the newest attack is against that which remains of the independent, non

governmental organizations in Russia. This attack was first heard in the

presidential speech on the state of the republic, which means that it is now our

turn

We don't know what the future holds, but we appeal to you also to give us

some thought, because we are very much aware of the double approach to Putin's

Russia. On the one hand, Putin is our royal partner in our struggle against

terrorism, but it should be noted that the idea of what terrorism is differs between

how it is conceived in the West and in Russia. And on the other hand, something

that seems to be getting clear to everybody is that something isn't quite right with

democracy in Russia

But at this point, the West seems to be giving more weight to the idea of

Putin as a staunch ally in the fight against terrorism because that seems to be more

important. But we feel that this problem needs to be viewed as somewhat deeper.

Thank you

MCNAMARA: Thank you

And our next panelist will be Ludmilla Alexeeva

ALEXEEVA: Thank you. I will speak about situation with elections in

Russia. The relatively recent end of the Soviet system of elections has caused the

freedom and fairness of elections in the young Russian states to still be Russia

under development. These changes in development have not been helped by the

systematic government-sponsored (inaudible) of election freedoms over the last few

years

This is (inaudible) in the recent federal election cycle (inaudible). The

state Duma elections last year and the presidential election in this year were

harshly criticized by both foreign and domestic observer groups. Of particular

concern was the crackdown on independent press and government for (inaudible) for

pro-Kremlin fascists

Media outlets were limited in their reporting freedom by law on reporting accuracy that was unclear in the (inaudible) media but harsh in the French. This

allowed for a selective approach in (inaudible) news reports. As a reaction, the

independent media community decided to rather be safe than sorry and limit their coverage of election and latest news

Government-controlled media (inaudible) those campaigns in an utterly biased way. As the OSCE concludes after the presidential campaign, strong and independent

media will provide unbiased (inaudible) of campaigns, thereby enabling the electoral

to make an important choice (inaudible). Government (inaudible) for Kremlin (inaudible) eliminated all stages of the election process. Some candidates

(inaudible) which were not applied to their more conformist colleagues. Registered

candidates were denied the chance to (inaudible) to meet this potential

(inaudible). In all instance, the local government (inaudible) to deny access to

certain (inaudible)

Election conditions are not only independent but they were under strong

pressure from local (inaudible) governments. The president decided to forego his

right to participate in the state-sponsored debate, leaving (inaudible).

Furthermore, the (inaudible) activities of the president allowed him to conduct an

indirect election campaign without real competition. As a result, only one opposition party was able to clear the 5 percent barrier and the pro-presidential party, United Fascia (ph) was able to form a majority in parliament (inaudible), which is the constitution (inaudible)

President Putin was elected with an overwhelming majority, but his election seems to be the (inaudible) result of the (inaudible). Now that the election cycle

was ended, a clear solidification of the president's power in all areas of political

life has taken place. The atmosphere of political debate in parliament has been (inaudible) to the extent that the legislature has become a superconductor for laws

handed down from the presidential administration. These have been approved in a way

that completely precludes any chance for a public debate of proposed laws

Of particular concern are the recent cause for changes that amount to the (inaudible) of freedoms. This includes a new law on the referendum and proposed

changes to the (inaudible). The new law on referenda was submitted to the

parliament on May 19 and approved as (inaudible) on June 2. It is expected that it

will take effect at the end of this month. The draft law calls for sufficient

limitations of the (inaudible) to initiate referendums and the laws for increased

government control for the process

In addition, it (inaudible) 2 million support signatures in-house. Even a referendum that will have been initiated 100 percent according to the law can now

be killed by the mid-level bureaucrats. (inaudible) be able to initiate a referendum. It takes (inaudible) to influence political process (inaudible) from

independent groups

Of even more concern is the proposed amendment to election laws. They have not been sent to the parliament for (inaudible) or made public, but the key aspects

have been leaked to the press. This reportedly includes (inaudible) for entering

parliament. The first change, eliminating (inaudible) statistics, would further increase (inaudible). Everybody who wants to enter parliament would have to cut deal (inaudible) to get on their candidate list. Last (inaudible) of independence

for those deputies (inaudible) presented to their institutions will be secret. The

people will have no direct representatives in parliament anymore. Deputies will only be (inaudible) rather than the people

The second change, eliminating party blocks, is clearly focused (inaudible) opposition party. Discussions have been going on recently of creating (inaudible)

two or more liberal parties that were denied entrance to the parliament during the

last election. The new law would force them to discuss the matter. Managing

parties whose only ideology is allegiance to the Kremlin is easy. Managing parties

that are small but help to well define the (inaudible) opposition is much harder

Finally, increasing (inaudible) for parties to enter the Duma (inaudible)

would preclude any medium-sized parties to enter the parliament. It would certainly

limit the diversity of political views in the legislature, causing the creation of

(inaudible), and it would cause even more millions of Russian citizens to

(inaudible), since their parties would not be able to enter the parliament

The Russian institution has a clear opinion on this matter. The referendum

and free elections shall be the supreme direct manifestation of the power of the

people. The only conclusion is that the recent moves of the government limits this

supreme direct manifestation of the power of the people. Thank you

MCNAMARA: Thank you very much

And our next speaker will be Alexei Simonov

SIMONOV: Thank you. My colleagues from National Endowment for Democracy

know from the very first test of our knowing each other I deny that there is freedom

of speech in Russia. And I deny it now, and I did deny it 10 years ago as well.

Because there is -- well, we have Glasnost, but it still is really growing smaller

and smaller, and we have about 500,000 copies of distribution of four liberal magazines of (inaudible). No way is this (inaudible), including and with 50 other

newspapers in the region, each of them with distribution from 1,500 to 5,000 each.

This is our liberal storage

The problem becomes even more difficult because to have freedom of speech you have this Glasnost to be heard. When I'm asked the difference between Glasnost

and freedom of speech, I usually use the story from Hans Christian Anderson that the

opportunity of shouting out of the crowd that the king is naked is Glasnost, and we

still have it. The opportunity to say to the king before he enters the square

doesn't exist, we don't have. And that's what is freedom of speech. It means not

only to shout out but to be heard

More than that, this 500,000 are, well, let us say, (inaudible), because the

problem is that democrats even in press can't go together. They really quarrel with

each other. They contradict each other. And we have no contradictory great amount

of press and contradictory small amount of democratic press. This is the dramatic

situation

The other part of drama in it is that our small guy who shouts of the crowd

that the kind is naked are sometimes hired by other (inaudible). The (inaudible),

which is the method which is used against practically every guy in the former Soviet

Union, now in Russia, is the most practical thing and the most used thing, even in

the democratic press

Sometimes we can't check up with the information they got, and they come out

with information which can be really -- can be faced in the court, and we have a lot

of cases in courts of protection of honor and dignity, you call it cases of

defamation. But, in general, there is about, let me say, about -- in our

(inaudible), which also covers not all the Russia but covers about 50 percent of

Russian territory. It is about 40 to 50 a month

The venue of each appeal to the court becomes bigger and bigger. In June

last year, a year ago, it was up to a million rubles, not dollars, up to a million

rubles. But what does it mean a million rubles to the local newspaper of 5,000

distribution

So the problem of freedom of speech doesn't include television at all,

because there is no freedom of speech in television, in Russian television. The

last example is very vivid. Mr. (inaudible) who was recently taken into -- well,

dismissed from his position in (inaudible), together with his program, didn't have

really any ideological contradictions with the power. He had contradictions in style, but he was dismissed nevertheless. So they don't want even contradictions in

(inaudible) on the federal channels. If he would be somewhere in region, it might

be that he would be quite OK, but each region has a Putin of its own, and his name

is governor, and they also don't like stylish differences

So it is already the ritualistic news with Putin as the first news, with

Putin as the second news, with something of the Central Bank as the third news and

then criminal and then sports. That is the majority of the news in my country

More than that, different channels do seem absolutely alike. If you take a

guy from the first channel and put it into the news program of the third channel, it

will fit. And the same vice versa, which really doesn't bring any variety of sources and variety of opportunity

Besides that, the whole press, so I don't speak about television, has the

words of freedom of speech (inaudible). There is opportunities of doing it in

press. So about press, one-third of this press is -- the chief editors of the local

press are no more free editors and they are not governed by the law on media, by the

media law because they are bureaucrats of the local governments. They belong to the

bureaucratic society, and they are governed by the law on the bureaucracy, or whatever, civil service, as civil servants. It's about one-third

The editorials are organized as (inaudible), which means the states unitary organizations or local Unitarian organizations, which means that they are a part of

the local bureaucracy, in general. Others, more than 50 percent, don't live with

the two main sources with which generally lives the press in the West -- I mean advertising and distribution. They are supported this way or they sell their pages

just for the advertising but without announcing that it is advertising

So we have only 10 or 15 percent of the papers that this way or that way cover their own operations by their own money. Most of them take money from somewhere, and each has this special somewhere, but nobody wants to speak of these

somewheres and this is another problem, because if you come to the newspaper which

gets its money somewhere, they are always open to any kind of political attack.

They are very polite when you come

So this is the situation in press, this is the situation in the media, and I

have to end up with the following sentence. There is only one real hope, that we

shall have better press. We shall have it better if first we shall lose it at all.

That is a problem which -- you see, I'm trying to protect media rights. I am

monitoring all these things daily, and I'm doing whatever I can and whatever it is

possible sometimes to protect the people that were this way or that way and who have

problems in this press. But at the same time, I (inaudible) that we are becoming a

flag shop with the flag, and there's no (inaudible) around it

MCNAMARA: Thank you

Our final presenter this afternoon will be Mara Polyakova

POLYAKOVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Judiciary reform in Russia, as any other reform, is a very complex combination of various problems that need to be solved.

We monitor the legislative activity of the deputies in regard to the defense of human rights, and we analyze this policy and the tendencies

And it should be noted that the situation in the legislative or practical field is characterized by very contradictory and complex processes. The contradiction consists in the fact that it seems that new democratic laws are being passed, new democratic institutions are being created, which declare democratic principles and positions, but at the same time there are no mechanisms for implementing these new laws, for mechanisms are created but are used for entirely different purposes

For non-specialists, these processes are not always evident, and that is one

of the greatest complications in conducting reform. Very evident are these contradictions in the implementation of judiciary reform

Finally, the long await of reform that we all had been waiting for for so

long has gone out of the realm of private enthusiasts to a state- and government-led

process. Now we feel the support on the part of the president and some other

institutions of power. With the assistance or with the support of the president and

his administration, a working group was created to work out the reform

All the new tendencies and all the new changes have been highly

propagandized by (inaudible) and others, and because of this support, the ability of

these new changes to be pushed forward was increased. New (inaudible) and new laws

and new institutions, legal institutions were created in a relatively short time,

and this reform was perceived, even among the democratic circles in Russia, as a

democratic reform

For example, the rule or the institution of arrests being ordered by courts

was introduced. The independence of judges was proclaimed. The adversarial nature

of the courts was also proclaimed and established. The system of jury trials was

spread, widened, from nine regions to all 89 regions of Russia, although there are

2,500 courts in Russia

If you are not familiar with the practice of law in Russia and where the mentality of our judges and of our law and order institutions and if one doesn't know how the non-legal technologies are applied and work within the system, then this reform could be hailed, and this, indeed, was done by our press

However, unfortunately, in the case of most of these democratic new norms, either no mechanisms were created for implementing them or mechanisms were created that when used by the current system actually hinder and do not improve the situation with human rights

What were the effects in practice? When we were simply talking about reforms, we were envisioning reform as finding solutions for the problems that led to very difficult and painful situations. We were sure or anticipated that the question of the independence of the judiciary and of judges, individual judges, would be solved, that the problem of the application of torture by the police and other institutions, the problem of falsifying evidence and that many other problems would be solved. However, not one of these serious problems that were the aim of reform has been solved by the new neologisms that have been introduced

The judges are still dependent in spite of the fact that their independence was loudly proclaimed (inaudible) in the constitution and other laws, because

the

real power remains in the hands of the chairmen of the court who are part or prone

to the influence by the executive

Tortures are still applied, the records of court proceedings are still being falsified. The legal (inaudible) of judges and members of the police and other institutions are still pervasive. Also, in the mentality of the workers and also in

the daily activities of the court system, the interests of the state are given precedence over the interests of the civilians

However, work on reforming all of this continues and we all still apply all our efforts to seeking solutions and bringing them about. And one of the main emphasis that we are putting in this activity is on the creation of mechanisms that would make it possible to implement reform and to create these mechanisms by legislative action

As an example, I would like to bring something that we're trying to achieve, and that is that the chairmen of courts not be appointed by the executive powers but that they be elected by judges. That mechanism in itself would bring about a great change

We also try to achieve a greater participation of the community in the work of the judiciary. The newest legislation sharply limits the role of human

rights

activists and of representatives of the community

So this, in brief, are some of the processes that we're watching and that we try to influence

MCNAMARA: Thank you very much. I wanted to start out before opening to the floor with two brief questions from Vladimir Putin himself. In his state-of-the-federation address where he acknowledges the need to have a critical appraisal of

the state of democracy in the Russian Federation, he asked, "Is the political system

in its current form an instrument of real people power?" So if any of our panelists

are interested in responding to President Putin's question

ALEXEEVA: I think our very short reports is our common answer to this question

(THROUGH INTERPRETER

Well, actually, I would say that the answer to this question is contained in what we have said up to now in our presentations

MCNAMARA: Thank you. The answer may be the same for the second question, which is how fruitful is the dialogue between the authorities and society

SIMONOV: It is a fantastic question, because our dialogue consists of a

question which was put in 2001, answered in 2002, repeated in 2003 and this is the

conversation leads on and on

MCNAMARA: Perhaps I'll try a question of my own before opening to the floor, and this is from a paragraph in the letter of our commission leaders to

President Bush. And I quote, "In another troubling trend, a recent Moscow municipal

court ruling effectively bans the religious activities of the local community of

Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian capital. This case should set off alarm bells

for members of other religious minorities in Moscow and beyond

There has also been a heightened rhetoric by Russian officials with frequent references to so-called traditional religions which raises serious concerns over the

status of individuals belonging to minority religious communities in Russia, many of

whom have existed in Russia for over a century.

So I wonder if someone might be able to address the question of religious

liberties in the Russian Federation

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Yes, I can answer but I will answer in

Russian because this is a very complex question, and I am used to speaking about it

in Russian. Unfortunately, I will have to say that the situation of so-called non

traditional religion, which in fact really means all but the Russian Orthodox

Church, that situation is becoming more and more difficult each year

Although Islam, Judaism and Buddhism are considered to be traditional religions, their situation, or the situation of their (inaudible) is becoming more

and more difficult every year and not even to mention the situation of Protestants,

Catholics and Krishnas

And, unfortunately, I have to say that the very active and very reactional role in these developments is played by the Moscow patriarchy. Unfortunately, the

Russian Orthodox Church seems to be striving to become the same type of state religion that it used to be under the (inaudible), and this is met by a very benevolent reaction on the part of the federal and also regional and municipal authorities

Our constitution state that all our citizens have the same rights no matter what their religion and their religious views, and there is no mention in the constitution about traditional and non-traditional religions. So because of this,

this law from its very conception and inception is anti-constitutional. But what is

worse than the law is the practice, and with each year this practice becomes more

and more harsh

A good example is the case that was mentioned by Mr. McNamara, and that is

the community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow. This case has been going on for years, and in spite of the fact there were a number of positive decisions in favor of the community by the courts, the prosecution again and again appeals and protests, and so the case is once again before the courts, and the community of Jehovah's Witnesses, which number about 10,000 people, is still being refused what is called registration, legal status

MCNAMARA: Although, ironically, they have registration at the federal level

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) The irony of this is that on the federal level the community is registered. So are other Jehovah's Witnesses community in Russia that all together number 400,000. The reason that the Moscow court refuses to register that particular community is that, and it's totally crazy, is that the analysis of their writings indicates that they feel that their religion is the only correct one. Well, what religion does not claim that, including the Russian Orthodox Church

We also know that there has been an increase in cases of desecration and destruction of churches and other temples, places of worship of other religions, as well as beatings of members of other religions, such as pastors, Catholic priests

and Krishnas. And, unfortunately, when these communities appeal for help and redress, they receive no support, no reply from the authorities. And the only ones who speak out in their defense are some, not all, non-governmental human rights organizations, because even not all of these organizations understand the problem

In its activities, the Russian Orthodox Church claims that it represents from 85 to 90 percent of the Russian population. If one considers that every Russian is Russian Orthodox, then, well, maybe there would be something to claim.

However, if you consider the fact that practicing Russian Orthodox believers constitute only about 2 percent of the population, this becomes a tenuous argument.

However, the federal government obviously supports the Russian Orthodox Church as an

almost state religion, and this is given substance by the fact that President Putin

is often seen in company with the patriarch and attends services in the Russian Orthodox Church

MCNAMARA: Now we'll open the mike to questions from the floor. As I said at the outset, if you could indicate your name and any affiliation that you have and

to whom you're addressing your question

KELEMEN: Yes. I'm Michele Kelemen with National Public Radio. And I realize you came here to talk about the president, but, as Mr. McNamara mentioned at

the top, a lot of us are thinking about the past, about Ronald Reagan, and I wondered if, particularly Mr. Simonov and Mr. Roginsky, if you can share with us any recollections you might have of whether Reagan inspired you to go into this business of human rights, where you were when he was making his speeches about evil empire

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) The first presidency of President Reagan was spent by me in prison, and I liked him very much. But once I left prison and had my first cup of coffee, everybody at that point was celebrating, saying that communism had been defeated, President Reagan had won, and everything began to change. So I must say I personally, sentimentally, have a very, very good feeling and attitude towards President Reagan

Then he didn't start any idiotic wars, as opposed to some of your other presidents, and the fact that he fought communism that was a sacred cross

SIMONOV: I will not be quite as generous. I hated Reagan. A person that attacked my country, said things that were unpleasant for me to hear, and my transformation from a Soviet man to a post-Soviet man occurred totally without his participation

But when in '88 I came for the first time to the United States, I discovered that all my friends, political emigrates who had come here earlier, adored

Reagan.

That forced me to reevaluate my views of Reagan but not to change them

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) I cannot remain silent because I was among these political emigrates who had come here in '77 during the Carter administration. I was very concerned during the election campaign when Reagan ridiculed Carter for his human rights inclinations, and I was afraid that should Reagan win, that the cause of human rights would suffer. And then, however, I discovered that once he became president Reagan forgot his irony regarding Carter's

human rights inclinations and assumed the mantle of the fight for human rights and

actually hammered the Soviet Union in a way that Carter would never even dream of.

So I have become to love him

Eventually, when I got my American citizenship I did get to vote, and I voted only once in a presidential election, and it was during the election for second term of President Reagan

MCNAMARA: Well, we have secrecy of the ballot, so you don't have to reveal who you voted for

(LAUGHTER)

The next questioner, please. If you'll approach the mike and indicate your name and affiliation

GOLDFARB: Alex Goldfarb, Foundation for Civil Liberties of New York. I have a question which actually has to do what should be done about this whole (inaudible). Having said that, what the United States policy should be towards Russia, and I have three specific issues which I just list that must be particularly interesting to people in this building

MCNAMARA: Excuse me, if we could have a translation

GOLDFARB: The first question is that the United States Holocaust Museum has placed in Chechnya on the genocide watch list, and according to the statistics published by the American Committee for Peace in Chechnya, the level of atrocities, both in absolute and in relative terms, has far surpassed what was seen in Kosovo and in Bosnia. Yet Mr. Milosevic is on the dock in Hague while Mr. Putin is here at the G8 meeting

So my first question is whether you would consider -- would advice the Holocaust Museum to raise the level and call what's happening in Chechnya a true genocide

The second question has to do with American funding of the human rights movement in Russia. According to the statistics, the amount of money allocated by the Congress through the Freedom Support Act to Russia is steadily increasing. The

intention is to phase it out

CLARKSON: It's increasing

GOLDFARB: It's decreasing, sorry. Decreasing

CLARKSON: Decreasing

GOLDFARB: So the figure for 2002 for Russia was \$162 million and for 2005 will be \$79 million

CLARKSON: How much

GOLDFARB: Seventy-nine. So, obviously, your comments would be appreciated

Number three has to do with what (inaudible) said about the dilemma with regards to the war on terror. In 1945, there was a similar situation when the United States was involved with Russia as ally against very bad enemy. So my question is should Mr. Putin, for whatever reason, decide not to be friendly and not

to cooperate with the West, is there anything in the Russian society or political

system or Mr. Putin's own constituency today that would prevent this turn

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) OK. That's a number of questions, so -

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) It seems to me that the term, "genocide," is not accurate. It's absolutely inaccurate. I'm happy that there is some exhibit or

some stand in the Museum of Holocaust -- I have not visited it yet -- that mentions

Chechnya. If I could, I would create such stands or exhibits at the entrance to the

Congress of the United States, to the British parliament, to all governments and museums throughout the world

Terrible crimes are being committed and have been committed in Chechnya.

Numerically, it compares to the height of terror in the Soviet Union in '37

and '38. Forty-four persons or victims for every 10,000 of the population, and this

is the same for '38 and '37 in Russia

This is terror. This is terror but this is not genocide. Genocide against

the Chechnyan people was committed in 1944. That was true genocide, although the

number of people that died was smaller than have died now

I don't know why people love to apply the term, "genocide," to every mass

crime committed. The Polish, for example, talk about genocide committed there, and

truly the number of people who died in Poland was great, but those are cases of

state terror or state terrorism rather than genocide. That is my personal view of

the matter. The second question will be answered by Simonov

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) We have already a number of times expressed

our concern about the diminution of financing on the part of American

foundations.

We have met repeatedly with a number of emissaries, both of the American government

and American NGOs, on the subject, both in the United States and in Moscow

We have a feeling that Americans do not quite correctly understand what is

happening in Russia. They seem to like the democratic record of the current Russian

government, and they seem to be taking this rhetoric as the truth of something

From that point of view, the decrease or cessation of help in the cause of

creating a civil society in Russia we find extremely worrisome

The third question now, whether there will be forces within Russian society

to react to a change in Putin position and, if I'm correctly saying this, if he

changes from being an ally for our allies to an enemy of our enemies, I have

attempted to say when it happens, then we'll see

Maybe this was not a very proper way of phrasing it, so I am going to try to

be less concise. I do not think that such a sharp turn can occur, but a gradual

change is possible because his popularity in Russia does not depend on his position

vis-a-vis the West; it depends on many other factors. Those people who would have

the desire or the inclination to protest will have great difficulty freeing

themselves or climbing from under his rhetoric, and, therefore, there will be very

few of those

MCNAMARA: The gentleman

ANDRIK: Hi. My name is James Andrik. I'm a human rights attorney with Jehovah's Witnesses, the Office of General Counsel. My question I think is mostly

for Mr. Roginsky and Ms. Alexeeva. I was in Moscow, the Moscow courtroom on March

26 of this year when the judge ruled that the 11,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow

would be banned and their religious activity liquidated

I was there for nearly two months of the latest version or the latest part

of the trial, and during that entire time there were no facts given that would back

up the claim of the prosecutor, but yet the judge, I think along the lines of Mr.

Roginsky with the non-independent judicial system, came down with this decision

We immediately filed a notice of appeal, and I'm wondering..

MCNAMARA: Perhaps you could -- the rights of the translator

ANDRIK: OK. We immediately filed a notice of appeal, and now the appeal is going to be heard on June 16, next Wednesday. And I was wondering what is your prediction to the outcome of the trial or rather the appeal, and how far do you think the Russian government is willing to allow the situation to digress

SIMONOV: If your president will read the letter of our president..

ALEXEEVA: Or an impression of..

SIMONOV: No. If your president will question about it to our president, there might be some steps forward. Otherwise, there won't be

ALEXEEVA: That's right. It's very important. Try to do it. And good luck

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) I have many contacts with Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelical Baptists, and I could add to your sad story of Jehovah's

Witnesses many instances where Baptists in Moscow are being deprived of places of

worship and simply evicted. Quite honestly, I do not understand what inspires this

policy. Ms. Alexeeva says that I do..

ALEXEEVA: No, no. I understand approximately (inaudible

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Jehovah's Witnesses understand where it's coming from. Let's put it this way: I am not optimistic about this

But all kinds of convoluted possibilities --- for example, your question may appear on some Internet sites. Somebody in Russia is going to read it, take it to

some higher up, show it to him, and the guy may say, "Oh, well, maybe we shouldn't

touch this. Maybe we should leave it alone." See, we have a policy -- our policies

are based on intrigue

POLYAKOVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) As a lawyer, I might suggest that if there is an appeal to the European courts or even simply statements about an intent to appeal to the European courts, that may have an effect

MCNAMARA: Yes

BRZEZINSKI: My name is Constantine Brzezinski. I'm a Russian writer journalist and retired lieutenant colonel of the KGB, KGB intelligence, now living in America. In 1998, Mr. Simonov wrote a letter (inaudible). That's why I'm here in America

So just my question is following. Mr. Roginsky and all other members of your jury, gave a lot of symbols of today's situation in Russia, but I think they need some determinations. But there is some entire general determination, what is on in Russia now, what system has been formed there, what system of state is underway there under Putin

I'm an historian, and I understand quite well (inaudible). They say that the (inaudible) system is under construction in Russia. You said about the state of Russian business is the main symbol of fascism, the nationalism of Russia, secondly. Thirdly, we should add the role of the KGB which is much more than was

the role of Gestapo in Nazi Germany. And, fourth, Americanism for which we don't

know here and which is the state (inaudible) in Russia now

Do you agree with me that the fascist system is under creation, underway now

or probably has already been created or you're hopeful about some democracy?

As a

former KGB, I know, I'm sure and feel that this has already been created. It will

never change

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) If you look from the outside in, everything seems to be more frightening than when you are on the inside in that state. I don't think that the fascist system is being created in our country, and

even less that it has already been created

And the best proof thereof is that we all are sitting here in the American

Helsinki Commission and discussing the fact whether the fascist system is being created or has been created in Russia. And a week from now we are going to return

to Moscow to our apartments without fear that we would be arrested and that somebody

is going to start taking needles under our nails

We are moving in a direction, but the world is a very multifaceted place,

and there are many bad directions in which one can move, not necessarily in the direction of fascist

SIMONOV: As an historian, it's better not to throw around words -- genocide, fascism. And I would say that for neither term is there enough basis, thank God, at least until now, neither for fascist nor genocide

MCNAMARA: Are there any additional questions

LUCIUS: I have a general question for the entire panel. We've been talking about the sort of authoritarian turn of Russia. Do you have any specific recommendations for either other nations or international organizations as far as steps they could take to help curb that or even reverse it

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) First recommendation, never take at face value anything said by officials in Russia. Words have to be confirmed and buttressed by some kind of action

MCNAMARA: If I could interject for a moment. There was one who once said, "Trust but verify," so perhaps that term applies

SIMONOV: We trust but no journalists in Russia

(LAUGHTER)

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Second recommendation, one thing is improving the expertise level in western organizations, because many of these organizations have people working for them who are really very much should be called

dilettante. And the result of this is a very great number of incorrect decisions

made by these organizations in regard to Russia and in Russia

They take counsel with the wrong people. They use as experts the wrong kind of people. All that needs to be corrected. Wrong experts

Until recently, the foremost expert on civil society in Russia for most of the press and many NGOs was Nyet Pavlosky (ph)

MCNAMARA: Are there any other questions. OK. You may have some questions for individuals panelists once the briefing is concluded

Perhaps to give a little bit of historical perspective, shortly after I

started working at this commission in the spring of 1986, the signatory countries to

the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe convened a follow-up meeting in

Vienna on November 4, 1986, and when we started that meeting we were aware, we knew

of over 700 political prisoners in the Soviet Union. And there were tens of thousands of divided families including some who were American spouses of Soviet citizens

And when that meeting concluded on January 19, 1989, the last day of

President Reagan's presidency, all of those political prisoners had been released,

and thousands of those divided families were reunited. So this is what I would

attribute as a legacy to the determination of his administration through is
leadership

And, certainly, our hope would be that others would follow in speaking the
truth about violations and backing up their rhetoric with deeds

ALEXEEVA: I think Helsinki Commission (inaudible) plays and will play a
very important role in this process, and thank the commission for your work

MCNAMARA: Thank you very much. You can be assured of that. Thank you

[Whereupon the briefing ended at 00:00 p.m.]

EN

MCNAMARA: Good afternoon, and on behalf of the Helsinki Commission, I am
pleased to welcome you to this briefing on human rights trends in the Russian
Federation, on behalf of our commission chairman, Congressman Christopher
Smith, and
our commission co-chairman, Senator Ben Lighthorse Campbell

It is fitting that we begin with a moment of silence to honor the life of

President Ronald Reagan, a stalwart defender of freedom in human rights who
matched

his rhetoric with concrete deeds

(MOMENT OF SILENCE)

MCNAMARA: My name is Ron McNamara. I'm currently serving as the

commission's deputy chief of staff. Today's briefing is particularly timely as President Putin will be visiting the United States this week for meetings at Sea Island, Georgia in conjunction with the G8 Summit meeting. And it is the latest in a series of commission events focused on developments in the Russian Federation

Most recently, the commission held a hearing on Russia on May 20. The full transcript of that hearing can be accessed on the commission's web site, www.csce.gov. As is customary, there will be a full transcript of today's briefing posted on the same web site within 24 hours

As the commission leadership acknowledged at the May 20 hearing, Russia has made tremendous strides in advancing democratic progress, human rights, civil liberties and press freedoms since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Much of this progress, I would underscore, was made during the 1990s

With President Putin's ascent to power, influential elements in his government appear determined to reverse Russia's direction and institute a more authoritarian policy of what some in his inner circle would characterize as managed democracy

Against that backdrop, I must admit I was somewhat puzzled by some of the rhetoric in President Putin's May 26 state-of-the-federation address. For example,

he asserts that among his aims are a mature democracy and a developed civil society. Elsewhere he asserts that, "Fidelity to democratic values is dictated by the will of our people." Continuing on, Putin insists that, quote, "Nobody and nothing will stop Russia on the road to strengthening of democracy and ensuing human rights and freedoms.

In an abrupt and chilling shift later in that same speech, the Russian president charges that some NGOs have made a priority of, quote, "obtaining funding from influential foreign or domestic foundations," end quote. He goes on to chide such groups for not addressing the most acute problems of the country

Putin's rhetoric must be judged against the concrete deeds of his administration as they affect pluralistic democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In this regard, there appears to be some significant gaps, especially as concerns the conduct of recent elections in the Russian Federation

The commission's recent hearing also touched on the bout of spymania that has recently broke out in Russia with serious implications for some scientists and academicians. There are also concerns over the actions taken against media outlets, and of course there are concerns over the situation in Chechnya as the war that propelled Putin into the presidency enters its fifth year

I would also mention that available outside on our documents table is a copy of a letter from our commission's leadership to President Bush urging him to raise a number of these concerns with President Putin when they meet starting tomorrow at the G8 Summit

Amazingly, we are now hearing the term, "political prisoner," ominously juxtaposed with the Russian Federation. As the OSCE and other international organizations work to promote civil society and democratic values in the OSCE participating states, will Russia be part of the solution or part of the problem?

If the latter, what does this portend for the people of Russia and the international community

As President Bush prepares to meet his Russian counterpart, our panelists, prominent in the Russian human rights movement, are well placed to provide their unique insights into trends in Russia. Is there an overreaction to not only Putin's words but his deeds? Might these issues be left to the Russian themselves to resolve, as was suggested by one of the witnesses at the commission's May 20 hearing? What is the role of Russian civil society in advancing democracy, human rights and the rule of law? And, certainly, what is the role of the OSCE and the international community

It's my pleasure to introduce Ludmilla Alexeeva, chairperson of the Moscow Helsinki Group and president of the International Helsinki Federation. A political

exile during the Soviet era, she returned to Moscow in 1993 to resume her work with

the reconstituted Moscow Helsinki Group

Arseni Roginsky is chairman of the International Memorial Society,

established in the late 1980s to investigate and publicize Soviet repression during

the Stalin era. Memorial has been very active in reporting on the human rights situation in Chechnya

Alexei Simonov is president of the Glasnost Defense Foundation, an organization that

supports freedom of the press, trains journalists and works to defend their rights

And, finally, Mara Polyakova is director of the Independent Council For

Legal Expertise, an organization that specializes in analyzing legislation on human

rights and advising lawyers on high profile cases involving rights violations

Before proceeding, I'd also acknowledge the assistance of the National

Endowment for Democracy as our commission staff prepared for today's briefing

As is customary again, there will be a full transcription of today's

proceedings. Should time permit, once all of our panelists have made their

presentations, it would be my intention to open the microphone that we have available to the floor for questions from the audience. What we would ask is that you indicate your name and any affiliation that you may have and which of the panelists you would like to address your question

At this juncture then, I would turn to Mr. Roginsky for his presentation

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) My task is to very briefly describe the situation in Russia from the point of view of those who defend human rights. Some of the theses which I will present now will be then developed by my colleagues

The main tendency in the life of our society over the last few years has been the efforts of the powers that be to destroy the isolated the islands of independence and democracy that still continue to exist in Russia. During the elections of last year, a completely governable, or pocket, parliament has been created

It was created -- the parliament was created by presidential forces, but it has become even more conservative than the presidential administration. This gives the president room for maneuvering. Therefore, because of the conservative attitude of the parliament, he can sometimes voice more liberal corrective ideas than the parliament desires. Just a tiny little bit. Actually, in principle, nothing is changed, because, basically, these are his initiatives

A good example is the new law on meetings and demonstrations, which in fact has seriously limited the ability to conduct meetings and demonstrations, the new law on referendums, which basically destroys any possibility for conducting referendums. And so it is totally governable by the state administration parliament

As to the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, it has totally lost its role, even its decorative role. It has become insignificant

Secondly, elections. Elections have become, and this is from the lowest municipal levels to the highest levels, has become, as we call it, made-to-order elections. They're conducted at the order of and completely so of the powers that be but also partially influenced by money. Sometimes the two kind of work across purposes

A typical example is the elimination from contention of candidates, whether they be deputies or governors, that are not desirable from the point of view of the administration

Let us look back at the last elections in Chechnya, the presidential elections in Chechnya, in which all, more or less, influential candidates for the presidential position who were opponents of the one favored by the Kremlin were eliminated. A more detailed description of the Chechnyan elections will be

given

by -- the Russian elections will be given by Ludmilla Alexeeva

Freedom of speech, officially it exists. In fact, though, the zone of freedom of speech no longer exists. Television is now formally or informally, directly or indirectly, under governmental control. And as you can imagine, in a

country as large as Russia, television has primary significance

The circulation of independent newspapers and publications, from my point of view, is now 700,000, 800,000, but my colleague, Mr. Simonov, feels that I'm an optimist, that the actual figure is 500,000. And this is for a country of 150 million. Alexei Simonov will speak to this problem in more detail

Point four, the problem of an independent judiciary. As in the case of freedom of speech, it would be incorrect to say that we do not have an independent

court system. In those cases which are no interest to the state, the independence

exists, but if the government is interested in that particular case, there is no freedom, just as there was no freedom during the Soviet times

Also, the court system is under great influence of the nationalistic, patriotic ideology that is flourishing in Russia at this time. You can see it in

the system of jury trials. Recently, a jury found not guilty a group of officers

and soldiers that had murdered a group of civilians in Chechnya. The courts

did,

however, the jury said -- the jury and the courts did state that indeed the murder

had taken place, the people were killed. The people who were being tried were those

who perpetrated the killing; however, they were not guilty. Again, more details

about this and about the judiciary system, the court system in Russia will be

described by Mara Polyakova

I need to speak separately about the problem of Chechnya. The last three

years have seen what we call the Chechnyazation of the conflict. What does that

mean? At the beginning, the fight against terrorist acts and also against the

military actions of the separatists was conducted and the terrorist acts were

committed against them by federal military forces. Now this fight is carried out

more and more by internal Chechnya military formations

Abductions, disappearances and kidnapping of people continue in Chechnya.

Here is a schedule -- and you will be able to pick this up -- on a monthly basis of

such kidnappings, disappearances and abductions. The Memorial is conducting this

kind of survey, but, unfortunately, we have accessed only 25 percent of the

territory. And still we know by name 500 Chech people who have disappeared over the

last year and already 200 for this year. Some of them are returned eventually, some

of them are found dead, and some of them are missing. You will see this

document

If we sum up, what do we have? We do not see any active liberal parties in

Russia. We see the more and more limited freedom of speech, but we see a parliament

that is fully under the control of the government, a dependent judiciary and also,

this is something new, an attack against independent business when it attempts to

have a political or social position of its own. In this context, we would mention

the case of Khodorkovsky. The trial, his trial is scheduled to start within the

next few days, and what remains of free Russian society is very encouraged by this

prospect

And the newest attack is against that which remains of the independent, non

governmental organizations in Russia. This attack was first heard in the

presidential speech on the state of the republic, which means that it is now our

turn

We don't know what the future holds, but we appeal to you also to give us

some thought, because we are very much aware of the double approach to Putin's

Russia. On the one hand, Putin is our royal partner in our struggle against

terrorism, but it should be noted that the idea of what terrorism is differs between

how it is conceived in the West and in Russia. And on the other hand, something

that seems to be getting clear to everybody is that something isn't quite right

with

democracy in Russia

But at this point, the West seems to be giving more weight to the idea of

Putin as a staunch ally in the fight against terrorism because that seems to be more

important. But we feel that this problem needs to be viewed as somewhat deeper.

Thank you

MCNAMARA: Thank you

And our next panelist will be Ludmilla Alexeeva

ALEXEEVA: Thank you. I will speak about situation with elections in

Russia. The relatively recent end of the Soviet system of elections has caused the

freedom and fairness of elections in the young Russian states to still be Russia

under development. These changes in development have not been helped by the

systematic government-sponsored (inaudible) of election freedoms over the last few

years

This is (inaudible) in the recent federal election cycle (inaudible). The

state Duma elections last year and the presidential election in this year were

harshly criticized by both foreign and domestic observer groups. Of particular

concern was the crackdown on independent press and government for (inaudible) for

pro-Kremlin fascists

Media outlets were limited in their reporting freedom by law on reporting accuracy that was unclear in the (inaudible) media but harsh in the French. This

allowed for a selective approach in (inaudible) news reports. As a reaction, the

independent media community decided to rather be safe than sorry and limit their coverage of election and latest news

Government-controlled media (inaudible) those campaigns in an utterly biased way. As the OSCE concludes after the presidential campaign, strong and independent

media will provide unbiased (inaudible) of campaigns, thereby enabling the electoral

to make an important choice (inaudible). Government (inaudible) for Kremlin

(inaudible) eliminated all stages of the election process. Some candidates

(inaudible) which were not applied to their more conformist colleagues. Registered

candidates were denied the chance to (inaudible) to meet this potential

(inaudible). In all instance, the local government (inaudible) to deny access to

certain (inaudible)

Election conditions are not only independent but they were under strong

pressure from local (inaudible) governments. The president decided to forego his

right to participate in the state-sponsored debate, leaving (inaudible).

Furthermore, the (inaudible) activities of the president allowed him to conduct an

indirect election campaign without real competition. As a result, only one

opposition party was able to clear the 5 percent barrier and the pro-presidential

party, United Fascia (ph) was able to form a majority in parliament (inaudible),

which is the constitution (inaudible)

President Putin was elected with an overwhelming majority, but his election

seems to be the (inaudible) result of the (inaudible). Now that the election cycle

was ended, a clear solidification of the president's power in all areas of political

life has taken place. The atmosphere of political debate in parliament has been

(inaudible) to the extent that the legislature has become a superconductor for laws

handed down from the presidential administration. These have been approved in a way

that completely precludes any chance for a public debate of proposed laws

Of particular concern are the recent cause for changes that amount to the

(inaudible) of freedoms. This includes a new law on the referendum and proposed

changes to the (inaudible). The new law on referenda was submitted to the

parliament on May 19 and approved as (inaudible) on June 2. It is expected that it

will take effect at the end of this month. The draft law calls for sufficient

limitations of the (inaudible) to initiate referendums and the laws for increased

government control for the process

In addition, it (inaudible) 2 million support signatures in-house. Even a referendum that will have been initiated 100 percent according to the law can now

be killed by the mid-level bureaucrats. (inaudible) be able to initiate a referendum. It takes (inaudible) to influence political process (inaudible) from

independent groups

Of even more concern is the proposed amendment to election laws. They have not been sent to the parliament for (inaudible) or made public, but the key aspects

have been leaked to the press. This reportedly includes (inaudible) for entering

parliament. The first change, eliminating (inaudible) statistics, would further increase (inaudible). Everybody who wants to enter parliament would have to cut deal (inaudible) to get on their candidate list. Last (inaudible) of independence

for those deputies (inaudible) presented to their institutions will be secret. The

people will have no direct representatives in parliament anymore. Deputies will only be (inaudible) rather than the people

The second change, eliminating party blocks, is clearly focused (inaudible) opposition party. Discussions have been going on recently of creating (inaudible)

two or more liberal parties that were denied entrance to the parliament during the

last election. The new law would force them to discuss the matter. Managing parties whose only ideology is allegiance to the Kremlin is easy. Managing parties that are small but help to well define the (inaudible) opposition is much harder

Finally, increasing (inaudible) for parties to enter the Duma (inaudible) would preclude any medium-sized parties to enter the parliament. It would certainly limit the diversity of political views in the legislature, causing the creation of (inaudible), and it would cause even more millions of Russian citizens to (inaudible), since their parties would not be able to enter the parliament

The Russian institution has a clear opinion on this matter. The referendum and free elections shall be the supreme direct manifestation of the power of the people. The only conclusion is that the recent moves of the government limits this supreme direct manifestation of the power of the people. Thank you

MCNAMARA: Thank you very much

And our next speaker will be Alexei Simonov

SIMONOV: Thank you. My colleagues from National Endowment for Democracy know from the very first test of our knowing each other I deny that there is freedom of speech in Russia. And I deny it now, and I did deny it 10 years ago as well.

Because there is -- well, we have Glasnost, but it still is really growing smaller

and smaller, and we have about 500,000 copies of distribution of four liberal magazines of (inaudible). No way is this (inaudible), including and with 50 other

newspapers in the region, each of them with distribution from 1,500 to 5,000 each.

This is our liberal storage

The problem becomes even more difficult because to have freedom of speech

you have this Glasnost to be heard. When I'm asked the difference between Glasnost

and freedom of speech, I usually use the story from Hans Christian Anderson that the

opportunity of shouting out of the crowd that the king is naked is Glasnost, and we

still have it. The opportunity to say to the king before he enters the square

doesn't exist, we don't have. And that's what is freedom of speech. It means not

only to shout out but to be heard

More than that, this 500,000 are, well, let us say, (inaudible), because the

problem is that democrats even in press can't go together. They really quarrel with

each other. They contradict each other. And we have no contradictory great amount

of press and contradictory small amount of democratic press. This is the dramatic

situation

The other part of drama in it is that our small guy who shouts of the crowd

that the kind is naked are sometimes hired by other (inaudible). The (inaudible),

which is the method which is used against practically every guy in the former Soviet

Union, now in Russia, is the most practical thing and the most used thing, even in

the democratic press

Sometimes we can't check up with the information they got, and they come out

with information which can be really -- can be faced in the court, and we have a lot

of cases in courts of protection of honor and dignity, you call it cases of

defamation. But, in general, there is about, let me say, about -- in our

(inaudible), which also covers not all the Russia but covers about 50 percent of

Russian territory. It is about 40 to 50 a month

The venue of each appeal to the court becomes bigger and bigger. In June

last year, a year ago, it was up to a million rubles, not dollars, up to a million

rubles. But what does it mean a million rubles to the local newspaper of 5,000

distribution

So the problem of freedom of speech doesn't include television at all,

because there is no freedom of speech in television, in Russian television. The

last example is very vivid. Mr. (inaudible) who was recently taken into -- well,

dismissed from his position in (inaudible), together with his program, didn't have

really any ideological contradictions with the power. He had contradictions in

style, but he was dismissed nevertheless. So they don't want even contradictions in

(inaudible) on the federal channels. If he would be somewhere in region, it might

be that he would be quite OK, but each region has a Putin of its own, and his name

is governor, and they also don't like stylish differences

So it is already the ritualistic news with Putin as the first news, with

Putin as the second news, with something of the Central Bank as the third news and

then criminal and then sports. That is the majority of the news in my country

More than that, different channels do seem absolutely alike. If you take a

guy from the first channel and put it into the news program of the third channel, it

will fit. And the same vice versa, which really doesn't bring any variety of sources and variety of opportunity

Besides that, the whole press, so I don't speak about television, has the

words of freedom of speech (inaudible). There is opportunities of doing it in

press. So about press, one-third of this press is -- the chief editors of the local

press are no more free editors and they are not governed by the law on media, by the

media law because they are bureaucrats of the local governments. They belong

to the

bureaucratic society, and they are governed by the law on the bureaucracy, or whatever, civil service, as civil servants. It's about one-third

The editorials are organized as (inaudible), which means the states unitary organizations or local Unitarian organizations, which means that they are a part of

the local bureaucracy, in general. Others, more than 50 percent, don't live with

the two main sources with which generally lives the press in the West -- I mean advertising and distribution. They are supported this way or they sell their pages

just for the advertising but without announcing that it is advertising

So we have only 10 or 15 percent of the papers that this way or that way cover their own operations by their own money. Most of them take money from somewhere, and each has this special somewhere, but nobody wants to speak of these

somewheres and this is another problem, because if you come to the newspaper which

gets its money somewhere, they are always open to any kind of political attack.

They are very polite when you come

So this is the situation in press, this is the situation in the media, and I

have to end up with the following sentence. There is only one real hope, that we

shall have better press. We shall have it better if first we shall lose it at all.

That is a problem which -- you see, I'm trying to protect media rights. I am monitoring all these things daily, and I'm doing whatever I can and whatever it is

possible sometimes to protect the people that were this way or that way and who have

problems in this press. But at the same time, I (inaudible) that we are becoming a

flag shop with the flag, and there's no (inaudible) around it

MCNAMARA: Thank you

Our final presenter this afternoon will be Mara Polyakova

POLYAKOVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Judiciary reform in Russia, as any other reform, is a very complex combination of various problems that need to be solved.

We monitor the legislative activity of the deputies in regard to the defense of human rights, and we analyze this policy and the tendencies

And it should be noted that the situation in the legislative or practical field is characterized by very contradictory and complex processes. The

contradiction consists in the fact that it seems that new democratic laws are being

passed, new democratic institutions are being created, which declare democratic principles and positions, but at the same time there are no mechanisms for

implementing these new laws, for mechanisms are created but are used for entirely

different purposes

For non-specialists, these processes are not always evident, and that is one of the greatest complications in conducting reform. Very evident are these contradictions in the implementation of judiciary reform

Finally, the long await of reform that we all had been waiting for for so

long has gone out of the realm of private enthusiasts to a state- and government-led

process. Now we feel the support on the part of the president and some other

institutions of power. With the assistance or with the support of the president and

his administration, a working group was created to work out the reform

All the new tendencies and all the new changes have been highly

propagandized by (inaudible) and others, and because of this support, the ability of

these new changes to be pushed forward was increased. New (inaudible) and new laws

and new institutions, legal institutions were created in a relatively short time,

and this reform was perceived, even among the democratic circles in Russia, as a

democratic reform

For example, the rule or the institution of arrests being ordered by courts

was introduced. The independence of judges was proclaimed. The adversarial nature

of the courts was also proclaimed and established. The system of jury trials was

spread, widened, from nine regions to all 89 regions of Russia, although there

are

2,500 courts in Russia

If you are not familiar with the practice of law in Russia and where the mentality of our judges and of our law and order institutions and if one doesn't know how the non-legal technologies are applied and work within the system, then this reform could be hailed, and this, indeed, was done by our press

However, unfortunately, in the case of most of these democratic new norms, either no mechanisms were created for implementing them or mechanisms were created that when used by the current system actually hinder and do not improve the situation with human rights

What were the effects in practice? When we were simply talking about reforms, we were envisioning reform as finding solutions for the problems that led to very difficult and painful situations. We were sure or anticipated that the question of the independence of the judiciary and of judges, individual judges, would be solved, that the problem of the application of torture by the police and other institutions, the problem of falsifying evidence and that many other problems would be solved. However, not one of these serious problems that were the aim of reform has been solved by the new neologisms that have been introduced

The judges are still dependent in spite of the fact that their independence

was loudly proclaimed (inaudible) in the constitution and other laws, because the

real power remains in the hands of the chairmen of the court who are part or prone

to the influence by the executive

Tortures are still applied, the records of court proceedings are still being

falsified. The legal (inaudible) of judges and members of the police and other

institutions are still pervasive. Also, in the mentality of the workers and also in

the daily activities of the court system, the interests of the state are given

precedence over the interests of the civilians

However, work on reforming all of this continues and we all still apply all

our efforts to seeking solutions and bringing them about. And one of the main

emphasis that we are putting in this activity is on the creation of mechanisms that

would make it possible to implement reform and to create these mechanisms by

legislative action

As an example, I would like to bring something that we're trying to achieve,

and that is that the chairmen of courts not be appointed by the executive powers but

that they be elected by judges. That mechanism in itself would bring about a great

change

We also try to achieve a greater participation of the community in the work

of the judiciary. The newest legislation sharply limits the role of human rights

activists and of representatives of the community

So this, in brief, are some of the processes that we're watching and that we try to influence

MCNAMARA: Thank you very much. I wanted to start out before opening to the floor with two brief questions from Vladimir Putin himself. In his state-of-the-federation address where he acknowledges the need to have a critical appraisal of

the state of democracy in the Russian Federation, he asked, "Is the political system

in its current form an instrument of real people power?" So if any of our panelists

are interested in responding to President Putin's question

ALEXEEVA: I think our very short reports is our common answer to this question

(THROUGH INTERPRETER

Well, actually, I would say that the answer to this question is contained in what we have said up to now in our presentations

MCNAMARA: Thank you. The answer may be the same for the second question, which is how fruitful is the dialogue between the authorities and society

SIMONOV: It is a fantastic question, because our dialogue consists of a question which was put in 2001, answered in 2002, repeated in 2003 and this is the conversation leads on and on

MCNAMARA: Perhaps I'll try a question of my own before opening to the floor, and this is from a paragraph in the letter of our commission leaders to President Bush. And I quote, "In another troubling trend, a recent Moscow municipal court ruling effectively bans the religious activities of the local community of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian capital. This case should set off alarm bells for members of other religious minorities in Moscow and beyond

There has also been a heightened rhetoric by Russian officials with frequent references to so-called traditional religions which raises serious concerns over the status of individuals belonging to minority religious communities in Russia, many of whom have existed in Russia for over a century.

So I wonder if someone might be able to address the question of religious liberties in the Russian Federation

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Yes, I can answer but I will answer in Russian because this is a very complex question, and I am used to speaking about it in Russian. Unfortunately, I will have to say that the situation of so-called non

traditional religion, which in fact really means all but the Russian Orthodox Church, that situation is becoming more and more difficult each year

Although Islam, Judaism and Buddhism are considered to be traditional religions, their situation, or the situation of their (inaudible) is becoming more

and more difficult every year and not even to mention the situation of Protestants,

Catholics and Krishnas

And, unfortunately, I have to say that the very active and very reactionary role in these developments is played by the Moscow patriarchy. Unfortunately, the

Russian Orthodox Church seems to be striving to become the same type of state religion that it used to be under the (inaudible), and this is met by a very benevolent reaction on the part of the federal and also regional and municipal authorities

Our constitution state that all our citizens have the same rights no matter what their religion and their religious views, and there is no mention in the constitution about traditional and non-traditional religions. So because of this,

this law from its very conception and inception is anti-constitutional. But what is

worse than the law is the practice, and with each year this practice becomes more

and more harsh

A good example is the case that was mentioned by Mr. McNamara, and that is the community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow. This case has been going on for years, and in spite of the fact there were a number of positive decisions in favor of the community by the courts, the prosecution again and again appeals and protests, and so the case is once again before the courts, and the community of Jehovah's Witnesses, which number about 10,000 people, is still being refused what is called registration, legal status

MCNAMARA: Although, ironically, they have registration at the federal level

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) The irony of this is that on the federal level the community is registered. So are other Jehovah's Witnesses community in

Russia that all together number 400,000. The reason that the Moscow court refuses

to register that particular community is that, and it's totally crazy, is that the

analysis of their writings indicates that they feel that their religion is the only

correct one. Well, what religion does not claim that, including the Russian Orthodox Church

We also know that there has been an increase in cases of desecration and destruction of churches and other temples, places of worship of other religions, as

well as beatings of members of other religions, such as pastors, Catholic

priests

and Krishnas. And, unfortunately, when these communities appeal for help and redress, they receive no support, no reply from the authorities. And the only ones

who speak out in their defense are some, not all, non-governmental human rights organizations, because even not all of these organizations understand the problem

In its activities, the Russian Orthodox Church claims that it represents

from 85 to 90 percent of the Russian population. If one considers that every

Russian is Russian Orthodox, then, well, maybe there would be something to claim.

However, if you consider the fact that practicing Russian Orthodox believers constitute only about 2 percent of the population, this becomes a tenuous argument.

However, the federal government obviously supports the Russian Orthodox Church as an

almost state religion, and this is given substance by the fact that President Putin

is often seen in company with the patriarch and attends services in the Russian Orthodox Church

MCNAMARA: Now we'll open the mike to questions from the floor. As I said

at the outset, if you could indicate your name and any affiliation that you have and

to whom you're addressing your question

KELEMEN: Yes. I'm Michele Kelemen with National Public Radio. And I

realize you came here to talk about the president, but, as Mr. McNamara mentioned at

the top, a lot of us are thinking about the past, about Ronald Reagan, and I

wondered if, particularly Mr. Simonov and Mr. Roginsky, if you can share with us any

recollections you might have of whether Reagan inspired you to go into this business

of human rights, where you were when he was making his speeches about evil empire

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) The first presidency of President Reagan

was spent by me in prison, and I liked him very much. But once I left prison and

had my first cup of coffee, everybody at that point was celebrating, saying that

communism had been defeated, President Reagan had won, and everything began to

change. So I must say I personally, sentimentally, have a very, very good feeling

and attitude towards President Reagan

Then he didn't start any idiotic wars, as opposed to some of your other

presidents, and the fact that he fought communism that was a sacred cross

SIMONOV: I will not be quite as generous. I hated Reagan. A person that

attacked my country, said things that were unpleasant for me to hear, and my

transformation from a Soviet man to a post-Soviet man occurred totally without his

participation

But when in '88 I came for the first time to the United States, I discovered

that all my friends, political emigrates who had come here earlier, adored Reagan.

That forced me to reevaluate my views of Reagan but not to change them

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) I cannot remain silent because I was among these political emigrates who had come here in '77 during the Carter administration. I was very concerned during the election campaign when Reagan ridiculed Carter for his human rights inclinations, and I was afraid that should Reagan win, that the cause of human rights would suffer. And then, however, I discovered that once he became president Reagan forgot his irony regarding Carter's

human rights inclinations and assumed the mantle of the fight for human rights and

actually hammered the Soviet Union in a way that Carter would never even dream of.

So I have become to love him

Eventually, when I got my American citizenship I did get to vote, and I voted only once in a presidential election, and it was during the election for second term of President Reagan

MCNAMARA: Well, we have secrecy of the ballot, so you don't have to reveal who you voted for

(LAUGHTER)

The next questioner, please. If you'll approach the mike and indicate your

name and affiliation

GOLDFARB: Alex Goldfarb, Foundation for Civil Liberties of New York. I have a question which actually has to do what should be done about this whole (inaudible). Having said that, what the United States policy should be towards Russia, and I have three specific issues which I just list that must be particularly interesting to people in this building

MCNAMARA: Excuse me, if we could have a translation

GOLDFARB: The first question is that the United States Holocaust Museum has placed in Chechnya on the genocide watch list, and according to the statistics published by the American Committee for Peace in Chechnya, the level of atrocities, both in absolute and in relative terms, has far surpassed what was seen in Kosovo and in Bosnia. Yet Mr. Milosevic is on the dock in Hague while Mr. Putin is here at the G8 meeting

So my first question is whether you would consider -- would advice the Holocaust Museum to raise the level and call what's happening in Chechnya a true genocide

The second question has to do with American funding of the human rights movement in Russia. According to the statistics, the amount of money allocated by

the Congress through the Freedom Support Act to Russia is steadily increasing.
The

intention is to phase it out

CLARKSON: It's increasing

GOLDFARB: It's decreasing, sorry. Decreasing

CLARKSON: Decreasing

GOLDFARB: So the figure for 2002 for Russia was \$162 million and for 2005
will be \$79 million

CLARKSON: How much

GOLDFARB: Seventy-nine. So, obviously, your comments would be appreciated

Number three has to do with what (inaudible) said about the dilemma with
regards to the war on terror. In 1945, there was a similar situation when the
United States was involved with Russia as ally against very bad enemy. So my
question is should Mr. Putin, for whatever reason, decide not to be friendly
and not

to cooperate with the West, is there anything in the Russian society or
political

system or Mr. Putin's own constituency today that would prevent this turn

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) OK. That's a number of questions, so -

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) It seems to me that the term, "genocide," is

not accurate. It's absolutely inaccurate. I'm happy that there is some exhibit or

some stand in the Museum of Holocaust -- I have not visited it yet -- that mentions

Chechnya. If I could, I would create such stands or exhibits at the entrance to the

Congress of the United States, to the British parliament, to all governments and museums throughout the world

Terrible crimes are being committed and have been committed in Chechnya.

Numerically, it compares to the height of terror in the Soviet Union in '37

and '38. Forty-four persons or victims for every 10,000 of the population, and this

is the same for '38 and '37 in Russia

This is terror. This is terror but this is not genocide. Genocide against

the Chechnyan people was committed in 1944. That was true genocide, although the

number of people that died was smaller than have died now

I don't know why people love to apply the term, "genocide," to every mass

crime committed. The Polish, for example, talk about genocide committed there, and

truly the number of people who died in Poland was great, but those are cases of

state terror or state terrorism rather than genocide. That is my personal view of

the matter. The second question will be answered by Simonov

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) We have already a number of times expressed

our concern about the diminution of financing on the part of American foundations.

We have met repeatedly with a number of emissaries, both of the American government

and American NGOs, on the subject, both in the United States and in Moscow

We have a feeling that Americans do not quite correctly understand what is

happening in Russia. They seem to like the democratic record of the current Russian

government, and they seem to be taking this rhetoric as the truth of something

From that point of view, the decrease or cessation of help in the cause of

creating a civil society in Russia we find extremely worrisome

The third question now, whether there will be forces within Russian society

to react to a change in Putin position and, if I'm correctly saying this, if he

changes from being an ally for our allies to an enemy of our enemies, I have

attempted to say when it happens, then we'll see

Maybe this was not a very proper way of phrasing it, so I am going to try to

be less concise. I do not think that such a sharp turn can occur, but a gradual

change is possible because his popularity in Russia does not depend on his position

vis-a-vis the West; it depends on many other factors. Those people who would have

the desire or the inclination to protest will have great difficulty freeing

themselves or climbing from under his rhetoric, and, therefore, there will be very

few of those

MCNAMARA: The gentleman

ANDRIK: Hi. My name is James Andrik. I'm a human rights attorney with

Jehovah's Witnesses, the Office of General Counsel. My question I think is mostly

for Mr. Roginsky and Ms. Alexeeva. I was in Moscow, the Moscow courtroom on March

26 of this year when the judge ruled that the 11,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow

would be banned and their religious activity liquidated

I was there for nearly two months of the latest version or the latest part

of the trial, and during that entire time there were no facts given that would back

up the claim of the prosecutor, but yet the judge, I think along the lines of Mr.

Roginsky with the non-independent judicial system, came down with this decision

We immediately filed a notice of appeal, and I'm wondering..

MCNAMARA: Perhaps you could -- the rights of the translator

ANDRIK: OK. We immediately filed a notice of appeal, and now the appeal is going to be heard on June 16, next Wednesday. And I was wondering what is your prediction to the outcome of the trial or rather the appeal, and how far do you think the Russian government is willing to allow the situation to digress

SIMONOV: If your president will read the letter of our president..

ALEXEEVA: Or an impression of..

SIMONOV: No. If your president will question about it to our president, there might be some steps forward. Otherwise, there won't be

ALEXEEVA: That's right. It's very important. Try to do it. And good luck

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) I have many contacts with Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelical Baptists, and I could add to your sad story of Jehovah's

Witnesses many instances where Baptists in Moscow are being deprived of places of

worship and simply evicted. Quite honestly, I do not understand what inspires this

policy. Ms. Alexeeva says that I do..

ALEXEEVA: No, no. I understand approximately (inaudible

ROGINSKY: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Jehovah's Witnesses understand where it's coming from. Let's put it this way: I am not optimistic about this

But all kinds of convoluted possibilities --- for example, your question may appear on some Internet sites. Somebody in Russia is going to read it, take it to

some higher up, show it to him, and the guy may say, "Oh, well, maybe we shouldn't

touch this. Maybe we should leave it alone." See, we have a policy -- our

policies

are based on intrigue

POLYAKOVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) As a lawyer, I might suggest that if there is an appeal to the European courts or even simply statements about an intent to appeal to the European courts, that may have an effect

MCNAMARA: Yes

BRZEZINSKI: My name is Constantine Brzezinski. I'm a Russian writer journalist and retired lieutenant colonel of the KGB, KGB intelligence, now living

in America. In 1998, Mr. Simonov wrote a letter (inaudible). That's why I'm here

in America

So just my question is following. Mr. Roginsky and all other members of your jury, gave a lot of symbols of today's situation in Russia, but I think they

need some determinations. But there is some entire general determination, what is

on in Russia now, what system has been formed there, what system of state is underway there under Putin

I'm an historian, and I understand quite well (inaudible). They say that

the (inaudible) system is under construction in Russia. You said about the state of

Russian business is the main symbol of fascism, the nationalism of Russia,

secondly. Thirdly, we should add the role of the KGB which is much more than was

the role of Gestapo in Nazi Germany. And, fourth, Americanism for which we don't

know here and which is the state (inaudible) in Russia now

Do you agree with me that the fascist system is under creation, underway now

or probably has already been created or you're hopeful about some democracy?
As a

former KGB, I know, I'm sure and feel that this has already been created. It will

never change

ALEXEEVA: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) If you look from the outside in, everything seems to be more frightening than when you are on the inside in that state. I don't think that the fascist system is being created in our country, and

even less that it has already been created

And the best proof thereof is that we all are sitting here in the American Helsinki Commission and discussing the fact whether the fascist system is being created or has been created in Russia. And a week from now we are going to return

to Moscow to our apartments without fear that we would be arrested and that somebody

is going to start taking needles under our nails

We are moving in a direction, but the world is a very multifaceted place, and there are many bad directions in which one can move, not necessarily in the

direction of fascist

SIMONOV: As an historian, it's better not to throw around words -- genocide, fascism. And I would say that for neither term is there enough basis, thank God, at least until now, neither for fascist nor genocide

MCNAMARA: Are there any additional questions

LUCIUS: I have a general question for the entire panel. We've been talking about the sort of authoritarian turn of Russia. Do you have any specific recommendations for either other nations or international organizations as far as steps they could take to help curb that or even reverse it

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) First recommendation, never take at face value anything said by officials in Russia. Words have to be confirmed and buttressed by some kind of action

MCNAMARA: If I could interject for a moment. There was one who once said, "Trust but verify," so perhaps that term applies

SIMONOV: We trust but no journalists in Russia

(LAUGHTER)

SIMONOV: (THROUGH INTERPRETER) Second recommendation, one thing is improving the expertise level in western organizations, because many of these

organizations have people working for them who are really very much should be called

dilettante. And the result of this is a very great number of incorrect decisions

made by these organizations in regard to Russia and in Russia

They take counsel with the wrong people. They use as experts the wrong kind of people. All that needs to be corrected. Wrong experts

Until recently, the foremost expert on civil society in Russia for most of the press and many NGOs was Nyet Pavlosky (ph)

MCNAMARA: Are there any other questions. OK. You may have some questions for individuals panelists once the briefing is concluded

Perhaps to give a little bit of historical perspective, shortly after I

started working at this commission in the spring of 1986, the signatory countries to

the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe convened a follow-up meeting in

Vienna on November 4, 1986, and when we started that meeting we were aware, we knew

of over 700 political prisoners in the Soviet Union. And there were tens of thousands of divided families including some who were American spouses of Soviet citizens

And when that meeting concluded on January 19, 1989, the last day of

President Reagan's presidency, all of those political prisoners had been released,

and thousands of those divided families were reunited. So this is what I would attribute as a legacy to the determination of his administration through is leadership

And, certainly, our hope would be that others would follow in speaking the truth about violations and backing up their rhetoric with deeds

ALEXEEVA: I think Helsinki Commission (inaudible) plays and will play a very important role in this process, and thank the commission for your work

MCNAMARA: Thank you very much. You can be assured of that. Thank you

[Whereupon the briefing ended at 4:00 p.m.]

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