

Chechen Parliamentarians



February 2, 2000

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

WASHINGTON : 2001

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION (OSCE)

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki process, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. Since then, its membership has expanded to 55, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. (The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, has been suspended since 1992, leaving the number of countries fully participating at 54.) As of January 1, 1995, the formal name of the Helsinki process was changed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The OSCE is engaged in standard setting in fields including military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns. In addition, it undertakes a variety of preventive diplomacy initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States.

The OSCE has its main office in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations and periodic consultations among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government are held.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION (CSCE)

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance with the agreements of the OSCE.

The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. House of Representatives, nine members from the U.S. Senate, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair are shared by the House and Senate and rotate every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

To fulfill its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates information on Helsinki-related topics both to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports reflecting the views of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing information about the activities of the Helsinki process and events in OSCE participating States.

At the same time, the Commission contributes its views to the general formulation of U.S. policy on the OSCE and takes part in its execution, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings as well as on certain OSCE bodies. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from OSCE participating States.

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CHECHEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2000

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE,
WASHINGTON, DC.

The Commission met at 10:00 a.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman, presiding.

Commissioners present: Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman; Hon. Joseph R. Pitts.

Witnesses present: Seilam Bechaev, Vice President, Chechen Parliament; Tourpal-Ali Kaimov, Chairman, Budget Committee, Chechen Parliament.

MR. SMITH. Good morning. My name is Chris Smith. I chair the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. To my left is Commissioner Joseph Pitts; and John Finerty, our staff expert on Russian affairs, joins us on this panel.

I'd like to welcome you to this briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I apologize for being late. The full International Relations Committee, on which I serve as Subcommittee Chairman on International Operations and Human Rights is conducting a hearing on overseas embassy security with a forward-looking theme. Part of their recommendations relates to embassy security and in the last year legislation that came out of our subcommittee provided about 900 million dollars more per year for embassy security, so I needed to be a part of that hearing to some extent because that's the jurisdiction of our subcommittee. So I do apologize for being late.

As we meet here today, a devastating war, as we all know, is taking place in Chechnya. What the Russian Government describes as an anti-terrorist operation has degenerated (if they did not plan it thus from the beginning) into a war of destruction against the people of Chechnya. In using the excuse of seeking to punish a handful of guilty—or allegedly guilty—persons, the Russian Government is applying indiscriminate force far out of proportion to its stated objectives.

Thousands of men, women, boys and girls are being killed, displaced, and terrorized by the Russian onslaught. In response to concern from the international community, the Russian Government and military simply claims that the conflict is an internal matter, although Russia has accepted as a matter of principle, that human rights issues are not exclusively any country's internal affairs.

Meanwhile, the Clinton Administration says the right things and Secretary of State Madeline Albright is in a meeting with Russian officials as we meet, to seek a peaceful solution, but at this time seems unwilling to take any stronger steps. We must be honest and note that in 3 years of actual independence, the Chechen Government did not create a viable basis for the rule of law or a growing, stable economy.

Chechnya became a land known for anarchy, violent crime and kidnapping. As Sergei Kovalev recently wrote in the *New York Review of Books*, the President of Chechnya timidly led the country to the worst possible outcome, an almost complete loss of control over the

country and the transfer of real power into the hands of the so-called Field Commanders. None of this, I would point out however, justifies the shelling of peaceful villages, strafing buses and killing of refugees fleeing from the fighting.

Setting up filtration camps for every male from the ages of 10 to 30 under suspicion of being guerrillas, and the entire litany of brutal acts by the Russian military bears no relation whatsoever to waging war against terrorists. When journalists attempt to report on events in Chechnya, they are prevented from doing so, harassed and arrested. At this very moment RFE Radio Liberty Correspondent Andrei Babitsky is being held by Russian authorities on charges of participating in actions carried out by illegal formations.

Just today, Human Rights Watch came out with another scathing report on the inability of journalists to in any way penetrate, watch, observe or report on the killing fields going on in Chechnya. Following the Khasavyurt Agreements of 1996, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Chechnya under the auspices of the OSCE and with the sanction of the Russian Government.

Our guests today are two members of the Parliament that were elected as a result. Mr. Seilam Bechaev is Vice President of the Chechen Parliament. Prior to his election in 1997, Mr. Bechaev was an attorney and an investigator in the Administration of the Government of Chechnya. He is a graduate of the Law Faculty of the Rostov University, Russian Federation.

Also with us is Mr. Tourpal-Ali Kaimov, Chairman of the Budget Committee of the Chechen Parliament. Mr. Kaimov is the former Chairman of the Chechen Freedom Party and a 1991 graduate of the Food Institute in Moscow and the Grozny Pedagogical Institute. I look forward to our guest presentations and I would yield to Mr. Pitts or Mr. Finerty, if they have any opening comments.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this very important hearing. It is very timely, as we all know. We're deeply disturbed about events in Chechnya and we welcome our distinguished guests, members of Parliament, we're looking forward to hearing their testimony. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Finerty.

Mr. FINERTY. I'd like to yield to our distinguished guests.

Mr. BECHAEV (through an interpreter unless otherwise noted). Thank you. Dear Chairman and ladies and gentlemen. Today our delegation finds itself in the most democratic and free country, the United States. First, I'd like to express our gratitude to you for listening to us at this most difficult time for our Chechen people. Before I say anything, I just want to clarify something in the announcement for this briefing: in the announcement it stated that the Parliament had been disbanded by President Maskhadov.

In fact, according to our Constitution, nobody has the right to disband our Parliament, not President Maskhadov, nobody. Our Parliament has not ceased to work, not even for one day. The events in the U.S. and Chechnya have shown that Russians are violating all international laws in conducting its genocidal, ethnic war against the people of Chechnya.

From 1994 to 1996, under the justification of implementing constitutional order, Russia killed 124,000 Chechens. These were civilians. These were men, women and elderly people. Russia destroyed 80 percent of Chechen production and infrastructure. The environment was damaged. Throughout this difficulty we remained isolated to the outside world for 3 years.

After the end of the military activities, Russia signed a peace agreement with the Chechen Government. In accordance with this agreement, Russia agreed to build relations with us according to international law. Nevertheless, Russia has not fulfilled one point of this agreement after signing it. For 3 years while we were in complete isolation, Russian conducted its "information battle" with us by presenting the Chechen people to the world community as terrorists.

The Chechen President and the Parliament called for further meetings with the Russian leadership to determine our future and the resolution of problems. Russia did not attempt to contact us and they did not acknowledge our invitations. We appealed to the democratic world to help us build a government in accordance with democratic laws.

Russia, through its special services, security services and through Chechen criminal elements, did everything possible to prevent journalists, international organizations or representatives from international human rights organizations to enter Chechnya. Such crimes as kidnapping have never occurred in Chechnya before. This is something imported to us by Russian soldiers during the war, from 1994 to 1996.

Russian soldiers would end up blockading roads and holding Chechen civilians or Chechen citizens and selling them back to their relatives. Knowing that the Chechens have a tradition of burying their own relatives, they would even sell back corpses. This is the crime that Russia initiated and sold to the world as an excuse to claim that we were the enemy.

This was to deflect attention from the Russian people themselves, from their problems and their difficulties. In this manner they blamed the Chechens for terrorist acts without any sort of evidence. In accordance with international law nobody can be convicted or even blamed without the agreement of a judge. Russia basically accused all of the Chechen people after the explosions in Russia, in Moscow.

Yury Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow, former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, and Alexander Lebed, the Mayor of the Krasznoyarsk Region, have declared that Chechens took no part in these acts, as has General Stelovich, the head of the FSB Information Center. The excuse to enter Chechnya followed these terrorist acts in Moscow and Besaev's entrance into Dagestan.

Basaev became a victim to the policy which was covered up by Russia, the Caucasus Policy. He was consciously drawn in by Russian forces to help resolve and, resolve the excuses for Russia's entrance into the national freedom of the people of Dagestan. Basaev did not hold any government positions when he engaged in this activity.

So under this guise of battling international terrorism, for the past 6 months we have seen the destruction of the Chechen people. They have killed more than 20,000 people already. They have wounded more than 35,000. More than 125 populated sites have been wiped off the face of the earth. it is impossible to call this anything other than ethnic genocide. On one territory alone in Ingushetia, there are more than 200,000 refugees.

They lack the elementary means to survive. They are living in inhuman conditions. Daily, approximately 100 people will die of cold, from illness, from malnutrition. Russia prevents any international rights organizations from entering those sites. It prevents humanitarian organizations and journalists from access as well.

The human catastrophe has already reached a horrible point. On the face of it, as everybody knows, the President had declared that Russia has used chemical weapons in Chechnya more than once. They have destroyed a chemical factory where there was a lot of ammonia

and where there was SO2 and many other chemicals. They have turned Grozny into ruins.

The bombing sites where we were holding radioactive materials, and you can't call this anything other than environmental catastrophe. We can't determine the level of radiation due to the current military activities that are going on. So I've briefly brought you up-to-date on just some of the events that have been going on. Now Mr. Kaimov would also like to add a few words.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

Mr. KAIMOV (through an interpreter unless otherwise noted). Dear ladies and gentlemen, first I'd like to thank you for this meeting. I will try to be brief as our previous orator had already told you about the situation, primarily told you about the situation in Chechnya. I will start with the most important.

As you know in Chechnya we're not only engaged in a war with Russia, but we're also engaged in a war, an ideological war from Arab countries. So Chechnya right now is finding itself in the cross hairs. Russia can be stopped through negotiations. Sooner or later this will happen. The problem is in something else.

This Arabic ideological war, which has wrapped up all the Chechen people, this is something completely new and amazing to the Chechen people. Emissaries from the Arab Region, from Saudi Arabia, from Pakistan, from Afghanistan have been working for the past 3 years with Russian Special Services to institute power and to institute the Shariah Law of Islamic Fundamentalism.

If we, in power, allow for this fundamentalism, these Special Services succeed in their goal. Basically the Chechen people would cease to exist. We are more worried about this problem than anything else and without the help of Europe or America we can't imagine that we will be able to resolve this issue quickly.

I wanted to declare with full authority that our people are not welcoming this movement and these sorts of radical beliefs. We consider ourselves European people. We have our common Jewish roots, and we always consider ourselves people of the European community. Our main goal is to build a democratic government, a government of laws, and this is actually the first article of the Chechen Constitution. Without the help of Europe and America this is going to be difficult for us. We need your help and that's why we're appealing to you.

I don't want to take up too much time, so I'll stop here. If there are any questions, please.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Kaimov, thank you very much and thank you both for your excellent testimony. You are briefing this Commission as well as those in the public who will join in the questioning shortly. As I mentioned, I came from another hearing that's being held on embassy security and other aspects of our foreign policy.

Chairman Gilman, the Chairman of the full International Relations Committee, wanted to be here because this is so very important and he did prepare some remarks. I'd just like to excerpt a few of those and I'll put the remainder of it into the record. This is Ben Gilman, New York member of the House of Representatives, the Chairman of the International Relations Committee, his words.

"Just as in Russia's earlier military campaign in Chechnya in 1994, through 1996, thousands of innocent civilians have been killed and displaced by Russia's military blanket shelling and bombing and vicious attacks. Quite clearly, the Russian Government has violated its commitments as a member of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe by its

conduct in the war.

“As we all know, there have indeed been numerous incidents of kidnappings and violence conducted over the past 3 years by criminal elements and radical forces within Chechnya. The attack on the Region of Dagestan mounted by Chechen radical forces was indeed inexcusable. Radicals and criminals in Chechnya have done a terrible disservice to their fellow residents of Chechnya. But we should be careful before we accept the Russian Government’s claim that its warfare in Chechnya is simply an anti-terrorist operation.

“The fact is that no real evidence has yet been produced that Chechens were responsible for the bombings of Russian apartment buildings in Moscow and elsewhere in August, that cost the lives of 300 Russians and that the Russian Government used as the major pretext for the military operation.”

Mr. Gilman goes on to say, “I am pleased to see that our Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, has finally started to speak out against the violence of this Russian military operation, but I am disappointed,” he goes on to say, “that President Clinton has done too little about this.

“I was in fact,” Mr. Gilman points out, “disappointed by our President’s recent characterization of the Russian’s military operation as intended to ‘liberate’ the Chechen capital of Grozny. It appears that the liberation of that city has cost the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent civilians and the almost complete destruction of everything that stands.

“In closing, let me suggest that it may be appropriate this time for the United States to bring a resolution before the United Nations Security Council regarding this brutal operation. It is certainly long past time that the United States joined those states of Europe that have insisted that Russia’s commitments to the OSCE be honored. It is time to stop a brutal military operation that violates those commitments. I believe that it is time to bring in the OSCE to mediate a resolution to this terrible violence.”

His full statement will be made a part of the record. Let me just ask a couple of questions, if I could, and then yield to my good friend, Mr. Pitts. Were either of you in Chechnya when Russia renewed this full-scale war against Chechnya? And did any of you personally see any of the atrocities that were being committed by the Russians?

Mr. BECHAEV. Thank you. We both are participants in the movement to fight for the defense against the Russian Army from 1994 to 1996. During this war we were on Chechen territory. The Parliament would get together every day and call for world attention and call for the world to stop this war. The first time we left Chechnya was at the end of September in 1999.

More than once we have had to travel through Georgia into Chechnya to gather information that we can disseminate throughout Europe. On a daily basis we have contact with the Chairman of the Parliament, Ali Hadjehev, and with President Maskhadov. We were fortunate enough to establish contact between President Maskhadov and the Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe, Russell Johnston, as well as being able to establish this contact with Senators and Deputies from the Polish Parliament and other influential people.

Mr. SMITH. In the previous Chechen war we held a number of hearings and pointed out with grave disappointment that at the beginning of the conflict in 1994, Vice President Al Gore was with Victor Chernomyrdin in Moscow at the outbreak of the hostilities. When asked about the conflict, Mr. Gore said that it was an internal affair. As a matter of fact, the State Department backed that up by going one better and suggesting that it was analogous

to the United States Civil War.

We convened in the Commission a number of bipartisan hearings. We heard from Elena Bonner, we heard from—as I mentioned before—Sergei Kovalev and others. It was a consensus among most of our witnesses, certainly not the Administration witnesses, but others, that the green light had been given to the Russians. While we may be displeased with their actions, there would be no penalty. There would be no political, economic, or any other kind of isolation. They could act with impunity and we would say, no, that's not right or we might just say it is an internal affair. Tens of thousands— I think, what's it, 80,000—people were killed in that horrific conflict. This seems to be, to some extent, a part two. Maybe not a green light, but an amber light where we express our displeasure. As I pointed out in my opening comments, the President has, I think, given at times, however unwittingly, the wrong impression that there again will be no penalty.

I would like to know your assessment about whether or not the United States in particular, the Western allies, the western countries overall, have inadvertently given a green light to the carnage that's being visited upon the people of Chechnya?

Mr. BECHAEV. First, I wanted to underscore that America and Europe had made particular declarations in reference to Russian activities on Chechen territory. The Chechen people and the Chechen Government do value this. But somehow these declarations and these resolutions are not adequate today. We need other methods and as we know violations of human rights cannot be considered the internal affairs of any government.

Russia is a member of the United Nations, as well as the Council of Europe and the OSCE and other international organizations and it has taken upon itself the responsibility to fulfill the protection of human rights. Russia is a signatory to international pacts, international pacts on civilian and political rights, on the Declaration of Human Rights and other such agreements where they are required to protect human rights. It committed itself to protecting these rights.

Obviously here today the world sees that Russia is violating these rights before the world community. If the world, Europe and America don't accept means by which to stop Russia, and as we've seen they've been threatening with their nuclear weapons, that this will only bode very poorly for the future Government of Russia. This, this in itself holds a great threat, not only to Chechnya, but to Europe and to America.

If you allow the violation of international rights one time, that will stop there, it won't be the only time. The Parliamentary Assembly gave Russia an additional three months to try and find a resolution to this. They have delayed this question until April. During these three months thousands of other civilians will be killed, women, children and elderly. Who will take the responsibility for the deaths of these civilians?

We need to make Russia responsible.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Bechaev, you know we're always trying to search for the reason of it, and many of us believe that this pretext of trying to mitigate terrorism is nothing but a bogus cover story to try to invade or to retake Chechnya. But there also seems to be the other aspect of Mr. Putin trying to exert himself in such a way as to win the next election, which is just weeks away.

How much do you ascribe this attack to a power play in terms of Moscow politics on behalf of people like Mr. Putin to take control of the reins of power?

Mr. BECHAEV. Today Chechnya is a very strategic point for Russia. Chechnya is in the

center of the Caucasus. The Caucasus are the gateway to Asia. As we know today that Europe and America have particular interests in the Caucasus Region, and Caucasus governments, Caucasus Region governments also have their interests in America and European government.

So they want the democratic development, especially with the governments, and naturally economic ties. Russia also has its particular interests whereby it does want to be able to stand against NATO and also from the East. In this manner they are trying to establish a base, a strategic base where they will be able to make a stand against NATO and the east without Chechens there.

Russia knows that Georgia and Azerbaijan in the future, at least they have expressed their desire to become members of NATO. We have large reserves of oil, uranium and gold on the territory of Chechnya. Of course the economic interest does not leave them in peace.

Mr. SMITH. Before yielding to Commissioner Pitts, you mentioned in your statement, Mr. Bechaev, that the bombing had hit or released radioactive materials. Is that hospital and x-ray equipment or is that some of the uranium reserves you just talked about? What is that all about?

Mr. KAIMOV. These are not hospitals. These are actually some waste storage sites from the old Soviet Union days. The storage facilities are within the territory of the city of Grozny. Several are within the territory of Grozny and others are approximately 15 kilometers outside Grozny.

Mr. BECHAEV. How many?

Mr. KAIMOV. Four. I wanted also briefly to return to the previous question. Putin is a dependent figure. He is, in all reality he is dependent upon the military-industrial complex of Russia and its Special Services. He probably cannot start his own policies for Russia, and that's why he's dangerous to society. Russia is always going to suffer from such unpredictable acts as long as it does not have a leader with democratic leanings, a leader who is independent, somebody like Yavlinsky..

Mr. BECHAEV. We will actually leave a map with you that shows the storage facilities that have been bombed.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, that will be made a part of the record and it is something I think we need to more widely disseminate because that's news to me today.

Commissioner Pitts.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you very much, Mr. Bechaev and Mr. Kaimov for your compelling testimony. As leaders in the Chechnyan Parliament your testimony carries a lot of weight. To hear of 10,000 innocent civilians killed, 35,000 wounded, 200,000 refugees, bombing 120 population centers, many radioactive waste sites, this is a very grave story. My question has to do with the Parliament.

Why did President Maskhadov suspend the work of the Chechnyan Parliament and what is the effect of introducing Shariah Law or Shariah Rule there and how do you assess Moscow's claim that now there is no government in Chechnya to negotiate with?

Mr. BECHAEV. Indeed after the war, Russia did conduct operations and work to divide the Chechen population into a civil war, something similar to Afghanistan. In the cities of Moscow, Volgograd and Mozdok were training facilities for the Wahabbis. After six months of training they were sent into Dagestan and Chechnya. They had long beards and this was under the auspices of religious activities.

They represented Russian interests. They would scream about radicalism, fundamentalism and they would fulfill the orders that Russia gave them. They were financed by Russia and by the East. As we noted several times, Moscow had the Institute for International Relations where they were training the leaders of these so-called National Freedom Movement for these Arabic countries. To prevent a civil conflict between the people in Chechnya, Maskhadov, with our agreement, made certain declarations.

This was done not to allow a civil war. Actually on the second day the Parliament had rejected this decree. The President did not veto the fact that we had turned down this declaration. He had taken some initial steps to prevent civil war and the Parliament did not cease working even for one day. On the territory of Chechnya the constitution has worked and continues to work.

Mr. KAIMOV. Taking into account the given fate that we may have with Russia or with the Arab countries, never in Chechnya in the past, in the present or in the future will we become a radical country. It is something that's just not acceptable to our culture. There are no other ways for us to survive than what we have.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Finerty.

Mr. FINERTY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This question is for either of our guests: right now there are some supposedly pro-Moscow forces, Chechen forces led by Mr. Bislan Gantimirov, who seems to be Moscow's Chechen hope in this conflict. I just wondered how much support do you think he has among the Chechen people?

Mr. BECHAEV. I would like to refer back to the previous answer that I gave. Russia had been training Chechen criminal elements and sending them into Chechnya. One of these representatives is Gantimirov, who was released from prison and prepared and sent into Chechnya. When it is convenient, when it is necessary, they'll put him back in jail.

So, in other words, he's basically fulfilling their orders. He has no support in Chechnya.

Mr. FINERTY. Thank you very much. Another question. During the period between wars there were many reports of kidnappings, violence against the Russian, the non-Muslim population. Russian Orthodox priests were kidnapped. The Baptist Church in Grozny had to evacuate, an elder was beheaded there. I would just ask about your commentary because this is one thing that I think has been used to project Chechnya as such a violent place.

Thank you.

Mr. KAIMOV. Yes indeed there are some basis to these facts. Indeed people were kidnapped, indeed there were violent murders in Chechnya. A lot of this was done by the Russian Special Services themselves. Some people were kidnapped on Russian territory and brought into Chechnya.

Unfortunately for us even though the official powers and the authorities were standing against us and fighting with us, it was very difficult to do in Chechnya, because after the war we had complete destruction of the economy, destruction of the infrastructure. Being able to fight these elements was hard, if not impossible. But the authorities are standing and fighting it.

The main organizers of all these events were the Russian Special Services. With us we have a Representative from the Polish Parliament, he works for the staff of the Polish Parliament, Tomasz Markowski, he's a witness to two of these kidnapping that happened in Dagestan.

Two women were invited to Dagestan by some Dagestan organizations through the Russian Special Services, and this was done in the Region of Lyshinsky, it is about 180 kilometers away and they were kidnapped there. As the war was going on along the borders of Chechnya and Dagestan they were, without any problems, moved over into Chechnya.

It is even impossible for civilians to cross the border in these areas. It is impossible for them to get across. Yet somehow they were able to get these kidnapped women through the border. This was done through the Special Services at their crossing points. This way Russia was able to take this attention, bring it before the world community and make the Chechens out to be kidnapers. Unfortunately, the Chechen people and the national authorities were stained by this event.

Mr. BECHAEV. To add to this point, I want to clarify something. You probably remember the murders of the Red Cross workers in 1996. The Chechen law enforcement had conducted investigations and they had found the organizers of this brutal act. It turns out it was a Chechen, by his nationality, Adam Denaev, who lives in Moscow and it turns out is a Colonel of the FSB. He wants to be named the second official of the Republic of Chechnya.

Mr. BECHAEV. Our President and our law enforcement demanded that Russia hand him over to us, and Russia refused to. We've asked Russia more than once that they give us the names of the people who they are paying ransoms to for the kidnap victims. Russia has not given us any names. We've asked Russia to identify who the middle men were in delivering the ransom for the kidnaps and they haven't done so.

The Russian Special Services were tied very closely to these people. They were conducting joint work. I'm sure, I want to bring forth another example. You remember the brutal killings that the whole world knew about, when they beheaded the New Zealander and three British citizens? This was done by the same Wahabbis, the fundamentalists that were trained in Moscow.

We conducted our own investigation and were able to determine who actually executed these murders. There is a joint group of Chechens and Russians, people who went through their six months of training in Moscow and received almost a quarter of a million dollars for these murders. Russia gave them an order to take these heads into some of the most populated and visible sites and display the heads for everybody to see.

The Russians knew exactly where they were going to display these heads and when they were going to display them. The Russians brought in 24 journalists to document this. This was an operation that was jointly conducted. As these people came out to display the heads, the journalists came out, they displayed the heads, the journalists took their photos, they took the heads away and the journalists left. It was something that was jointly conducted.

Mr. FINERTY. Yes, thank you. I just wondered if there was anything more you could add about the connection between these governments in the Middle East, like the Saudis and Chechnya?

Mr. KAIMOV. In reality, right after the war, Chechnya, on its territory, had certain emissaries from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan. There weren't many of them but they were conducting a lot of intensive work. And they had the support, not only from Russia, but from these governments as well. And at the given moment the leaders of this policy are, we believe that they are either in Afghanistan or in Pakistan. They are continuing their work via the internet. In particular, this is Mr. Udugov.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Let me just ask one final question and then we'll open it up to the

audience. What is your assessment of the OSCE mission which was based in Grozny and is now relocated in Moscow? Maybe just a sub-question to that, and that is the Wahabbis that you have mentioned, how aware is the OSCE mission and other human rights organizations about this, this information campaign, using pretext in order to somehow, you know, slander or liable the Chechen people as being all thugs and criminal class?

Just like we've seen the use of the pretext of trying to eradicate terrorism and then a war is initiated, it just may be part of a modus operandi by the Russians. Could you speak to that?

Mr. BECHAEV. We had meetings in Norway with representatives of the OSCE and the Administrator of Foreign Affairs, Kurt Vollabeck, in 1999. We met with his Deputies and we explained the situation just as we've explained it to you. Afterwards, Mr. Kaimov had meetings with the Chairman of the OSCE and explained, just the same, explained the whole situation. He gave our delegation his word that he would try to go to Chechnya and meet with Aslan Maskhadov.

He tried to meet with Maskhadov. He tried through Georgia, through Dagestan, through Ingushetia, but at no point was he allowed to enter Chechnya. More than once the OSCE has made resolutions condemning Russia's activities in Chechnya, but that's all they remain—resolutions.

At the last OSCE meeting in Istanbul when they came to the decision that, that the conflict in Chechnya can only be resolved through peaceful means, but Russia paid no heed to this. We have to implement stronger means against Russia. We're ready to sit at the peace table and to take certain responsibilities upon ourselves. We are ready to be responsible for fulfillment of these responsibilities.

Mr. KAIMOV. You asked the question whether the OSCE was aware of the Wahabbis, the Wahabbism in Chechnya. The OSCE experienced this themselves, actually, when Udugov was the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Chechnya. He did everything possible to make sure that the last international organization would abandon Chechnya. With this last incident we in the Parliament removed Udugov from this post and we named the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ilyas Akhmadov.

So Udugov was executing these planned policies of the Special Services which was in complete conflict with the interest of the Chechen people.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Kaimov and Mr. Bechaev. I want to thank Dimitri for your translating. We appreciate that. Just for the record and you may know this. We did pass in the House of Representatives H. CON. RES. 206, which is a strongly worded— but just words, rhetoric—condemnation and urging of all parties, particularly the Russians, to negotiate a peace.

The tragedy is, and you have said a number of times, Mr. Bechaev, that we need to do more. Just maybe one final question or comment. You might want to just say what else should the House of Representatives, the Congress, and the President be doing right now? Words can be very cheap. I mean this passed almost unanimously. We had a spirited debate on the floor, but nothing has come of it. What should we be doing, specifically?

Should we link it to economic aid? I mean, I was very much angered and chagrined despite the fact that many of us had asked the World Bank to withhold its money. I think it was 100 million, I could be off on the exact amount. They didn't. Right before the new year, released that money to the Russian Government, even though, indirectly that aids and abets

this carnage in Chechnya.

They could have made a stand there and it seems like we do have some levers, most of them economic, that we are just failing to utilize in this effort. So again, before I turn it to the audience, is there anything specific, today, we should be doing to stop this? Again, we've done resolutions, what did it do? It just put us on record.

Mr. BECHAEV. Yes, we do have some concrete proposals. The first issue, first question is how do you stop the war? How do you stop the killing of the Chechen people? There should be an establishment of an international committee that has the authority to go to Chechnya and conduct investigations into these brutal killings. To implement economic sanctions against Russia.

To deny Russia humanitarian aid. To get a meeting between the leadership of Chechnya and the leadership of Russia using a mediator, the United States. To provide humanitarian aid to Chechen refugees and to the citizens of Chechnya. And to allow international organizations to have access to Chechnya. And to provide support in helping us build an independent, democratic government in Chechnya and to help us develop democratic institutions in Chechnya.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. BECHAEV. This is an expression. This is the opinion of our President, the Parliament and the Chechen people.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Bechaev. This ends the formal part of this hearing and now we would like to go to the briefing portion which would include questions. In order to do that, if you wouldn't mind just changing chairs so you could face the audience and get any questions that anyone might have, please make your way to the microphone at this point.

Please state your name.

QUESTIONER. Certainly, thank you. My name is Lisa McAdams. I'm here with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Secretary Albright, as you may know, left for talks with President Putin today in Moscow saying she saw no signs of a political settlement anytime soon. The question is to both gentlemen, how does this news sit with you, particularly Mr. Kaimov, who in your remarks sounded much more optimistic that Russia would eventually come around?

What do you base your optimism on? Could I also ask how you feel about Chairman Gilman's show of support in the statement that was read here earlier by Mr. Smith? Thank you.

Mr. BECHAEV. We are certain that Mr. Putin will never resolve any issues through political means. The fact that he was a Communist and an employee of the KGB says a lot. Today he is a hostage of the Special Services. He doesn't have any of his own ideas. He is executing the orders of the military-industrial complex of Russia.

His ascendance to power is not only dangerous for the Chechens, but is dangerous for the Russian people themselves, and Europe and America.

Mr. KAIMOV. I just wanted to add a few facts to what Mr. Bechaev has said. Yes indeed today Mr. Putin doesn't have any free thoughts of his own, whether they're good or they're bad. Right now we're not awaiting anything good from Putin at the moment. If there is a way in which they'll be able to officially affect Russia, to officially affect the government, then maybe we'll be lucky. But in the first place I think you can affect Russia through economic sanctions. This is one means by which you could force them to the negotiating table.

QUESTIONER. Can they also address the issue of the statement that was read by Chairman Gilman? How they feel about that?

Mr. BECHAEV. Was there anything in particular?

QUESTIONER. I don't have the statement in front of me, but I believe if I heard correctly about bringing the issue before the UN Security Council.

Mr. BECHAEV. We know full well that Russia is a member of the United Nations and through this organization it might be possible to influence them. If you took the Declaration of Human Rights, which consists of 30 articles, and they are supposed to protect, Russia has violated all 30 of those articles.

Having a government like Russia be a member of this type of organization is only to the detriment of this organization. That's why we feel it is necessary for the United Nations and the member states of the United Nations to implement some concrete steps against Russia.

Mr. KAIMOV. I just wanted to add that until the White House, until the European Council, until the OSCE and other international organizations, as long as they continue viewing these sorts of wars as internal conflicts, they will continue. We need to have very strict approaches to the resolution of these types of problems. This is especially true when they are destroying a whole ethnicity, a whole people.

QUESTIONER. Thank you.

Mr. FINERTY. Ben. Why don't you come over here.

QUESTIONER. I'm Benjamin Tuev, a former member of the OSCE mission to Chechnya. I wonder if Mr. Bechaev and Mr. Kaimov would try to explain why President Maskhadov dismissed the Mufti of Chechnya, Mr. Kadirov, who is a moderate not a fundamentalist?

INTERPRETER. Could they explain why, I'm sorry?

QUESTIONER. Why President Maskhadov dismissed the Chief Mufti of Chechnya, Mr. Kadirov?

Mr. BECHAEV. The Mufti is not a position where you can fire somebody from. It is an elected position. The responsibility, the accountability for the Chechen people lays in the hands of the President. The President wanting to prevent a civil war based upon religion in Chechnya had to take certain steps. The Mufti was demanding immediate implementation of certain rights associated with the Wahabbis.

The President serves as the guarantor of stability in Chechnya and he couldn't allow this to lead to a civil war based upon religion. On this basis they had their disagreements.

Mr. KAIMOV. I do want to add, I understand your question, but I do want to add to that the Mufti and the Parliament together were fighting against the whole Wahabbis Movement. Today we have other problems that have appeared between the President and the Mufti. That was probably the source of this event.

Again, the President is the guarantor of stability and I do want to give credit to the Mufti for the fact that he was one of the leading fighters against the Wahabbis movement.

QUESTIONER. Thank you very much.

Mr. FINERTY. Any more questions? That being the case, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. This briefing is concluded. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the briefing was concluded at 11:43 a.m.)

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