Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate

the chance to discuss the conflict in Chechnya and our response

to what you appropriately call a humanitarian disaster

there. As the questions that you have posed in your statement indicate,

this is a complex topic with a long history and important implications

for Russia’s domestic politics, for the stability of the region,

and for Russia’s standing in the world, including its relations with the United States.

Since my remarks involve strong criticism of Russian policy, I

want to emphasize at the outset that we recognize Russia’s territorial

integrity and its right to respond to threats to its security.

The Russian Government has a responsibility, indeed an obligation,

to protect its citizens. But it also has a responsibility to avoid using

indiscriminate force against them and to take steps aimed at a peaceful settlement.

Mr. Chairman, I hope it is clear that in speaking of threats to

Russian security I am not referring to abstract or hypothetical

threats. There are real terrorists and violent insurgent groups in

the North Caucasus. Chechen insurgents are receiving help from

radical groups in other countries, including Usama Bin Laden’s

network and others who have attacked or threatened Americans and American interests.

The Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev led a raid on neighboring

Dagestan, as you noted, last August that aimed to set up an Islamic

state there. That attack and the series of apartment bombings

that killed nearly 300 innocent people spurred the Russian

Government to step up its fight against terrorism and to launch

the present military campaign.

President Clinton and Secretary Albright condemned the apartment

bombings as acts of terrorism. The President offered the Russians

technical assistance with their investigation and the FBI will

send a team to Moscow shortly to follow up.

But while we share Russia’s outrage over terrorism and respect

its right to defend itself, the manner of the Russian Government’s

response is deeply troubling. I know from your statement that you

agree with that. Let me note three problems in particular.

First, the indiscriminate use of force. The Russian military offensive

in Chechnya that was launched on October 1 has steadily escalated.

A relentless bombing and artillery campaign has been carried

out in nearly all parts of the republic. This use of indiscriminate

force against innocent civilians is indefensible and we condemn

it. We have publicly and privately urged Russia to exercise

restraint and to open Chechnya’s borders to allow civilians to escape the fighting.

The 1994 to 1996 war in Chechnya left 80,000 dead, the overwhelming

majority of them civilians. That tragedy must not be repeated.

Like other countries, Russia has assumed obligations under

the Geneva conventions and commitments under the OSCE Code

of Conduct on Political-Military Aspects of Security. Russia’s current

campaign does not match these commitments.

Second, a second issue that concerns us has to do with refugees.

The conflict in Chechnya has created a growing humanitarian crisis

that requires immediate attention. Neighboring Ingushetia

lacks the resources to care for nearly 200,000 displaced Chechens

and Russia’s efforts have also been inadequate.

Americans do not stand idly by in such cases and, through the

International Committee of the Red Cross and the U.N. High Commissioner

for Refugees, we are providing emergency aid. We recently

provided $4.5 million to help support UNHCR and Red Cross

programs in the region, and the administration will quickly answer

the Red Cross’ specific appeal for funds to help civilians displaced

by the conflict in Chechnya. In the past week, three air shipments

of U.S. humanitarian supplies arrived in the North Caucasus to

support these Red Cross efforts.

As winter approaches, the international community will almost

certainly have to do more, and I hope that we can count on your

support for the resources to do the job. Russia too must devote significantly

more resources to addressing this humanitarian crisis,

which it created. We have made that point repeatedly to Russian officials.

Third, let me address the question of human rights. In the wake

of apartment bombings in Moscow and other cities, the Russian Interior

Ministry launched what was called Operation Whirlwind to

root out terrorists nationwide. Police have detained over 2,000 individuals

in Moscow and deported many of them, evidently because

the color of their skin suggests they might have Chechen or other Caucasus origins.

Ethnic-based roundups of the ‘‘usual suspects’’ are wrong and

have no place in a country that aims to provide equal treatment

to all its citizens, as the Russian Government has said it wishes

to do. The Russian Government is obliged to do so as a signatory

to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We have said repeatedly, Mr. Chairman, that there cannot be a

purely military solution to the conflict in Chechnya. A durable solution

requires dialog and the participation of regional leaders. Unfortunately,

neither the Russian Government nor Chechen leaders

have shown much interest in such a dialog, and the military escalation

that is under way obviously makes it very difficult to open talks.

In these circumstances, we believe that the OSCE may be able

to help. During the first war in Chechnya, after all, the OSCE mission

to Grozny brokered many rounds of negotiations and monitored

cease-fires. On Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov invited

an OSCE mission to visit the North Caucasus. This is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, like you, we are particularly concerned that the

violence in Chechnya could spread beyond Russia’s borders and

pose threats to the independence and security of Azerbaijan, Georgia,

and Armenia. Deputy Secretary Talbott and I visited the South

Caucasus last week and we made clear at every stop that the U.S.

supports these three countries during this time of turmoil in the region.

Azerbaijan and Armenia have made progress in addressing the

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as a way of further stabilizing the region.

They have done so with support from us and other OSCE

Minsk Group countries, including Russia. We need to do more.

As for Georgia, the single largest element of our assistance program

to that country has been to strengthen the Georgian Government’s

ability to control its own borders, including with Chechnya.

The international implications of the conflict in Chechnya extend

beyond the Caucasus region. To conduct their operations in

Chechnya, Russian armed forces have deployed more weapons and

military equipment in the North Caucasus than they would be allowed

under an adapted CFE treaty. On Monday Prime Minister

Putin pledged that this situation is only temporary and that all excess

weapons and equipment from the so-called CFE flank areas

will be withdrawn as soon as possible once the situation in

Chechnya is under control. This commitment is especially important

now since Russia, the United States, and the other CFE treaty

member states hope to sign an adapted CFE treaty at the OSCE

summit in Istanbul in 2 weeks.

Mr. Chairman, let me repeat that the Russian Government has

an obligation to protect itself and its citizens from terrorists and

other attacks. But this obligation does not and cannot justify indiscriminate

attacks on civilians, the closing of borders to prevent civilians

from fleeing, or other violations of human rights. How Russia

resolves these issues, how it counters the insurgency, how it

treats its own people, will determine what kind of country it will

become and what kind of relationship we have with it. That will

be Russia’s challenge and ours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to our discussion.

Senator, you may have seen the

statement by Defense Minister Sergeyev on this question yesterday,

which did not answer your question entirely, but did say that

they did not intend to storm Grozny. He said at the same time they

intend to be in Chechnya forever and to retake the entire province.

I would guess that as a matter of military tactics they are still

resolving this planning question. The fact that they have not—that

the defense minister would indicate that they are not going to

storm the city may mean that they have heeded some of the criticisms

that they have heard even internally about the wisdom of

doing that and repeating the calamitous invasion of the city that

took place in the previous war. But this is conjecture.

If they wait outside Grozny they could try to lay siege to it, and

some Russian officials have suggested to us that this is an alternative

that they may be looking at. Well, I think the first thing it tells

you is something that is political commonplace: When a government

can define a problem as one of a terrorist threat to the country

or as a threat of a violent insurgency that may lead to the

breakup of the country, political support from the population is not

hard to generate. Threats of that kind typically generate strong political

support, and it is clear that the Russian Government has

been able to define this problem in those terms.

It is also clear, I think, that they have tried to deal with some

of the problems that led to the unpopularity of the war last time

around. In particular, they have acknowledged that they are trying

to keep casualties, on their side at least, to a minimum. That has

neutralized one of the sources of criticism, although I do not think

we can be sure what the true level of casualties has been.

This leads me to indicate and to suggest one of the other ways

in which the government has been able to maintain a higher degree

of popular support for its actions than it did last time. That

is the state of the media. There has been less media openness in

this case than there was last time. This has not been a television

war that the Russians have watched in the evening.

The government has kept TV coverage

down by keeping television crews out of Chechnya on what they say are security grounds.

I am not sure whether that picture

has been on Russian television. There is an awareness of allegations

made in the West about events of this kind. The Russian Government

has been routinely dismissing such allegations as what

they call bandit propaganda.

Let me add one other point about this, Senator, if I might, because

you raise an understandable question about whether there

has been a change in the state of Russian democracy or Russian

civil society in the interim here. We are at an early stage of this

war and public attitudes may yet evolve and come closer to what

they were in 1994 and 1996. That is particularly likely if the Russian

army undertakes the kinds of actions that you were asking

about a moment ago, that is trying to seize cities through street to

street operations. If that is the case, then much higher levels of

casualties will be unavoidable.

With any degree of greater openness, I think there will also be

more opportunities for criticism by Russian political leaders. You

may have seen that in Izvestia yesterday the handling and treatment

of refugees was denounced as incompetent. Some Russian political

figures have focused on individual elements of the policy as

wrong-headed, counterproductive, contrary to Russia’s commitments.

That has not yet produced a full-blown critique of the policy and

we may not see that. But there is—I think there is every likelihood

that with greater information and with the evolution of this war—

going to be, as there is in any system where you have got political

candidates holding the policies of the government up to public scrutiny,

there is going to have to be some debate on this subject.

Senator, you have asked two questions.

Let me address them in turn. Why has there been less attention

to this humanitarian crisis than there may have been last

time? Certainly not because we have failed to speak up on this subject.

We have tried to address this from the get-go to make very

clear what our view of this matter is and what we consider to be

international obligations under which Russia is obliged to conduct

a war against terrorism or violent insurgencies. We have used

strong language in those statements.

I certainly applaud your effort to get greater attention for this,

because I think that will begin to attract the attention of the

media. We have also been coordinating closely with other governments,

trying to make sure that the international relief efforts here

are adequate to the problem. And we have been trying to make

clear at all levels, including in meetings that President Clinton

himself has conducted with Russian leaders, what our views are.

Now, you asked about President Clinton’s comparison of this

problem to the American Civil War. It is true that President Clinton

used that comparison as a way of making a point about our policy,

which is still our policy, and that is that we respect the territorial

integrity of the Russian Federation.

In that statement, which I looked at again recently, he went on

to say we, the United States, believed there is not a military solution

and believed that there had to be a political settlement, and

we still believe that. He called for a political settlement as the only

way of creating permanent stability in the region and respecting

the rights of people in the region and of neighboring states. That

is still our policy. Senator, I think there is no doubt on

the part of the Russian Government as to where we stand and that

we are going to continue to speak out on this conflict and state our

views as to what Russia’s international obligations are, both of a

humanitarian, political, security nature.

I might add that, from a visit to Moscow last week, that there

does seem to be one place where our statements are heard and

taken rather seriously, indeed criticized and countered, and that is

Russia. You and I may express surprise at how thin the media coverage

has been of this issue and how little Western disapproval

seems to figure into Russian policy. In Russia one actually hears

something rather different—a lot of pushing back at what they regard

as unfair criticism, double standards.

They are hearing us. I think they are under no illusion about what we think.

Sure. Senator, I completely agree

with you about, from what you have just said and from your opening

statement, about the nature of American interests in this region

and in this conflict. This conflict raises questions about regional

stability and there is an American interest there. It raises

questions about the future of Russia and there is an American interest

there. It raises questions about the credibility of Russian

international commitments and that is an obvious interest of ours.

It raises obvious humanitarian concerns.

So I think there is no difficulty in establishing a consensus about

the important interests that are at stake here for us and explaining

that publicly and developing an international consensus on it.

You asked about the attitudes of other states. I can say a little

bit about that because I actually visited all four of the countries

you asked about in the past couple of weeks, and some of them

twice in that period. There is, as you can imagine, an acute concern

on their part. Although the South Caucasus is separated from the

North Caucasus by some rather imposing mountains, that does not

create as much comfort as these countries need to be sure of their

independence over the long term.

I think they understand very well our concern and see our policies

in action trying to increase their confidence about their independence

and security. I mentioned as one example the efforts that

we have made to help the Georgian Government with border security.

I mentioned that that is the single biggest assistance program we have provided.

We have also been insistent in the negotiation of the CFE treaty

that the concerns of small countries on the periphery of Russia in

the flank area be addressed. These are not interests that we consider

as peripheral to the CFE treaty, but as central.

In both Azerbaijan and Georgia, which are countries that border

Russia, and Georgia, as you know, borders Chechnya and Azerbaijan

borders Dagestan, there is a concern as well about the fact

that their countries can in fact be used by organizations supporting

terrorist activities inside the Russian Federation, and they have

made a substantial effort to address that problem.

They understand that their interests are in no way served by becoming

transit routes for terrorism. That is an area where we have

further offered to provide assistance that may be useful to them in

increasing their capacity to control those flows.

Mr. Chairman, I would answer your

question in two ways. First of all, as Prime Minister Putin’s own

statement this week indicated, the Russians are above and acknowledge

that they are above the limits that would be allowed for

them under an adapted CFE treaty. We pushed them to acknowledge

this publicly, to provide greater transparency about the levels

that they have there in the region, as required under the treaty.

You are absolutely right that a CFE treaty cannot be a viable instrument

for increasing the security of all states unless Russian

equipment levels come to match the limits that they are allowed under the treaty.

Second, let me address the interests that other states have in

this region, in this treaty, because this is not a bilateral treaty. It

is negotiated among 30 countries. If this treaty is to be, as I said,

a serious instrument for increasing the security of all states, it has

got to serve the interests of Georgia, of Moldova, as you noted.

These are countries that are now involved in negotiating the

final terms of this treaty with the Russians. If those negotiations

are a success, then the treaty will be a success. If it is not, then

it will not serve the purposes that we all agree it needs to.

Senator, let me answer in two ways.

I have to take issue with the words ‘‘our failure to protest’’ what

has happened. We have really spoken up in the clearest possible

way and I think my statement today bears that out. We consider

that there are substantial issues involved here, that this is not an

affair that Russia can treat as simply an internal matter, but that

it has to respond to the international community’s concerns about

its international obligations and issues of fundamental humanitarian

principles, among others.

Senator Smith and I were talking earlier about the need to develop

a broader and louder consensus on this issue. I think it is important

that the Russian Government hear this as well from our

European allies, and on that basis we have been consulting closely

with the European Union, the OSCE, and others.

It is partly as a consequence of those consultations and the consultations

of those organizations with the Russians that we have

seen some movement on the Russian side, some responsiveness to

our concerns. It was as a result of this, for example, that the Finish

Foreign Minister—the Finns have the EU presidency now—traveled

to the region, produced a report that attracted a lot of attention.

It is on the basis of the kinds of concerns and protests that

we have been lodging that we have seen some movement to open

the border now so that people fleeing this conflict can actually escape

the violence and put themselves out of harm’s way.

So I think we have been speaking up on this and have seen signs

that the Russian Government knows it has to listen to this kind

of storm of protest internationally.

Let me add a second point to what you have said about democracy.

I am not comfortable with the idea of letting the political

leadership in Russia off the hook by talking of an assertion of military

authority. We do not have any good reason to think that, beyond

tactical decisions, the Russian army is doing anything other

than carrying out a political mandate that it has from the elected

leadership of Russia. That is a source of concern.

Senator Smith asked the question about civilian oversight of the

military and said we should be alarmed if it is not there. Also I

think he suggested that we should be appalled if it is there. I have

no reason to doubt that there is civilian control of this policy. That

is a reason for us to speak even more loudly, as you suggested.

Can I add one comment to that? I

think this is the kind of issue that cries out for real contacts between

parliamentarians. Senator, let me say it is always an

honor to be Elena Bonner’s warm-up act.