I am going to bring the Committee to order. All

Committees are meeting this morning, and it is sort of a round

robin. Senators who intend to be here are not here yet, but they

will be here. And, this is the way it is in the early part of the year,

when everybody is trying to get legislation going, including us.

Well, we certainly have a distinguished panel this morning. Mr.

Thomas Dine, whom we all know, president of Radio Free Europe/

Radio Liberty; and Mr. Peter—

—Bouckaert, an investigator for the Human

Rights Watch, Washington D.C.; and here we go with Ms.—Ms.

Karen Konig AbuZayd.

Well, I—I was not even close, was I?

Well, we are glad to have all three of you. You are very prominent

in your fields and uniquely qualified to discuss the war in

Chechnya, the reprehensible conduct of the Russian government in

that conflict and the implications of this conflict for the United States.

Now, then, Tom Dine, as I mentioned earlier is president of

Radio Free/Liberty Radio Europe, which has a substantial presence

in Russia. And Mr. Dine has worked tirelessly in recent weeks to

ensure the safety and welfare of the distinguished Radio Free Europe/

Radio Liberty reporter, Andrei Babitsky. I sure appreciate

your coming.

And Peter—I am not—I am going to leave your surname alone.

I—we are—we are good friends, so you first-name me, and I will

first-name you, and we will both come out ahead.

Peter, who is with Human Rights Watch, just arrived

from Russia, where for the past three months he has been

investigating the atrocities committed in the ongoing war in

Chechnya. We welcome you, sir.

And, we are pleased to have this delightful lady, who puts up

with my mangling her surname, AbuZayd. I did better that time.

Good. She is—and she is the regional representative

to the United States and the Caribbean of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees. The UNHCR has also been examining

the tragic state of human rights in Chechnya. And, we welcome you.

Now, before Mr. Dine begins his testimony, he has a brief fiveminute

film on the Russian assault on Grozny, a horrifying portrait

of Russia’s brutality against the inhabitants of that city.

And I believe it is important for this Committee to view this film.

I wish that the world could see it, because it brings home for us

the enormous human suffering caused by Russia’s brutal campaign

in Chechnya, a war that most of the world seems perfectly content to ignore.

Now, let us just for the record say that more than 100,000

Chechen were killed in the first Russo-Chechnya war of 1994 to

1996—100,000 out of a population of fewer than 1 million.

Today the Kremlin is trying to undo its military defeat of four

years ago with indiscriminate use of force that, again, has left

countless thousands of innocent men, women and children dead,

and hundreds of thousands homeless.

The capital city of Chechnya is Grozny. And it has been subjected

to a destruction unseen in Europe since World War II. A

photo of that city has been blown up to show precisely what I

mean. And indeed, what has been done to Grozny surpasses even

the havoc that Milosevic has wrought upon the towns and cities of

both Bosnia and Kosova.

At a time when Western governments have turned a blind eye

to this conflict, the ability of journalists to report objectively on this

war and its horrors has become all the more important.

The Russian acting president, Vladimir Putin, appears to recognize

this only too well. Freedom of the press is another victim of

his war.

Nowhere has this war against the press been more blatant than

in the case of Andrei Babitsky. For his unfavorable accounts of the

Russian military’s conduct, he was detained by Russian authorities,

and then he disappeared. Today, I am relieved that he is alive and

now with his family.

Our ability to help Russia evolve into a stable democracy cannot

be effective if we ignore such systematic repression of the press and

the brutal campaign of terror Russia has conducted.

Nor is it helpful for Western governments to portray this as a legitimate

battle against terrorists, and certainly not for the President

of the United States to call this a war—and he used the word

‘‘liberation,’’ in the recent essay for Time Magazine. This premise

was not only extremely misleading. It is morally flawed and shortsighted.

And I am proud that while the rest of the world has sought to

ignore or pretend that the war in Chechnya is legitimate, Congress

has stepped forward and condemned Russia’s brutality there.

Now, let us look at the film.

Well, that makes me even prouder that this past

Thursday, the Senate passed unanimously Resolution 261 condemning

the detainment of Mr. Babitsky and called for his safe return

and demands an end to the systematic harassment of the

press in Russia.

The Senate also passed Resolution 262, authored by Senator

Wellstone, to repudiate the notion that the Chechen people are terrorists

and underscore their right to defend themselves against the

indiscriminate use of force. It also urges President Clinton to promote

negotiations between the Kremlin and the Chechen government.

Now, it is no small coincidence that the day after these two resolutions

were passed by unanimous consent, the Kremlin suddenly

found Andrei Babitsky. I do not know where he was hiding, but

they found him.

Now, imagine what could have been accomplished if the administration

had addressed this conflict as more than a rhetorical priority

in our relationship with Russia.

Now, Senator Biden will make his opening statement when he

gets here, but the Senator from—from the distinguished State of

Minnesota has asked for a couple of minutes to make a statement too.

Russell, how about some words from you?

I will say to my two colleagues that the witnesses

and I have agreed that I can first-name them, because I

have difficulty with pronunciation.

And before the media gets too interested in that, I will remind

them for a year after Kofi Annan became Secretary General of the

United Nations, they were still saying ‘‘Kofi Annon.’’ Right?

Karen, you may proceed, ma’am.

Mr. Bouckaert.

Well, I thank you. And I have tried in the nearly

28 years that I have been here to let politics stop at the water’s

edge, but I am ashamed of our government in this regard. I am

ashamed of comments that have been made in defense of Russia,

and that is what it amounts to.

But I—the two of you who have already testified have been

great. And Tom Dine is going to be equally great, because I know

him. Tom.

Well, in the case of all of you, if you have additional

statements, we will include those in the printed record of

this meeting.

And you may proceed.

Right.

Yes.

Yes.

Thank you. First, I want to get Andrei Babitsky

here to testify before this committee, and I have an idea that these

gentlemen with the television will not be the only ones here to

cover that.

Right.

We can take him any time we can get him.

Thank you. Secondly, I am instructing, respectfully,

the staff for the majority on this committee, and I know that

they will be joined enthusiastically by the minority, or the Democrat,

I want an updated resolution prepared to be presented to the

Senate and to be voted on, and I want it to be complete, with as

much information as you can work out from testimony here today.

I would like that to happen as quickly as possible, and I know

you will do that.

Thirdly, I want to get a transcript of what each of you has said

this morning, and I think we ought to use that every time the Senate

has a quorum call, but no business to conduct. I think we ought

to read part of the testimony. We would do that with careful selection,

of course, and so we will begin on that.

Now, let me ask some quick questions. Most of them are answerable.

I was going to ask you about Babitsky, the question of who

held him, the Russians, the pro-Russian Chechnya group, or the

Chechnya resistance, and I know the answer to that.

How would you assess the Clinton Administration’s efforts to ensure

the safety and release of Andrei Babitsky?

Good.

Good.

I want Mr. Bouckaert to comment on that same

question.

By the way, let us do seven minutes, and then,

of course, set it for—so I will not overrun the seven minutes. Ms.

AbuZayd, your comments on that.

Mr. Bouckaert, do you think the United States

government has adequately addressed the need to stop the indiscriminate

killing and atrocities in Chechnya?

Sure. Sure.

Right. Now, I want to ask you, how many civilians

do you think have been killed in the conflict over there?

How about resistance, how many have they

killed?

Do you think the Russian commanders are involved

to whatever extent, or any extent, in the atrocities that have

been documented thus far?

Well, how about your investigation, has there

been any interference with those investigations?

Have you folks looked into these so-called filtration

camps? Have you been granted access to any of them?

How about prisoners of war, what has happened

to them?

My time has expired. We started late, so I am

not going to spend any more time on mine.

The Senator from Minnesota.

You have seven minutes.

Next is Senator Biden.

Sure. Sure.

We all feel that way about it. It has been a stimulating

morning, and it has given us some guideposts about what

we should do further in the Senate.

This is one time that I am very proud of the Senate for its having

undertaken this. We have not gone far enough, but if I have anything

to do with it, we will go much farther.

You bet.

Without objection, it certainly will be.

The Senators who had to go to other committee

meetings and were not able to be here may want to file some questions

in writing, and I know you-all will accommodate them to the

best of your ability.

If there will be no further business, I thank you very, very much.

Have a good day. We stand in recess.