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Trip of the First Lady to Central Asia, Russia, and the Ukraine -Speechwriter Trip Book
(David) [Binder] [2]

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Divider Title: **D – KZ (Misc.)**

**First Lady's November Trip to Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan**

UZBEKISTAN

Background Papers

- Main Issues in Bilateral Relations
- Political/Social Overview
- Economic/Commercial Overview
- Human Rights Overview
- Ethnic and Religious Issues
- Education System and Issues
- Women's Issues
- Population and Family Planning Issues
- Children's Issues
- Health Issues
- Overview of U.S. Assistance Program
- Environmental Issues
- Overview of U.S. Embassy

Other Materials

- Biographies
- Background Notes/Fact Sheets
- Scenesetters

UZBEKISTAN: MAIN ISSUES IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Interest in U.S. ties. Despite its slow pace of internal reform, Uzbekistan actively seeks closer U.S. ties. It has supported U.S. positions in the UN on controversial issues such as Iran and Cuba; it has cooperated actively in efforts against weapons proliferation and narcotics; and it has been an active participant in Western security initiatives under Partnership for Peace, OSCE and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Uzbekistan is also a member of the Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion (Centrasbat) with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which in September held joint military exercises that included U.S. participation.

Mutual benefits. Uzbekistan values closer relations with the U.S. to assure its independence, counter the regional ambitions of Russia and Iran, assert its own regional role, and attract western investment. The U.S. in turn recognizes Uzbekistan as a regional leader, representing relative stability in a turbulent region; a growing market for U.S. exports (\$350 million in 1996); a producer of natural resources such as gold, uranium, and natural gas; and as a likely regional hub for infrastructure such as pipelines, transportation, and communications, in which U.S. firms seek a leading role.

- **Joint commission.** The desire for closer relations on both sides has led to an agreement to form a Joint Commission, chaired by Ambassador-at-Large Sestanovich and Foreign Minister Kamilov, to be inaugurated in Washington, most likely in January 1998. Formation of the Joint Commission, an idea endorsed by President Clinton in his June 1996 meeting with Karimov, institutionalizes our effort to build closer relations. While both sides seek to deepen military and regional cooperation, the Commission will also serve to push political and economic reform.

Differences. Despite close cooperation in a number of areas, there are sources of friction in our bilateral relationship. These arise from Uzbekistan's slow pace of economic reform, poor human rights record and sometimes meddlesome regional activities.

a) Economic reform. Reform has stalled since Uzbekistan's October 1996 decision to restrict currency convertibility. This has reduced IFI programs and hampered foreign companies seeking to invest. Other concerns are slow movement on medium/large-enterprise privatization and bureaucratic obstacles to investment and trade. More positively, a new tax code was passed in April; we will monitor its implementation closely.

b) Human rights. President Karimov, a former Uzbek Communist Party First Secretary, has fallen far short of his declarations in favor of a democratic society and free press: the government refuses to register human rights NGOs or real opposition parties; there remains pervasive press censorship; and there have been numerous reports of beatings and torture by police. Karimov, a former Uzbek Communist Party First Secretary, defends his political record by claiming the need to defend the state against ethnic and fundamentalist unrest.

c) Regional aspirations. Despite its fear that the conflict, instability and Islamic fundamentalism in neighboring countries could spill across its porous borders and threaten its own secular state, Uzbekistan has taken some potentially destabilizing actions within the region. Uzbekistan has supported renegade ethnic Uzbek officers in neighboring Tajikistan, which threatens to disrupt that nation's fragile peace process. Moreover, in Afghanistan -- although it has at times played a moderating and constructive role -- the Uzbek government has supported ethnic Uzbek military activity, which helps perpetuate Afghanistan's civil conflict.

Future relations. The U.S. believes that Uzbekistan's stability and prosperity could better be assured by a firmer commitment to economic and political reform, an issue we will pursue in the Joint Commission. Lack of progress on both fronts will jeopardize continuation of some USG assistance and undermine the overall relationship. We also continue to encourage Uzbekistan to maintain a neutral role in the civil conflicts in neighboring Tajikistan and Afghanistan. In addition, we want to build on the success of September's Centrasbat exercise by making it an annual event, and to expand IMET and other forms of training for Uzbek military forces.

UZBEKISTAN: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW

Uzbekistan is politically one of the least changed states in the former Soviet Union. Power is now concentrated in the hands of President Karimov instead of the Communist Party, but the legislature functions largely as it did in the Soviet era. There is no independent judiciary.

Consolidation of presidential power. During his first few years as President, Karimov focused on consolidating power. He outmaneuvered his rivals within the government and crushed the largest non-Communist political opposition movement in Central Asia, although he did so largely without resort to force. A former First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, Karimov was elected President in a contested election in December 1991 in which the most popular prospective candidate, Abdurahim Pulat, leader of the main opposition movement, was not allowed to run.

Opposition. Following a student riot in early 1992 and mounting opposition criticism of the regime, police suppressed Birlik and Erk, the two main independent political movements that had emerged during the era of perestroika. The authorities also cracked down on Islamic activists in the Ferghana Valley. Opposition and religious leaders were harassed, beaten or arrested. Others, including Birlik Chairman Pulat, Erk Chairman Solikh and former Grand Mufti of Uzbekistan Sadiq were forced into exile.

Popular support. Despite his use of repression, Karimov appears to have popular support. A 1996 International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) poll showed that over two-thirds of the respondents said that they were satisfied with "the situation in Uzbekistan today," and three-fourths said that the overall quality of their life today was either "very good" or "fairly good" -- indicating high levels of satisfaction, according to U.S. polling experts.

Status quo. Absent a rapid deterioration in the economic situation, Karimov is likely to succeed in his bid to stay in office past the year 2000. This reflects not only his successful repression of opposition and public acceptance of his approach to reform, but also the cohesive nature of the population (three-quarters ethnic Uzbek), an unbroken history of authoritarian rule, and the a growing sense of national identity that Karimov has helped build. Although the legacy of repression in Uzbekistan probably stifled the level of dissent expressed to the pollsters, the uniform results nevertheless suggest that many Uzbekistanis appreciate the stability that Karimov has brought to

the country and accept his claim that political reform must be implemented gradually to prevent chaos.

Attention to western concerns. As Karimov has attempted to attract foreign investment, he has sought to accommodate, at least superficially, Western concerns about human rights and democratization. Karimov allowed Radio Liberty to reopen an office in Tashkent and has allowed the establishment of local independent television stations. The government invited the OSCE to hold a seminar on human rights in Tashkent and permitted the brother of Birlik Chairman Pulat, Abdumannob Pulat, who was given political asylum in the U.S., to return to Uzbekistan and attend the meeting.

Superficial reforms. Nevertheless, democratic reforms have been largely cosmetic. In practice, the Uzbekistani Government continues to restrain, either directly or indirectly, fundamental freedoms. Karimov broke his promise to consider his current term in office -- extended by a March 1995 referendum -- as his last, by having parliament to declare in August 1995 that he is eligible to run again in the year 2000.

UZBEKISTAN: ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL OVERVIEW

Energy and agriculture. Uzbekistan's labor-intensive economy is centered on agriculture and mineral extraction. It has been less vulnerable to the disruptions experienced by other countries of the former Soviet Union, because rapid growth in the production of oil and gas -- which grew by 180 and 19 percent, respectively, between 1991 and 1996 -- allowed Uzbekistan to reduce its oil imports at a time when energy prices were increasing sharply. Uzbekistan -- a net gas exporter -- took advantage of these higher prices and increased gas exports. In addition, the government's policy of shifting crop acreage from cotton to grains and other crops increased domestic food supplies, heading off social tensions and the need for food imports.

Economic performance. Uzbekistan's GDP declined 17 percent, but industrial production held steady, between 1990 and 1996 -- easily the best performance of all the CIS countries. Nevertheless, rapid energy growth has masked steep drops in other industrial sectors, including metallurgy, chemicals, and construction materials, ranging from 33 to 59 percent between 1990 and 1995.

Trade. Foreign trade has performed better than in other CIS countries. Although total two-way trade in 1996 was an estimated 50 percent of the 1990 level, exports to hard currency non-CIS partners -- mostly of cotton -- more than doubled during that period, and Uzbekistan was the only CIS country to import more from non-CIS partners than it had in 1991.

Reform. While initially rejecting serious economic reforms, in mid-1994 Uzbekistan implemented a macro-economic stabilization policy and other reforms with IMF guidance to deal with high inflation and to attract greater foreign investment. State control over the economy, however, remains strong. The government's tight rein on credits and deficit spending has reduced average monthly inflation from more than 20 percent in 1994 to four percent in 1996 and an estimated three percent in 1997.

Privatization. Housing and small-scale enterprises, mostly in retail and services, have been almost fully privatized. Employment in the state sector dropped from 67 percent in 1991 to 43 percent in 1996, and 95 percent of retail sales last year went through enterprises not owned by the government. Large-scale privatization has barely begun, however, and the government's approach has favored current employers and managers over a process more open to the public. In 1996, the government further changed privatization procedures to encourage the participation

of foreign investors. The government has permitted private ownership of livestock and expanded privatized cotton production. While most consumer prices are close to world levels, Uzbekistan maintains artificially low prices on cotton and wheat. Moreover, the government retains state orders -- as high as 50 percent -- on the cotton and wheat crops, as well as complete control over cotton exports, and it strictly controls participation in hard currency exchanges.

Foreign investment. Economic reforms have improved the foreign investment climate in Uzbekistan, but potential investors continue to face problems from an inadequate legal infrastructure and a cumbersome, often corrupt, bureaucracy. In October 1996, the government restricted the number of banks authorized to conduct foreign exchange transactions. Several small-scale investors have shut down operations, and major foreign investors have noted difficulties in purchasing foreign exchange to meet external obligations and repatriate profits. Although more than 1,200 joint ventures have been registered in Uzbekistan, only about half were operating in 1996.

UZBEKISTAN: HUMAN RIGHTS

Slow progress. Uzbekistan is an authoritarian state with limited civil rights. The government has failed to make significant progress on human rights concerns and political reforms. Chosen President by a 1991 election that was neither free nor fair, Islam Karimov had his term extended to 2000 by a 1995 Soviet-style referendum. The government continues to deny registration to independent political parties and other groups critical of the government, while creating several parties to support itself. It also continues to hold political prisoners. Police and security services use torture, harassment and illegal searches against activists. Police often beat criminal suspects to obtain confessions.

Freedom of the press. Press censorship remains pervasive. Almost all newspapers are government-owned, and citizens have little access to foreign newspapers. Radio Liberty, the Voice of America, BBC radio and expensive local cable television channels are among the few sources of uncontrolled news, but even their reporters face harassment. Freedom of expression is constrained by an atmosphere of repression and concrete measures including a law against "offending the honor and dignity of the President."

Positive steps. Nevertheless, some potentially positive steps on human rights were taken in 1996 and 1997. It remains to be seen to whether these measures are truly reforms or merely superficial. In 1997, legislation was enacted to increase access to information and protect journalists; to reform the penal system and protect the rights of prisoners; and to establish an ombudsman's office to monitor and investigate human rights abuses. During the summer of 1996 authorities permitted Human Rights Watch/Helsinki and Radio Liberty to open bureaus in Tashkent. In addition, just prior to a meeting with President Clinton in June 1996, President Karimov released fifteen political prisoners and invited exiled human rights activists to return to Uzbekistan. Later that year he established a National Center for Human Rights devoted to training professionals in human rights issues.

UZBEKISTAN: ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Discrimination claims. Despite official Uzbekistani government policy favoring the development of a multi-ethnic society, a number of non-Uzbek ethnic groups claim official discrimination. For example, some groups claim that their communities are shortchanged in distribution of government resources. This discrimination appears to apply particularly to those groups who are most isolated, such as the Karakalpaks who occupy the ecologically-devastated northwestern corner of the country near the Aral Sea.

Language issues. The government is moving to replace Russian with Uzbek as the official language by the year 2000, a move that is seen as disadvantaging the quarter of the country's 24 million people for whom Uzbek is not the first language. In addition, legal proceedings are often conducted in Uzbek without Russian translation, even when they involve Russian speakers, and Russian suspects are routinely forced to sign confessions written in Uzbek.

Freedom of religion. Uzbekistan's constitution provides for freedom of religion and separation of religion and state. Many groups worship freely, including the majority of (Sunni) Moslems, Jews, Russian Orthodox and several other Christian denominations. However, the government suppresses some religious groups and activities. For example, to counter what it perceives as extremist Islamic views, the government limits the expression of political views by religious leaders in sermons and elsewhere, and effectively controls the Islamic religious hierarchy. Authorities continue to use the tactic of convicting Islamic religious leaders on trumped-up criminal charges (e.g., possessing drugs and ammunition) to suppress their suspected criticism of government policy. Moreover, at least one evangelical leader has been arrested and briefly jailed for operating an unregistered church. Other evangelical groups have had difficulty registering and, as a consequence, operate in legal limbo. Acting on orders from presidential staff, customs officials confiscated and held for most of 1997 a shipment of 29,460 Bibles belonging to the Uzbekistan Bible Society.

UZBEKISTAN: EDUCATION ISSUES

High literacy. The high educational level of the Uzbek population is a great asset to this Central Asian nation. Literacy is near universal at over 98 percent in both rural and urban areas. Educational methods and curricula, however, are often outmoded and inappropriate, and rural schools are less well-equipped than their urban counterparts.

Deteriorating conditions. As in other social sectors, the Uzbek educational system experienced significant material and financial constraints following the breakup of the former Soviet Union. As a result, serious problems relating to the maintenance of educational institutions and the provision of necessary equipment and supplies such as textbooks have emerged. For instance, many schools, especially in rural areas, have no telephone, no running water, and no sewage system. In addition, low teacher salaries have caused many of the most talented teachers to leave teaching.

Length of schooling. Despite this bleak financial situation, the total mean years of schooling for both men and women in Uzbekistan exceeded 11 years in 1994. Also, the percent of all persons aged 6 to 23 enrolled in school was approximately 50 percent in 1994. However, this figure is over 10 percent lower than the equivalent figure for 1992. Also disturbing is the fact that the percentage of 19-year-olds still enrolled in full-time education declined from 31 percent in 1992 to 26 percent in 1994.

Continued decline? The needs in the educational sector must be addressed fairly quickly to preserve the quality and availability of education for all children and young adults. Hence, during coming years, Uzbekistan must try to maintain its educational achievements by revising and restructuring curricula to meet the requirements of a modern, independent nation. Assistance is also urgently needed for maintenance of the basic educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Education has not been a sector of specific concentration for USAID work.

UZBEKISTAN: WOMEN'S ISSUES

Women's rights. Uzbekistan has acceded to a number of international human rights-related treaties, almost all of which prohibit discrimination based on gender. Both the Constitution and the 1992 law on citizenship prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. However, enforcement mechanisms are inadequate, and women are unaware of their rights and too poorly organized to advocate for themselves effectively.

Traditional society. Uzbekistan is a traditional society in which Islamic culture is becoming more of a presence. Women assume that raising children and managing the home are exclusively the domain of women. Early, arranged marriages are common, and young brides are expected to have a child within the first year of marriage and to care for their mothers-in-law.

Education. The female literacy rate in 1990 was 96 percent, which compares very favorably with a 60 percent rate worldwide. Opportunities for women to obtain an education are declining, however. Because traditional attitudes toward women favor early marriage and child rearing, education for women receives a low priority. The government has abolished the compulsory attendance law, making it easier to keep girls out of school. Declining financial support for state schools has resulted in the best educational opportunities requiring entry payments amounting to bribes. Economically hard-pressed families are more likely to do this for sons, for whom a career is considered as required, while keeping daughters at home.

Economic Participation. Women's employment and labor force participation is high (71%), but women tend to be employed in low-skilled occupations or in low-paying occupations such as education and health. Women make up three-fourths of the country's doctors and nurses and 60% of teachers, but only a third of technicians and engineers. Women seeking to be entrepreneurs face a host of obstacles, including cultural attitudes, family and household responsibilities, and lack of access to family assets, which reduces access to scarce credit.

Political representation. The proportion of women represented in Parliament has dramatically decreased since independence. Before the 1989 elections, due largely to a quota system, women comprised 35% of the Supreme Soviet. Now, only 13 of the 250 deputies in Parliament, or five percent, are female. Few women hold influential positions in the executive branch and those that do tend to serve in ministries dealing with social issues such as health and education. A woman deputy prime minister was appointed to handle women's affairs. She is the only female in

the Cabinet and has no program funds or real power. Women serve as deputy governors for women's affairs at the province and district levels, but have no program funds and limited chances to put issues forward in a male-dominated environment.

NGOs. The Republican Women's Committee, a government-sponsored NGO headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, has supported a few useful projects. A number of women-oriented, grassroots NGOs deal with specific gender issues but, as with most NGOs in Uzbekistan, they are weak and lack depth in their leadership.

International activities. A national delegation was sent to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing as well as to the 1996 meeting in Bucharest. Support from outside the country permitted key women leaders not affiliated with the government to attend the Beijing conference. Since Beijing, the government has prepared a paper entitled "The Government's Conception on Improving the Status of Women". In May 1997, a Gender in Development Unit under the Republican Women's Committee, financed by the UN, began developing a National Action Plan to be based on the Government's concept paper.

Social benefits. Under the Soviet Government, a comprehensive system of social benefits assisted women and gave them preferential treatment, including child allowances, maternity leave, and favorable retirement pensions allowing earlier retirement than men. Unfortunately, this system of social welfare is grossly underfunded. Benefits are too small and often paid late. Until it is reformed, women are likely to suffer disproportionately.

Demographics.

Female population - 11.5 million (50.5% of population) (1995)
Number of women 15-45 in 1995 = 5.6 million; in 2015 = 8.9 million
Life expectancy - 72 years (as opposed to 66 for men)
Total fertility rate - 3.8

UZBEKISTAN: POPULATION AND FAMILY PLANNING

Projected trends. With a total population of approximately 23.7 million, Uzbekistan is the third most populous country in the former Soviet Union. With the current population growth rate of 2.5 percent, the population will dramatically increase in the next fifteen years and is projected to reach 35.7 million by the year 2025. Forty percent of the population of Uzbekistan is less than 14 years of age. Fertility in Uzbekistan has declined in recent years by one child. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for women is 3.3 children.

Contraception. Currently, reproductive health services are available at hospitals and polyclinics at the oblast, rayon, and city levels, and at primary health care institutions through the public sector. According to demographic and health data, knowledge of contraceptive methods is virtually universal among Uzbekistani women and 51 percent of currently married women are using a modern method of contraception, primarily in-uteri devices. Most of the women obtain their contraceptive method from the public sector.

International assistance. The United Nation Fund for Population (UNFPA) with the EU credit has supplied the contraceptive for the public sector. This may change in the future as the commercial sector becomes more active. USAID is helping the Ministry of Health to improve the accessibility and availability of contraceptives through the commercial sector. However, the recent adoption of regulations to control and limit foreign exchange for businesses have affected USAID's efforts.

Abortion. An abortion rate of 0.7 abortions per woman in Uzbekistan is lower than estimates for other areas in the former Soviet Union. These lower rates are largely due to greater availability and use of alternative contraceptive methods.

UZBEKISTAN: CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Decline in social services. Despite recently increased efforts on the part of the government of Uzbekistan to address the general downturn in the country's social indicators, preoccupation with macroeconomic issues as well as real budgetary constraints has meant that social services for the most vulnerable groups -- especially children -- are shrinking and in danger of not furnishing even minimum support. Some 41 percent of the population is under the age of 16; this places high demands on scarce social services.

Nutrition. A wide range of serious nutritional problems affect a large percentage of children, especially in rural areas. Among the major reasons are large families, low family incomes and sporadic supplies of major food products. The USAID-funded 1996 Uzbekistan Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) found that close to 15 percent of the child population is stunted and another three percent wasted. This is in line with percentages generally found in Central Asia, but higher than those for other areas. Breast-feeding is almost universal in Uzbekistan; 96% of all children are breast-fed during their first four to six months of life. This satisfies the World Health Organization recommended minimum four months of breast feeding.

Infant health care. Almost all births in Uzbekistan (94%) take place in health facilities and under the care and supervision of trained medical personnel. Uzbekistan provides a full range of inoculations (polio, measles, BCG and DPT/DT) to 85 percent of the children aged 12 - 23 months. The highest coverages are for Polio 1 and Diphtheria 1, 99 percent. The lowest is for measles, 89 percent. USAID addressed vaccine security issues early on in Uzbekistan and Central Asia. It provided technical assistance to modernize antiquated and inefficient immunization protocols. USAID has also been in the forefront of helping combat other diseases by providing vaccines and associated assistance.

Aral Sea. In the Aral Sea zone, children have been especially susceptible to the air and waterborne diseases associated with the ecological disaster area. Although the infant mortality rate has fallen in recent years, it remains higher than in other areas of Uzbekistan. USAID mobilized resources quickly in 1994 to fulfill Vice President Gore's commitment to the area. Uzbekistan shared with Kazakhstan in USAID's \$22 million Aral Sea Initiative to bring potable water to people of the Aral Sea region. This initiative has now shifted from infrastructure projects to ones addressing water policy and sustainability.

Adoption law. While international adoptions of Uzbekistani orphans are legal, government officials are not in agreement on who has authority over such adoptions. Only three foreign adoptions took place in FY 1997. Uzbekistan is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Thus, cases of children abducted to or from Uzbekistan must be handled in the family courts of the country to which they have been taken. When such cases are brought to the attention of the Department of State, the natural parents are advised to retain legal counsel in the country to which the children have been taken. The Department of State is not aware of any pending cases in Uzbekistan.

UZBEKISTAN: HEALTH ISSUES

Major problems. Uzbekistan's major health problems include high maternal and infant mortality rates; poor women's health, including reproductive health; intestinal and parasitic infections; high rates of cardiovascular diseases; and increasing incidence of tuberculosis and vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio, diphtheria, and anemia, particularly in women and children.

Deteriorating conditions. Historically, the national health care system in Uzbekistan was comprehensive. Services available to a large percentage of the population were provided mainly free of charge. However, health sector resources have declined since the breakup of the former Soviet system, reducing health care quality, accessibility and efficiency.

Drinking Water. Lack of access to potable water continues to be a major problem for half a million people in the Aral Sea area. This is a main cause of higher incidences of diarrheal disease in the region. The government and USAID have already improved two large water treatment plants serving half a million people in the Aral Sea region through installation of chlorination and other water cleaning equipment. These efforts immediately improved drinking water quality, which in turn reduced health risk. A regional effort in water management and water pricing is underway.

Reform and USAID assistance. Recently the Government of Uzbekistan has indicated readiness to pursue health reforms more consistent with a market-oriented economy. USAID is focusing on issues of health care financing and improved primary health care. This complements USAID's existing assistance in improving access to contraceptives through the private sector; reducing vaccine-preventable infant deaths; strengthening epidemiological monitoring of infectious diseases; and developing hospital partnerships with U.S.-based hospitals to transfer modern clinical technologies. USAID has provided some \$3 million to the health sector in the past two years, in addition to roughly \$5 million to improve water supply systems. USAID works closely on health issues with the World Bank, the World Health organization, and other United Nation Agencies.

UZBEKISTAN: ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Total funding commitment. The United States has provided approximately \$137.5 million to fund humanitarian aid, technical assistance and investment promotion activities in Uzbekistan since 1992. These programs seek to lay a basic foundation for market economic and democratic reform in an effort to encourage the government of Uzbekistan to embrace such reforms in earnest. The U.S. has contributed an additional \$16.6 million to the UNHCR and International Organization of Migration's 1997 Joint Appeal for the CIS Migration Conference follow-up for programs in Uzbekistan, as well as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Funding for economic reform. U.S. funding since 1992 for private sector development and economic restructuring in Uzbekistan totals approximately \$18 million. This relatively low figure compared to aid to other NIS reflects the slow pace of economic reform in Uzbekistan to date. Despite declarations to the contrary, the Uzbek government has been reluctant to implement many of the reform ideas generated by U.S.-funded programs. In addition, Uzbekistan's restrictions on currency convertibility undercut its efforts to attract foreign investment.

Economic programs. Our programs are nevertheless helping to lay the groundwork for a market-oriented economy by working with selected, reform-minded GOU officials. USAID has fielded a team of resident advisors that has been working closely with Uzbekistan's government on tax, fiscal, and financial reform. These advisors played a key role in drafting Uzbekistan's new tax code, which parliament passed in April 1997. USAID advisors are also working to draft new laws on budget formulation, reform the pension system, train banking system supervisors and streamline Uzbekistan's legal framework for international trade and investment in preparation for possible WTO membership.

Central Asian-American Enterprise Fund. The USG has also pledged \$150 million to capitalize the Central Asian-American Enterprise Fund, which operates in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. We created this fund to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Central Asia by making equity investments and providing micro-lending services. The fund has invested \$23.4 million in 10 Uzbek businesses in the manufacturing, food processing, construction, and service sectors. Unfortunately, currency convertibility problems have prevented even greater Fund activity in Uzbekistan thus far.

Democracy and human rights. The GOU has moved slowly on democratic reform, continues to repress its political opponents and resists the emergence of an independent media. Democracy-building aid activities have consequently been limited to working to strengthen civil society by supporting the development of a variety of NGO's in areas such as women's rights, advocacy for the handicapped and general human rights. People-to-people

programs such as USIA exchanges, farmer-to-farmer programs, and the Department of Commerce's SABIT Business Internship Program contribute to the development of Uzbekistan's civil society. Another project assists 16 local television stations.

Health care programs. Since 1992, the U.S. has allocated approximately \$7 million for improvements in Uzbekistan's health care system which have benefited women and children in particular. At the national level, the U.S. is helping Uzbekistan create a computerized national disease surveillance system. At the local level, USAID is beginning a major project that will develop pilot programs for financing rural hospitals.

Family planning programs. Underlying these programs is a focus on women's reproductive health and children's health. USAID supports two family planning programs that seek to reduce rates of maternal morbidity, infant mortality and abortions by creating model training clinics and conducting public education campaigns on the use of modern contraceptives. Recent data from project sites throughout Central Asia indicate a significant decline in abortions and increase in contraceptive use in recent years. USAID and the U.S. Center for Disease Control are also operating training programs aimed at battling infectious diseases such as polio, diphtheria, and Uzbekistan's two major causes of child mortality -- pneumonia and diarrhea. A medical partnership between Tashkent State Medical Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago Teaching Hospital has been awarded over \$1.5 million in grants since April 1995 for work on treatment of high-risk pregnancies, training in neo-natal resuscitation, and establishment of a Women's Wellness Center.

Environmental programs. The USG has provided nearly \$9 million for environmental programs in Uzbekistan since 1992. A large portion of these funds have financed projects that address the environmental disaster zone surrounding the Aral Sea. USAID has provided \$7 million for capital improvements in water treatment facilities in communities near the Aral Sea. USAID has also sponsored intense efforts to promote regional cooperation on water management and sharing. Thanks to this initiative, the presidents and prime ministers of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are close to agreement on a common water management policy. USAID has also funded pollution control projects at a major oil refinery and cement plant.

Energy programs. The U.S. has recently initiated a new project that aims to develop a legal and regulatory structure for Uzbekistan's energy sector. The goal of this program is to create the necessary conditions to attract foreign investment.

Humanitarian Assistance. We have delivered \$58.7 million in medical equipment, medicines, and other commodities donated by the U.S. Department of Defense and private voluntary organizations since 1992.

UZBEKISTAN: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Serious problems. Caused largely by the former Soviet regime's mismanagement of natural resources in the region, Uzbekistan's environmental problems include depletion of water supply, deteriorating water quality, water contamination from both agricultural pesticides and fertilizers and industrial enterprises, increasing water salinity, public health crises, improper waste and wastewater disposal, and air pollution from the industrial sector, concentrated in Tashkent province. Uzbekistan's economy relies largely on agriculture and extraction of natural resources, both carried out in an unsustainable manner, particularly with respect to water use.

Aral Sea disaster. Uzbekistan includes the southern portion of the Aral Sea. Due to Soviet agricultural development policies, large amounts of water were diverted from this sea for irrigation, leading to its shrinkage to slightly more than half its previous volume. The massive diversion of water from the two main tributaries, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, in combination with unsustainable agricultural practices, has destroyed the Aral Sea as a viable ecosystem and ruined local economies in the process. The U.S., along with the World Bank, UNDP, the EU, and Canada, is now focused on trying to stabilize the situation; any hope of restoration is dim at best.

USAID assistance. Much of USAID's initial focus has been on the urgent public health needs arising from the sea's degradation. Several million people living in the sea's basin have been deprived of access to safe water and have experienced abnormally high rates of morbidity, non-specific diarrheas, and viral hepatitis. In response, USAID undertook a series of multi-million dollar potable water projects to provide increased clean water access to over a million Central Asians. Some \$7 million of capital improvements including new disinfection systems, coagulation units, and expanded testing capabilities were provided to potable water treatment facilities in the major towns of northwestern Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has committed resources to insure the ongoing maintenance and operation of these renovated facilities. USAID has provided legal and regulatory review to help develop Uzbekistan's National Environmental Action Plan, and has emphasized use of economic instruments to promote environmental improvements and discourage liability hazards.

Water sharing and management. Donors including USAID, the World Bank, UNDP and the EU have sponsored intense efforts to promote cooperation among the five new Central Asian Republics in water management and sharing, thereby addressing the underlying causes of the Aral Sea disaster. From workshops and a demonstration

project to promote concepts of water pricing, protection of water resources for beneficial uses, and water demand management, donors have shifted to application of these principles at the Toktogul Reservoir, the largest multi-year storage facility in Central Asia, used primarily for irrigation and secondarily for power production. Acreage under irrigation provided by Toktogul water generates hundreds of millions of dollars from cotton and other crops in Uzbekistan and somewhat less from rice and other agricultural production in Kazakhstan.

Competing needs. Acute tension has arisen from competing needs for power generation for winter heating of homes in Kyrgyzstan and irrigation of crops in the summer for downstream countries. A series of year-long agreements between the countries on the dam's operation and the sharing of water have collapsed.

Water management agreement. Over the last year and a half, USAID has worked with the Interstate Council of the Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (ICKKU) to establish a multi-year agreement applying the principles of water pricing and demand management. The result is a draft agreement which ICKKU will submit for approval by the three governments by early 1998. USAID intends to assist in successful implementation of the agreement. Based upon the lessons learned through Toktogul, USAID also plans to assist with the development of other water basin management agreements along the Syr Darya. On a more local level, USAID is helping to form agricultural water user associations through training seminars and drafting of sample incorporating documents.

Waste minimization. Over half of Uzbekistan's industry is centered in Tashkent Oblast. Principal environmental problems are air emissions of particulates from power plants and cement plants, wastewater from chemical plants, and disposal of solid wastes from mineral extraction and processing. To tackle these, USAID funded demonstration projects in waste minimization in two industries. An oil refinery and a cement plant installed pollution reduction equipment, resulting in large energy and dollar savings and substantial reductions in carbon dioxide and particulate emissions.

Environmental NGO Development. Non-governmental organizations are a key means of overcoming the Soviet legacy of environmental mismanagement. USAID has funded ISAR, a non-profit organization that supports NGOs working on environmental issues in the Newly Independent States since 1993. ISAR has awarded \$500,000 in small grants (from \$300 to \$5,000) to local NGO's to conduct concrete actions in environmental education, awareness, monitoring, and law; alternative energy; sustainable development; sustainable agriculture; and related areas.

EMBASSY OVERVIEW: TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN

Location and staff. Embassy Tashkent opened in March 1992 and moved to its present site in a former Soviet Youth Center about five miles from downtown Tashkent later the same year. Staffed initially by fewer than ten full-time Americans, the Embassy has grown substantially to reflect the increasing complexity of U.S.-Uzbek relations and U.S. interests in the region. The Embassy now has about 32 full-time direct hire American positions plus several local hire Americans.

Offices and programs. The State Department complement includes political/economic, political/military, administrative and consular sections. In addition, the newly-created regional environmental office is located here, covering the five Central Asian states most affected by the Aral Sea crisis. The following agencies also are present in Tashkent:

USIS. USIS is staffed by a Public Affairs Officer and a Regional English Language Specialist.

USAID. USAID for Central Asia is based in Almaty, but represented in Tashkent by one direct-hire American.

Foreign Commercial Service. The Foreign Commercial Service is represented by a Senior Commercial Officer, who also oversees the operations of the American Business Center here.

Defense Attaché. The Defense Attaché Office (DAO) is headed by an Army Lieutenant Colonel assisted by an Operations Coordinator. DAO oversees the Partnership for Peace Program and the bilateral military educational and training exchanges.

Peace Corps. The Peace Corps maintains two programs countrywide, one focusing on English teaching and the other on small business development and education, with about 50-60 total volunteers.

Other. Family services for resident Americans are developing gradually as funding increases and Uzbek officials become more comfortable dealing with an international business and diplomatic presence. There is a locally organized International School and an International Clinic. The U.S. government contributes significantly to both institutions.

UZBEKISTAN: TASHKENT SCENESETTER

History. Tashkent was the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union and the Russian/Soviet administrative center for central Asia. Until its conquest by the Czar's armies in 1863, Tashkent had been a minor town (its name means "stone village" in Uzbek). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, Tashkent had grown into a prosperous trading town.

City setting. Tashkent has the appearance of a modern city, owing mostly to its near-total destruction by an earthquake in 1966. It was rapidly rebuilt in a "Soviet modern" style. Post-independence, much new building is going on and the government has encouraged a more Asian architectural style. Many new buildings have white columns and turquoise domes. The combination of this new style with the broad, tree-lined boulevards built by the Soviets makes Tashkent a pleasant city to visit.

UZBEKISTAN: SAMARKAND SCENESETTER

History. Samarkand, which celebrated its 2,500th birthday last year, was already a major urban center when it was conquered by Alexander the Great. For almost a thousand years, beginning in the second century B.C., virtually every caravan on the Silk Route passed through Samarkand. It remained an important trade city until sea routes between Europe and the Orient were opened. The city's glory ended with its destruction at the hands of Genghis Khan in 1220. However, by early in the thirteenth century, Samarkand recovered when Tamerlane (known here as Amir Timur, the "Iron Emir") chose it as his capital.

City setting. Today Samarkand, with a population of about 500,000, is a center of commerce supporting agricultural activity in the surrounding countryside. There has been some light industrial development. Samarkand is set apart from other Central Asian cities by its spectacular historic sights.

UZBEKISTAN: BUKHARA SCENESETTER

History. Considered by many to be Uzbekistan's most beautiful city, Bukhara celebrated the purported 2500th anniversary of its founding on October 19, 1997. Successively ruled by Achaemenids, Greeks, Seleucids, Parathions, and Kushans before being captured by Arabs in the eighth century, it was a major trading, cultural, and educational center for much of its history. It was the capital of the Samanid empire -- the first independent central Asian state -- in the tenth century. Largely destroyed by Genghis Khan, the city's fortunes improved in the second half of the sixteenth century as it became the center of various Khanates or Emirates until 1920. The Emirate of Bukhara became a protectorate of Russia in 1873, although the Emir was allowed to continue to rule. Bukhara was a center of counter-revolution during the Russian civil war and was taken by the Red Army in September 1920. Any semblance of Bukharan independence (under a Bukharan People's Republic) was ended in September 1924 when the region officially joined the Soviet Union.

City setting. Today, Bukhara is a quiet city of roughly 300,000 inhabitants. While there are some industrial enterprises in the new part of the city, the city was not as heavily industrialized as others in central Asia. Moreover, the old city, with its narrow, twisting streets, maintains a separate atmosphere from more modern sections of Bukhara, and kept its historic identity intact.

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**First Lady's November Trip to Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan**

Russia

Background Papers

- Main Issues in Bilateral Relations
- Political/Social Overview
- Economic/Commercial Overview
- Human Rights Overview
- Ethnic and Religious Issues
- Education System and Issues
- Women's Issues
- Population and Family Planning Issues
- Children's Issues
- Health Issues
- Overview of U.S. Assistance Program
- Environmental Issues
- Overview of U.S. Embassy
- Science and Technology
- Space

Event Papers

- Arrival/Departure Statements

Other Materials

- Biographies
- Updated Background Notes/Fact Sheets
- Moscow Scenesetters
- Maps



Russia

President

Boris Yel'tsin

(reelected July 1996)



Key Ministers and Other Government Representatives

Chairman
 First Deputy Chairman
 First Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Deputy Chairman
 Minister of Agriculture & Food
 Minister of Civil Defense, Emergencies, & Natural Disasters
 Minister of Cooperation with Member States of the CIS
 Minister of Culture
 Minister of Defense
 Minister of Economics
 Minister of General & Vocational Education
 Minister of Finance
 Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Minister of Foreign Economic Relations & Trade
 Minister of Fuel & Energy
 Minister of Health
 Minister of Internal Affairs (MVD)
 Minister of Justice
 Minister of Labor & Social Protection
 Minister of Nationalities Affairs & Regional Policy
 Minister of Natural Resources
 Minister of Railways
 Minister of Science & Technology
 Minister of State Property
 Minister of Transportation

Viktor Chernomyrdin
 Anatoliy Chubays
 Boris Nemtsov
 Ramazan Abdulatipov
 Maksim Boyko
 Vladimir Bulgak
 Viktor Khlystun
 Anatoliy Kulikov
 Valeriy Serov
 Oleg Sysuyev
 Yakov Urinson
 Viktor Khlystun
 Sergey Shoygu
 Anatoliy Adamishin
 Natal'ya Dement'yeva
 Igor Sergeev
 Yakov Urinson
 Vladimir Kinelev
 Anatoliy Chubays
 Yevgeniy Primakov
 Mikhail Fradkov
 Boris Nemtsov
 Tat'yana Dmitriyeva
 Anatoliy Kulikov
 Sergey Stepashin
 Oleg Sysuyev
 Vyacheslav Mikhaylov
 Viktor Orlov
 Nikolay Aksezenko
 Vladimir Fortov
 Maksim Boyko
 Nikolay Tsakh

Date of Independence: 24 August 1991

Population: approx. 149 million

Minister without Portfolio
 Chairman, Federal Securities Market Commission
 Director, Federal Security Service (FSB)
 Chief, State Protection Service (SGO)
 Director, Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR)
 Director, Federal Border Service
 Head, Government Apparatus
 Chairman, Central Bank of Russia
 Central Currency & Export Control Service
 Chief, Government Press Service
 Ambassador to the US
 UN Perm Rep

Yevgeniy Yasin
 Dmitriy Vasil'yev
 Nikolay Kovalev
 Yuriy Krapivin
 Vyacheslav Trubnikov
 Gen. Andrey Nikolayev
 Vladimir Babichev
 Sergey Dubinin
 Oleg Pavlov
 Andrey Nikolayev
 Yuliy Vorontsov
 Sergey Lavrov

Key Legislative Officials

Chairman, Federation Council
 Duma Speaker
 First Deputy Duma Speaker
 Deputy Duma Speaker
 Deputy Duma Speaker
 Deputy Duma Speaker
 Deputy Duma Speaker
 Deputy Duma Speaker
 Deputy Duma Speaker
 Chairman, Duma Security Committee
 Chairman, Duma Budget, Taxes, Banking,
 and Finance Committee
 Chairman, Duma International Affairs Committee
 Chairman, Duma Defense Committee

Yegor Stroyev
 Gennadiy Seleznev
 Vladimir Ryzhkov
 Mikhail Gutseriyev
 Artur Chilingarov
 Svetlana Goryacheva
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RUSSIA: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW

Six years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Russia as an independent state, Russia continues to undergo a dramatic political, economic, and social transformation. The 1993 constitution provides the basis for a government founded on three separate branches of power and grounded in the rule of law, respecting human rights and civil liberties.

Institutions. Democratic institutions and practices continue to take firmer root in Russia. Following the bloody standoff between Yeltsin and the parliament in October 1993, Russia has held successful presidential elections and two cycles of parliamentary elections. For the first time in Russia's history as an independent state, its head of state was chosen in 1996 in a competitive election, judged by the international community to be free and fair. All heads of regional government and regional legislatures, previously appointed by the president, are now democratically elected.

Institutional conflict. President Yeltsin's government and the lower house of parliament, the Duma, which has a majority of communists and nationalists, frequently differ over policy and legislative issues. Sharpened differences over tax reform and other legislation deemed essential to advance economic reform led to an effort by deputies to challenge the Yeltsin government through a vote of no-confidence in mid-October. Yeltsin's last-minute appeal to deputies not to follow through with the vote and his offer to hold "reconciliation" talks with parliamentary leaders averted a showdown for the time being. His subsequent public pledge to observe constitutional norms put to rest rumors that he might attempt to bait the Duma into a showdown with the government.

Religious freedom. More worrisome for Russia's political transformation is a new law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations." The law appears to restrict the activities of minority religious organizations -- including some under the Orthodox rubric -- and newer religions. The Russian government, however, claims implementing regulations will protect the religious freedoms to which Russia is committed under its international covenants. The law responds in part to concerns voiced by the Russian Orthodox Church and other conservative forces about activities undertaken by non-traditional religions and sects in the past few years. While

the government portrays the law as a compromise among all traditional faiths, most major Protestant groups and the Roman Catholic Church publicly opposed the law. We will carefully monitor implementation of the law and watch for cases that violate Russia's international commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements.

Economic transition. For the past six years, Russia has been in the process of transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy. While this process has brought greater economic opportunity and expanded goods and services available to consumers, it has also adversely affected people living on fixed incomes, those whose skills are no longer in demand, and persons who continue to be employed at inefficient state-run enterprises. Unemployment remains high, particularly in the countryside.

Social conditions. Some twenty-one percent of Russia's population -- 31.5 million people -- live below the poverty level of 402,000 rubles or 69 U.S. dollars per month. The elderly are extremely hard hit, with the average monthly pensions set at 55 U.S. dollars per month. Decreases in the availability and quality of health care and life expectancy, coupled with increased incidences of epidemic disease, higher infant mortality rates and death rates dramatically illustrate how the social safety net has frayed for Russia's neediest citizens.

Crime. Crime has also increased dramatically in Russia as state law enforcement authorities grapple with a shortage of resources to combat crime effectively and as society tries to cope with growing inequalities of wealth amid a deteriorating social safety network.

RUSSIA: ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Ethnic diversity. The Russian Federation is home to over 100 distinct nationalities. While ethnic Russians comprise about 81% of the population, there are also large numbers of Turkic peoples (many of whom are Muslim), Caucasians and numerous ethnic groups native to Siberia and the far north. The Federation is a patchwork of 89 administrative units, including oblasts, autonomous oblasts, autonomous okrugs and republics, many of which were nominally established during the Soviet period to grant a measure of autonomy to non-Slavic minorities. Though local governance was largely a fiction during Soviet times, many regions -- including Sverdlovsk Oblast (of which Yekaterinburg is the capital) -- are attempting to redefine Russia's brand of federalism in order to wrest more authority from Moscow. With the exception of the bloody conflict in Chechnya, which ended in 1996, Russia has contained these centrifugal forces without serious problems with ethnic strife or violence.

Ethnicity by region. Both Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk lie on the trans-Siberian railway and were key settlements during Russia's eastward expansion. As such, they are by-and-large populated by Russians, though adjacent regions have considerable numbers of ethnic minorities. Yekaterinburg's region borders on the Republic of Bashkortostan, whose population is about 50% Muslim. Southeast of Novosibirsk are the Altay mountains and due east, beyond Lake Baikal, lies Buryatia. Both of these regions have indigenous Mongol populations who take pride in their kinship to Ghengis Khan.

Religious diversity. Russia's religious diversity matches its ethnic diversity and since the fall of the USSR Russia has seen a remarkable rebirth of religious activity. About half of the population is affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church, which is one of Russia's most respected national institutions, symbolized by its partnership with the City of Moscow to reconstruct the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in central Moscow. There has also been a revival in Jewish life and religious practice. Other religions with large followings include Islam, Catholicism, Buddhism and the Baptist Church.

Religious intolerance. There are continuing incidents of societal anti-Semitism and the government has been justly criticized for not aggressively prosecuting perpetrators of hate crimes. Some prominent politicians and members of the Russian Orthodox clergy have publicly denounced foreign

missionaries and argued for strict limitations on their activities because of their allegedly corrosive influence on young people. Many regional governments have harassed religious minorities and tried to prevent missionaries from proselytizing.

Religion law. A new law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" was signed by President Yeltsin and went into effect October 1 despite high-level intervention from President Clinton and Vice President Gore. While the Russian government portrayed the law as a compromise among all traditional faiths, most major Protestant groups and the Roman Catholic Church publicly opposed the law. Interpretation and implementation of the law will likely vary by region, though federal officials have insisted that Russia's respect for religious tolerance will not be eroded.

Legal restrictions. The legislation imposes severe restrictions on minority religious organizations -- including some under the Orthodox rubric -- and newer religions. Some of these communities may be forced to wait up to 15 years before attaining full legal status, a requirement for owning property, publishing literature, inviting foreign guests, operating schools and conducting charitable activities. The law also imposes onerous restrictions on non-citizens and erects barriers against foreign missionaries.

Incidents of implementation. In late September, the municipal authorities in Touim, a village in Khakassiya, a region in Siberia near Novosibirsk, notified a Lutheran congregation that it was being deregistered under terms of the new law. The authorities subsequently backed off, implicitly acknowledging the illegality of their action. It is expected that local authorities in other regions may also be emboldened by the new law to disrupt minority religious communities.

The Russian Orthodox Church. From the perspective of the Moscow Patriarchate, the law is a form of protectionism against foreign missionaries as well as rival elements of the Orthodox Church. By conferring de facto legal advantages on the Moscow Patriarchate, the law could serve as a powerful instrument for exerting pressure on non-conformists within the Orthodox family. For this reason, the "Old Believers" and the "Free Orthodox Church" opposed the law. According to press reports, a municipality near Moscow is already using the law to transfer control of a church building from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Moscow Patriarchate.

U.S. Congressional reaction. Congress is considering legislation that would cut off assistance to the Russian government if the law is applied in a manner that results in religious discrimination. Our government continues to engage with the GOR on this issue and we intend to watch closely how the law is implemented.

RUSSIA: ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL OVERVIEW

Economy in transition. As it has moved from a centrally planned economy toward a free market system, the Russian economy has suffered considerable stress. GDP fell by over 30% between 1992 and 1997, comparable to the Depression of the 1930's in the United States. Estimates of combined unemployment and underemployment range from 15 to 30 percent. The average wage is about \$150 per month and average pension about \$55 per month. Late payment or non-payment of wages and pensions is a pervasive problem at times affecting as much as 60% of Russia's work force, including public servants such as teachers and military personnel. The infant mortality rate is about three times as high as in the United States.

Cautious optimism. Today, however, more and more analysts are expressing cautious optimism about the Russian economy. Despite periods of policy drift, the Russian government has brought inflation down from a peak of over 2,200 percent in 1991 to a projected 12-15 percent in 1997, stabilized the Russian ruble, privatized over 70 percent of all enterprises, and has turned towards regulating major monopolies, streamlining the tax system, rationalizing housing and fuel subsidies and making other structural and social reforms. The appointment of Anatoliy Chubays and Boris Nemtsov as First Deputy Prime Ministers in March 1997 reflected an renewed commitment to reform by the Yeltsin government. After six-plus years of economic contraction, the Russian government projects zero growth in 1997 and approximately 2 percent growth in 1998.

Investment. Investment in the Russian economy, which is essential for modernization and renewed growth, is still lacking. There is evidence of repatriation of Russian capital, and the stock market is up dramatically, but there is little indication that Russian industry is investing in new capital goods. Foreign investment goes mostly into portfolio investments rather than into capital investment in new production. Foreign direct investment in Russia pales by comparison in per capita terms with China, Hungary, Poland and other transitional economies. U.S. and Russian businesses identify the lack of strong, market-oriented laws and economic institutions, the arcane and punitive tax code, and pervasive problems with crime and corruption as key impediments to operating in Russia. Improving the investment climate has become a major theme of President Yeltsin's economic reform program, and presents his administration with one of its

greatest challenges. The U.S. is Russia's largest foreign investor with cumulative investment of approximately \$4 billion, mostly in the energy and food processing industries.

Bilateral trade. U.S.-Russia trade reached \$6.3 billion in 1996, with Russia enjoying a surplus of \$1.2 billion. The U.S. ranks as Russia's third largest trading partner, although from the U.S. perspective Russia ranks below thirtieth. Leading U.S. exports to Russia include aircraft, nuclear equipment, meat and poultry, and tobacco. Russia's principal exports to the United States are aluminum, iron, steel and chemicals. Although there is strong protectionist sentiment within elements of the Russian government and Duma, government policy is moving in the direction of a more open market, mainly through the process of acceding to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Russia's goal, which President Clinton endorsed at Helsinki, is to accede in 1998, although this objective will be challenging.

RUSSIA: HUMAN RIGHTS OVERVIEW

Russia's record on human rights is mixed, with notable successes in the development of democratic institutions and press freedoms juxtaposed with continuing problems in the judicial system and the military. Despite the slow process of institutionalizing human rights protections, the Russian Government is committed to observing international standards as embodied in the OSCE process and the European Convention on Civil and Political Rights. Russia's Law on Religion is covered in a separate briefing paper.

Democratic institutions. Democratic institution-building has been one of independent Russia's stellar achievements. As mandated by the 1993 constitution, parliamentary elections took place in 1995 and presidential balloting occurred in 1996. Both elections were deemed free and fair by international observers although OSCE monitors noted that state-owned media displayed bias in their coverage of the candidates contending for president in 1996.

Chechnya. The most serious blemish on Russia's human rights record since independence was the war in Chechnya, in which tens of thousands of civilians were killed and over 500,000 persons displaced. Russian forces engaged in indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, resulting in numerous civilian deaths. The two sides reached a settlement in August 1996 and negotiations between Moscow and Grozny continue, albeit sporadically. Both sides have agreed to resolve conclusively Chechnya's political status prior to 2001. Despite the end of hostilities, violence has continued to plague Chechnya; six International Committee of the Red Cross workers were murdered in December 1996 and kidnappings occur frequently. Two U.S. citizens who disappeared in 1995 remain unaccounted for. In recent months, Chechen authorities have staged public executions as part of a campaign to institute shari'a law.

Violation of international standards. Although Russia has made progress in recognizing the legitimacy of international human rights standards, the institutionalization of procedures to safeguard these rights has lagged. Implementation of constitutional provisions for due process, fair and timely trial and humane punishment have proceeded slowly. In addition, the judiciary is subject to manipulation by political authorities and plagued by large case backlogs and trial delays. Lengthy pretrial detention is a serious problem and there are credible

reports of beatings and torture of inmates by correctional officials. As many as 20,000 inmates and detainees are thought to die annually because of sub-standard conditions and physical abuse.

Military hazing. In the military, the practice of "dedovshchina" (the violent hazing of new conscripts) remains a serious problem. Military personnel acknowledge unofficially that beating and psychological abuse remain part of the military initiation ritual. Human rights activists allege that scores of soldiers die or commit suicide each year as a direct consequence of the trauma inflicted by these practices.

Violation of due process: the Nikitin case. In one high-visibility case that has been fraught with numerous violations of due process, Aleksandr Nikitin -- a former navy captain who was researching the environmental dangers of nuclear waste from the Northern Fleet -- was detained by the security services for six months in 1996 without charge. He was later charged with espionage and revealing state secrets on the basis of a decree that is itself secret. Nikitin has been released from detention, but is barred from leaving St. Petersburg and is still awaiting a determination about whether his case will go to trial. In April, Nikitin was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Award, which his wife received on his behalf. She and the five other award recipients were received by President Clinton at the White House. Perhaps as a reaction to the Nikitin case, on October 6, Yeltsin signed a new law that makes illegal some previously acceptable forms of environmental activism.

Freedom of the press. Freedom of the press is generally respected and Russia's diverse political spectrum is well represented in newspapers and on television. There are increasing concerns, however, that control over the media, particularly television, is being concentrated in the hands of a small group of business empires, many of which have close relationships with the government.

Migration and refugees. Russia is a party to the major international conventions on refugees and forced migrants. Russia's Federal Migration Service has made progress in establishing the legal basis and procedures for evaluating applications for asylum and the U.S. government works closely on these issues with Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union. However, little progress has been made in implementing these procedures to adjudicate the 50,000

registered asylum seekers in the Russian Federation. Moreover, strict residential registration requirements in regions such as Moscow have been used to block migrants from establishing residence. Human rights activists have also documented instances in which local authorities use registration requirements to target darker skinned people for harassment and abuse.

RUSSIA: HEALTH CARE

Deteriorating conditions. Russia is in the midst of a public health crisis caused by lack of public funds, lax sanitation standards, inadequate health care service, industrial pollution and poor dietary and health practices. As a consequence, the health of the average Russian has deteriorated over the last decade, according to official statistics and extensive anecdotal reports. Russia's birthrate has been dropping since the mid-1980s, and the death rate increased steadily from 1992 until 1996, when it began to stabilize. As a result, Russia's population has been declining slightly since 1992, despite emigration.

Mortality rate increases. During the period since the mid-1980s, mortality rates for cardiovascular disease, cancer, accidents, suicide and violent crime have increased markedly, particularly among men of working age. These rates are up to three times higher than those observed in Western Europe and other industrialized countries. High levels of alcohol and tobacco consumption contribute to the deterioration in public health.

Infectious disease. The incidence of infectious diseases such as diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tuberculosis, syphilis, polio and cholera increased sharply in the mid-1990s, exceeding levels seen in the USSR during the 1970s. Widespread government vaccination programs for children since 1995 have succeeded in significantly reducing the incidence of diphtheria and polio. Tuberculosis, however, has continued to spread at a rapid rate, and health officials are alarmed at the rapid increase in the incidence of sexually and intravenously transmitted diseases such as syphilis and HIV. If present trends continue, as many as 800,000 Russians could be infected with HIV by 2000.

Government health programs. Russia's compulsory medical insurance program, implemented in 1992 to provide payroll tax-based funding for basic health coverage, has had difficulty collecting premiums as more enterprises fail to pay taxes. Moreover, conflicting Health Ministry directives, wide regional variations in implementing the insurance program, and inadequate funding have left the majority of Russians with minimal basic health coverage and few affordable or accessible alternative for health care, according to Russian health analysts. Efforts to shift enterprise-funded health facilities over to local governments have only aggravated the lack of funds for these facilities, half of which need capital repairs or upgrades

such as showers and baths, hot water systems, and functioning sewer systems. Hospital and clinic patients often must provide their own -- usually costly -- medications and other medical supplies.

USAID assistance. USAID's assistance to Russia in the health sector grew out of an explicit commitment by President Clinton to President Yeltsin at the 1993 Vancouver Summit to a program of "Humanitarian Medical Assistance." Originally designed to respond to anticipated acute humanitarian needs associated with the breakup of the USSR, the program has been redirected to help create long-term sustainable reforms to the Russian health care system. A total of \$87.3 million was programmed in 1994-96 and an additional \$ 7 million is planned for 1997. Our programs focus on six areas:

- The Health Sector Restructuring Program supports the design and testing of alternative approaches to health care financing and service delivery with the aim of creating sustainable, replicable Russian models for improving efficiency, cost-effectiveness and quality.
- The Women's Reproductive Health Program is designed to increase the availability of reproductive health choices to Russian women and to reduce high rates of abortion.
- The Pharmaceutical Security Program helps to improve pharmaceutical management and rational drug use; increase imports of high quality, FDA-approved pharmaceuticals, medical devices and foods; and increase the production and distribution of critical pharmaceuticals in Russia.
- The Medical Partnerships Program strengthens the response of hospitals, professional associations and non-governmental organizations to key health sector problems by introducing new approaches and assisting them in professional and organizational development.
- The Environmental Health Initiative assists policy-makers and NGO's identify and reduce environmental risks to public health through assessments of the impact of environmental pollution on the population, prioritizing health risks, and incorporating results into the development of policies, laws and regulations.
- The Health Information and Response activities strengthen the capabilities of responsible Russian agencies in health surveillance, monitoring, health education and promotion, and disease prevention and control.

RUSSIA: EDUCATION ISSUES

Organizational restructuring. Russia's educational system, like other state-run institutions, has been hit especially hard by the political and economic changes of recent years. The quality of free elementary, secondary and post-secondary education provided by the state has declined because of shrinking education budgets at all levels of government. At the national level, an administrative shake-up is underway that will consolidate a divided education bureaucracy into a single Ministry of General and Professional Education.

Deteriorated conditions. Teachers, already among the lowest paid, have in recent months had to endure increasingly longer periods between paychecks as local authorities divert scarce resources to pay for other critical needs. In addition, many Russian students are forced to study in dilapidated schools using outdated textbooks and inadequate supplies. Resource shortages have complicated the already-difficult task of revising the school curriculum. Not surprisingly, teachers' strikes occur regularly and scores of teachers are leaving the state schools for better paying positions in private schools or in business.

Private education. Starting in 1993, private education at all levels became an option and by the end of 1995 more than one percent of primary and secondary schools were private. In higher education this trend has been more pronounced: in the 1996-97 school year, 30% of all post-secondary institutions, attended by 6% of the students, were private. Private entities are also being established to develop textbooks and curriculum materials; one example is the Moscow-based organization "Grazhdanin" ("Citizen") which designs and produces materials for civic education.

International cooperation. Despite general disarray in the educational system, there are now unique opportunities for the international community to establish contacts with Russia's world-class universities and there is unprecedented interest everywhere in the study of English. As the training ground for Russia's next generation and future leadership, cooperative activities with educational institutions have been a key component of our assistance efforts.

English in demand. Though underdeveloped during the Cold War, learning and teaching of English is so popular today that the educational system is struggling to respond to demand. In addition to school-age students, businessmen,

journalists, politicians, scientists and others are seeking access to materials and courses which can provide them with proficiency in English, which is regarded as the language of opportunity. As a consequence, Russian teachers are receptive to the introduction of new materials and eager to expand contact with native speakers in order to absorb information about American culture as well as contemporary teaching methodology. USIS libraries, the Peace Corps and numerous independent secondary and university-level exchange programs have sought to meet these demands.

USIS assistance. The U.S. is also supporting the development of local English teaching associations. With USIS assistance, they have sponsored seminars and conferences for teachers. These groups also assisted in the distribution of new teaching materials to replace the ideologically dated material that remains in use in many schools. In addition, USIS is facilitating access by teachers and students to e-mail and the internet.

Exchange programs. Traditional exchange programs such as Fullbright and Humphrey Fellowships continue to benefit thousands of scholars, young and old. The experiences of participants in these programs provides impetus for further educational reform and has ripple effects throughout Russian society.

RUSSIA: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Environmental matters affect and are affected by a number of issues key to Russia's transition: economic development, health, military conversion and the growth of citizens advocacy groups.

Global implications. Russia possesses some of the world's unique natural areas whose protection has significant implications for the preservation of global biodiversity. These areas include vast boreal forests which could play a role in the global warming equation (through sequestration of greenhouse gases) comparable to that played by the Amazon Basin. Conservation issues generate a significant amount of international interest and it has been reported that as much as half of Yeltsin's correspondence from the foreign public relates to environmental matters.

Competing concerns. While the Russian government formally acknowledges the importance of conservation issues, it is reluctant to devote additional resources while the country is unable to cope with pressing problems of industrial, municipal and agricultural pollution, hazardous and radioactive waste, elevated levels of lead and toxic air pollution. These problems are a factor in Russia's on going public health crisis, which has contributed to declining rates of life expectancy.

Public activism. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, environmental activism played a leading role in the democratization movement. Although economic pressures have weakened the influence of the environmental movement, these issues still have the capacity to mobilize citizens to political action, particularly at the local level.

Institutions. Institutions intended to protect the environment have been plagued by inadequate funding, constant reorganizations and bureaucratic turf battles with agencies committed to exploiting natural resources. Moreover, the most far-reaching environmental policies in Russia are those set by economic policymaking institutions such as the economics and finance ministries. Their decisions on tax policy, investment and industrial policy have tremendous impact on environmental outcomes because they determine the structure of incentives guiding economic restructuring and development.

U.S. assistance. A number of U.S. assistance programs are designed to address environmental problems in the Urals and in

Siberia. In Yekaterinburg, USAID is working on a comprehensive study to identify the sources of pollution in the city's drinking water supply and outline technical and institutional changes that will help ensure a safe and reliable water supply for city residents. Elsewhere in the Urals, the U.S. is sponsoring a \$5 million program in Nizhniy Tagil that is identifying technological modifications to local industry that will both increase economic efficiency and reduce pollution.

In eastern Siberia, American advisors have worked with local and regional government officials, NGOs and the private sector to protect Siberia's Lake Baikal and its associated watershed, which contains more than 20 percent of the world's fresh water and supports tremendous biological diversity. The project has helped local and regional governments to implement land-use planning, and has also promoted sustainable agricultural practices through farmer-to-farmer workshops. As a result of the USAID program, a regional approach to ecotourism was developed, and a regional tourism guidebook was written and distributed. Seminars were also held in Baikal-area villages on operating bed and breakfast inns for tourists.

RUSSIA: POPULATION AND FAMILY PLANNING ISSUES

Projected trends. Russia has an unusual demographic outlook. The population peaked in 1992 at 148.6 million, is expected to decline for most of this decade, then to grow slowly until the early 21st century, and then begin a long-term decline. Factors behind these shifts include: Russia's highly irregular population profile, with few people in several five-year age groups reflecting the multi-generational impacts of World War II; emigration to Israel and reunited Germany after the late 1980s, and immigration of Russians from other former Soviet Republics after 1991; and dramatic recent changes in fertility and mortality. The Russian government has frequently expressed concern about the declining birth rate.

Fertility and life expectancy. By industrialized country standards, Russian fertility has been high and life expectancy low since the 1960s. However, as the USSR began to unravel, fertility declined sharply, from 2.2 births per woman in 1988 to 1.4 by 1993 -- one of the lowest levels in Europe. At the same time, as living conditions deteriorated, Russian mortality hit its worst point since World War II. At 58.9 years in 1993, male life expectancy is the lowest of any industrialized country, and female life expectancy is among the lowest. With these changes, yearly deaths in Russia have exceeded births since 1992, and the population growth rate is now a negative 0.6%.

Reproductive health. Available data suggest that Russia meets all the targets set by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, but its reproductive health situation is comparatively quite poor. Infant mortality is three times greater than in the U.S. or EU, much of it from easily prevented infectious disease. Maternal mortality is six to seven times greater, reflecting poor sanitation, reproductive damage from repeated abortions, and abortion-related complications. Particularly during Soviet times, abortions were widely used as a form of birth control and were performed without regard for long-term health risks. With thousands of radioactive waste dumps and underground nuclear explosion sites across the country, radiation is another reproductive health hazard.

Birth control and abortion. Russian abortion rates have long been among the world's highest; there were 216 abortions per 100 live births in 1992. In the past this was due to low contraceptive usage, but a recent USAID-funded survey found

current contraceptive prevalence to be surprisingly high at 69-78% (of which about 15% use traditional methods). The most common contraceptive methods are the IUD, withdrawal or abstinence, and condoms. However, a high rate of abortions persists. Only about one-third of all pregnancies reported by women in the survey had resulted in a live birth; the majority were ended by induced abortion, suggesting frequent contraceptive failure or a high discontinuation rate. About one in four women has an unmet need for modern contraception.

Sexually transmitted disease. Sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS are an emerging issue for Russia. HIV-positive drug users appeared in 1996, and reported cases of the infection in Kalingrad rose eighteen-fold in 1996. Syphilis cases in Russia more than doubled between 1994 and 1995, indicating unsafe sex that could also facilitate HIV/AIDS transmission (condoms are little available or used). The HIV-positive male-to-female ratio has already begun to equalize and is now 2:1 versus 6:1 when HIV/AIDS appeared.

USAID assistance. USAID's support for family planning in Russia began in 1994; this program was highlighted to show how family planning saves lives in the Administration's successful effort to win early release by Congress of FY97 international population assistance funds. Total funds committed have exceeded \$8 million, and \$1 million was allocated in FY97. Program components include the creation of model family planning clinics; training pharmacists and health personnel in contraceptive technology; counseling and clinical skills; publishing and distributing educational materials; assisting local NGOs including the Russian Family Planning Association, and developing support for family planning among policy makers. At this year's Gore-Chernomyrdin Health Committee meeting, Secretary Shalala and Health Minister Health Dmitriyeva endorsed a national mass media campaign for family planning.

RUSSIA: CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Along with other vulnerable segments of society, many Russian children have suffered disproportionately during recent years. Hundreds of thousands of children endure the consequences of domestic violence, the lack adequate health care and an overburdened network of orphanages.

Orphans. Russia's high divorce and poverty rates have exaggerated the number of "orphans": in 1995, some 530,000 children were classified as orphans although only five percent were truly orphaned. The remainder had been removed from their homes due to alcoholism and/or abusive conditions. Some estimate that up to 500,000 additional children were on waiting lists to enter orphanages because economic conditions compelled their parents to relinquish custody. Abusive conditions often prevail in orphanages, particularly facilities for mentally disabled youngsters. Human rights organizations contend that in some institutions children are physically abused and/or deliberately treated with inappropriate medications.

Domestic abuse. Although data are difficult to obtain, evidence suggests that domestic violence affects scores of children. Duma Deputy Mariya Gaydash stated that two million children under 14 suffer from physical or mental abuse and as many as 200,000 die of their injuries each year. She also asserted that 50,000 children run away from home each year and 2,000 commit suicide to escape domestic abuse.

Child labor. Child labor is not a major problem in Russia. The Labor Code prohibits regular employment for children younger than 16 and in practice there is an adequate supply of adults available for low-wage employment although cases of children working after school in family businesses are not unknown.

Foreign adoption. Since the enactment of Russia's new adoption law in September 1996, adoptions of Russian orphans by American citizens have taken place smoothly and in large numbers. Russia is expected to be the leading source country for international adoptions this year with more than 3,500 adoptions. Russian law assigns the Ministry of Education responsibility for general supervision over foreign adoptions. That ministry and the Health Ministry have authority over the institutions, such as orphanages, from which adoptable children are identified. Local courts must authorize all adoptions.

Foreign adoption problems. Despite the high volume of successful adoptions by Americans, there have been several problematic cases. An incident of alleged abuse involving two newly adopted four-year-old girls resulted in civil and criminal suits against the adoptive parents. The children are currently in foster care in Arizona pending a decision of the court. The Russian government has not issued any complaints about the handling of this or other such cases by the U.S. authorities.

Proposed legislative restrictions. Communist Party members in the Duma recently proposed changing Russia's adoption law to strengthen the government's ability to monitor the well being of Russian children who have been adopted by foreigners. The proposal would also mandate the conclusion of bilateral adoption agreements between Russia and receiving countries. This review is in its initial stages and it is unclear whether these proposals have broad support in the Duma.

Child abduction. As Russia is not party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, cases of children abducted to or from Russia must be handled in the family courts of the country where the children are resident. In the past year, three abduction cases involving Russia have been brought to the attention of the State Department.

RUSSIA: WOMEN'S ISSUES

Despite Soviet rhetoric about women's equality, Russian society has been and remains extremely traditional in views about gender roles. Economically, Russian women in many ways have borne the brunt of the suffering associated with the transition to a market economy. Accentuating a pattern of the Soviet era, women have frequently been the first targets of layoffs and suffered discrimination in hiring as employers seek to save on maternity and child-care costs. According to Russian NGO's, women form a disproportionate number (62%) of Russia's unemployed and salary disparities have magnified in recent years, with women comprising 87% of those earning less than \$21 per month.

Educational and professional access. Women enjoy equality of educational opportunity and are not formally restricted in their choice of profession. The opportunities in Russia's new economy have also opened new options for women, some of whom have become successful entrepreneurs. In practice, however, the highest echelons of business, government and academia generally remain closed to women.

Domestic violence. Domestic violence -- compounded by pervasive alcoholism -- remains a major problem. The Interior Ministry estimates that 80% of all violent crime occurs in the home. Police are often reluctant to involve themselves in what are frequently regarded as domestic disputes. Medical personnel are also timid in seeking details about domestic violence because of the inconvenience of working such cases through the court system. Victims themselves are deterred from reporting such crimes because the acute housing shortage in Russia makes it difficult to find housing outside the family dwelling or to expel an abusive spouse, even after a final divorce action. The institutional response has thus far been inadequate as there is no law on domestic violence and little effort at changing the attitude of the police towards crime of this type. A draft law on domestic violence is reported to be worse than the current lack of any law.

U.S. assistance. United States assistance programs seek to address domestic violence with a multi-disciplinary approach that includes police, lawyers, physicians, mental health workers, social workers, politicians and NGO activists. These teams are developing a plan that will include the establishment of a network of shelters for victims of domestic violence. We have sponsored a project with the University of South Carolina to

develop ways to combat domestic violence as part of training in community-oriented policing and to train health care providers and law enforcement officials in ways to respond more effectively to cases of spousal abuse. In addition, in April 1997, the State and Justice Departments hosted a one-week seminar for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and leaders of NGO's from Russia and the U.S. to examine the phenomena of trafficking in Russian women internationally and the solicitation of child pornography via the internet.

Reproductive assistance programs. Reducing the high levels of maternal morbidity and mortality is another focus of our assistance efforts. This objective is pursued by increasing knowledge and use of modern contraceptives, which can also contribute to a reduction in the high abortion rate among Russian women. A key element of this program is the establishment of model family planning centers in six oblasts, including Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk. More than 70,000 women have made use of these centers and over 4,000 physicians have been trained in modern contraceptive technology and/or clinical and counseling skills.

International women's conferences. Participation by the Russian Government delegations at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and at the 1994 and 1995 prepcoms in New York and Vienna, was minimal. The Russian delegates were for the most part silent; what few interventions they made focused on ensuring that "economies in transition" were recognized, along with references to "least developed countries, particularly Africa" whenever the subject of outside assistance, especially financial assistance, was raised. In contrast to other delegations from the former Soviet bloc, Russia's delegations did not have dynamic women willing to play public and visible roles. At the New York meetings, in fact, Russia was represented predominantly by men from Russia's UN mission. Russian NGOs have also not been active participants at these sessions. The few represented at the Vienna ECE meeting voiced concerns about decreasing levels of women's political participation.

U.S.-Russian cooperation on women's issues. More recently, however, the Russians played an active role at the U.S.-hosted G-8 Democracy experts meetings in September/October on expanding women's political participation. In addition, following a bilateral discussion on human rights earlier this year, Russia proposed conducting a joint US/Russian conference on family violence. Discussions with the Russians on this proposed conference are underway.

RUSSIA: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

History. There is a long tradition of advanced science in Russia, particularly in mathematics and physics. In addition, U.S.-Russia science and technology cooperation was far more extensive and uninterrupted during the Cold War than is generally known. These facts provide the basis for the greatly expanded cooperative effort in science and technology that is currently underway between the U.S. and Russia.

Declining government support. As the Russian government is increasingly unable to fund science, pressure has mounted for a more independent, "Western" model of cooperation. Increasingly, individual institutions, such as universities, foundations, companies and national laboratories, are cooperating on specific projects, as opposed to large-scale government-to-government cooperation. Nonetheless, this is a slow evolution, as science in Russia is still dominated by the government. The government's financial pressures have also been reflected in a "brain drain" from Russian science and technology, with experts not only leaving Russia, but shifting to other work inside Russia.

Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. At the government level, our relationship is centered around the Science and Technology Committee of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (GCC). The Committee coordinates and initiates projects of mutual interest and benefit, to enhance technology and knowledge transfer between the U.S. and Russia. Recently, Russia has shown great interest through the GCC process in technology commercialization. This again reflects financial pressures on the science community and its need to move from pure research to product development. This Russian initiative presents an important strategic opportunity to the U.S., both scientifically and commercially. For Russia, the initiative is also of strategic importance as a way to revolutionize its economy and to convert defense industries to civilian use.

Cooperation for mutual benefit. While science and technology cooperation with the U.S. continues to involve vast numbers of basic research projects, the more immediate value of the relationship is its potential to assist Russia in development of a stable, sustainable economy, and to help the U.S. maintain the leading science and technology base in the world.

RUSSIA: OVERVIEW OF U.S. MISSION
INCLUDING U.S. CONSULATE YEKATERINBURG

Mission purpose. The U.S. Mission to Russia is considered one of the U.S. government's most important posts overseas. The historical political and economic transformations now underway in Russia have profound consequences for vital U.S. interests. These include our national security (while it no longer targeted at the U.S., Russia retains the only nuclear force capable of threatening the United States directly), security and stability in Eurasia and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The United States is likely to have no greater interest in foreign policy over the rest of the century than the evolution of Russia in the direction of a stable, democratic, market-oriented society, integrated into the international community and at peace with its neighbors. U.S. Mission members grapple with aspects of these issues daily, working to encourage both the further development of democratic and market institutions as well as a Russian foreign policy compatible with our most basic principles and concerns.

Mission staff. The U.S. Mission to Russia is comprised of a diverse group of Americans. With twenty-three agencies represented, there are close to 600 American officials serving in Russia, with 511 at the Embassy in Moscow. Forty U.S. government employees serve in St. Petersburg, with another twelve in the Far Eastern city of Vladivostok. The newest U.S. consulate general in Russia, located in Yekaterinburg, opened in 1993 and currently has six USG employees.

U.S. Consulate in Yekaterinburg. The Consulate General in Yekaterinburg was established to recognize the regional and economic importance of the Urals and because this region had been closed to foreigners for close to seventy years. It also is Boris Yeltsin's hometown. Known for its seemingly boundless natural resources, including oil and natural gas, the region also remains one of Russia's high tech centers; Yekaterinburg's sister city partner in the U.S. is San Jose, California. Yekaterinburg has an American Business Center operated by the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service to provide information on and advocacy for U.S. business.

Yekaterinburg history. Yekaterinburg was the capital of the original Soviet "Urals Oblast," and it still sees itself as the unofficial center for the whole region. Governor Eduard Rossel became the first elected governor in the region in August, 1995 and plans to visit the United States in 1998. Yekaterinburg is an industrial and mining center. Stalin had Yekaterinburg renamed Sverdlovsk in memory of Y.M. Sverdlovsk, a leading Bolshevik. In post-Soviet Russia, the government restored the pre-Soviet name Yekaterinburg. Peter the Great founded the city in 1721 and named it after his wife Catherine I. Bolshevik forces took the last Russian tsar, Tsar Nicholas, and his family to Yekaterinburg after their arrest. There, Bolshevik troops executed the royal family in 1918.

The Urals. The Urals region has seen itself as a distinct society since at least the turn of the century, different from either Siberia or Western Russia. It has been linked with Russia's military-industrial complex from Peter the Great's era, and still takes pride as being the "center of Soviet power" during the fight against Nazi Germany. The region was the producer of virtually all the weapons used to win the "Great Patriotic War" of 1940-45.

NIS REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Commonwealth of Independent States. When the new independent states (NIS) of the former USSR attained independence in 1991, they were largely unprepared for the challenges of statehood or for the requirements of membership in the international community. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was established in 1992 to try to preserve some Soviet-era political and economic relationships in the absence of the Soviet government. Many of the new independent states, however, were uncomfortable with these ties - which were mainly vertical and dominated by Moscow - and have steadily distanced themselves from Russia by establishing closer links with each other as well as with the outside world.

Rejection of Russian authority. The CIS has not fulfilled Russia's original expectations. NIS leaders use the CIS as a forum to conduct bilateral or regional diplomacy rather than as a mechanism for building viable multilateral institutions. The Russian leadership now explicitly recognizes that NIS leaders are loathe to cede authority to an organization that puts Russia's interests first or attempts to establish links similar to those of the Soviet era. Many recognize that the CIS will only develop to the extent that it serves the common interests of all its members.

Ukraine. Russia's relations with Ukraine began contentiously in 1992 with the dispute over the Black Sea Fleet which is based on Ukrainian territory in Crimea. The controversy festered for nearly five years and was aggravated by trade problems and Russian resentment over Ukraine's efforts to establish closer ties with the United States and the West. In 1997, the two neighbors finally reached agreement on a friendship treaty and resolved the Black Sea Fleet dispute, which President Yeltsin concluded during a state visit to Kiev in May.

Central Asia. In Central Asia, Russian policy is largely defensive, motivated by the desire to prevent further erosion of Russia's military, political and economic influence in the region. Given Russia's history of heavy-handedness and lack of capital or technology, it is only natural that the Central Asian countries would seek investment, political contacts and integration with the world community.

a) **Russian interests.** Many Russians want to secure a major role for Russia in developing Central Asia's natural resources

and seek to limit outside economic involvement in the region. Moscow would like to maintain its monopoly on transit routes for Central Asian oil and gas, even as Russia's private sector has an interest in participating in international consortia planning to exploit these resources. As economic interests gain more influence over Russian foreign policy, a more market-driven approach towards Central Asia should emerge. A dispute between the Foreign Affairs Ministry and Russian oil companies over delimitation of the Caspian Sea typifies the disconnect between Russia's economic interests and its foreign policy community.

b) Relations with Russia. Russia's closest relationship in Central Asia is with Kazakhstan, in part because of the long border and centuries-old political and economic ties, as evidenced by Kazakhstan's large (though aging) ethnic Russian minority. Russia's leverage in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is also strong. In Tajikistan, Russian troops play a key role in arbitrating the balance among feuding clans, and the GOR was instrumental in brokering the peace settlement in June. Russia also regards its presence in Tajikistan as necessary to stem narcotics trafficking, as a beachhead for influencing events in Afghanistan and as a means to thwart Islamic fundamentalism. Kyrgyzstan regards close ties with Russia as a necessary balance to China, Bishkek's southern neighbor. The Uzbekistani leadership has been the most able and willing to pursue policies independent of Moscow and is actively reaching out to the West and building political bridges to Ukraine. Turkmenistan, adhering to a policy of neutrality, has been stymied in efforts to export its gas to paying customers through Russia because of Russia's control of oil and gas pipelines. In response, Ashgabat is seeking to develop alternative pipeline routes through Iran and Afghanistan.

c) Regional cooperation. Within Central Asia, cooperation has been closest among Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, though personal rivalries and competition for resources often limit the scope of joint activity. These three states have established an organization that mediates issues of water usage. All five Central Asian countries are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization, an association of ten countries throughout Central and South Asia. Security cooperation is also fledgling: in September, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan participated in CENTRASBAT, a military exercise conducted with the U.S., Russia, Turkey and others under the auspices of NATO's Partnership for Peace initiative.

U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

High-level meetings. In thirteen personal meetings since 1993, most recently at the Summit of the Eight in Denver, President Clinton and President Yeltsin have transformed U.S.-Russian relations, laying the foundation for a bilateral relationship in which we seek to expand and deepen areas of cooperation and air our differences frankly but without confrontation. Meetings between Secretary of State Albright and Russian Foreign Minister Primakov occur frequently. Thus far in 1997, they have met over a dozen times.

NATO-Russia relations. The United States and the NATO Allies have cooperated closely with Russia to strengthen European security and create an undivided Europe, as evidenced by successful NATO-Russian cooperation in Bosnia. On May 27, NATO and Russia concluded a "Founding Act" that establishes the basis for a new relationship between NATO and Russia. The Founding Act created a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council as a mechanism for consultation, cooperation and, as appropriate, joint action on issues of mutual concern. The Allies and Russia held the inaugural meeting of the PJC at the Ministerial level in September in New York.

International cooperation. In the international arena, the United States and Russia are often partners rather than rivals. The United States and Russia are co-sponsors of the Middle East peace process and consult on a range of regional issues including as co-chairs of the Minsk Group dealing with the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Cooperation is also expanding in efforts to combat global problems such as organized crime, narcotics trafficking and environmental degradation and in developing scientific and technological contacts.

Arms control. Historic strides have been made in reducing both sides' nuclear arsenals and enhancing controls over weapons of mass destruction, including measures to avoid their proliferation. We are working with Russia to improve accountability standards for nuclear material and to dismantle hundreds of Russian nuclear weapons. Such cooperation takes place under the umbrella of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program and numerous Defense and Energy Department activities. At Helsinki in March 1997, President Clinton and President Yeltsin committed to explore further reductions in nuclear weapons once START II is ratified by the Russian Duma.

Obstacles. Despite these areas of cooperation, the United States and Russia continue to differ on a number of issues. The United States is concerned about Russian nuclear, technological, and economic cooperation with Iran. Also, notwithstanding the conclusion of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, Russian officials across the political spectrum continue to oppose NATO enlargement.

Economic engagement. The United States has worked closely with Russia throughout its transition to a market economy. The USG has provided significant technical assistance to Russia through the Freedom Support Act (well over two billion dollars since 1992) to aid in the development of laws, regulations and economic institutions essential for the proper functioning of a market-oriented democracy. The U.S. also actively supports Russia's efforts to integrate itself into the world economy, working closely with the Russian government on WTO accession, Paris Club membership, and participation with a view to future membership in a variety of other organizations, including the OECD and APEC. At Helsinki, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed to pursue an active economic agenda.

Private investment. The U.S. private sector has shown great interest in Russia. The U.S. is Russia's largest foreign investor with cumulative direct and portfolio investment of about \$4 billion. The U.S. was Russia's largest trading partner in 1996; Russia enjoyed a \$1.2 billion trade surplus and two-way trade totaled \$6.3 billion.

Challenges remain. Still, U.S.-Russia trade and investment are both far below their potential. The challenge facing the U.S. government is to encourage Russia to keep its markets open and improve its investment climate as well as establish a legal system that protects investments through the creation of a more transparent and predictable business environment in Russia.

ILSA - Gazprom: (Need short section)

Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. The ninth session of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (GCC) took place in Moscow in September. A highlight was the signing of an agreement on cooperation concerning plutonium production reactors. A broad range of cooperative activities takes place under the GCC rubric, including a regional investment initiative to attract more foreign and domestic capital to the regions of Russia outside Moscow; joint work to protect the marine ecosystem near Sakhalin Island; and a program to raise public awareness in

Russia of women's reproductive health issues. The eight working committees of the Commission are: business development, defense conversion, agriculture, space, science and technology, energy, health, and environmental issues. In addition, the Commission provides a forum for high-level discussions of security, nonproliferation, economic, and other priority issues.

RUSSIA: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW

Six years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Russia as an independent state, Russia continues to undergo a dramatic political, economic, and social transformation. The 1993 constitution provides the basis for a government founded on three separate branches of power and grounded in the rule of law, respecting human rights and civil liberties.

Institutions. Democratic institutions and practices continue to take firmer root in Russia. Following the bloody standoff between Yeltsin and the parliament in October 1993, Russia has held successful presidential elections and two cycles of parliamentary elections. For the first time in Russia's history as an independent state, its head of state was chosen in 1996 in a competitive election, judged by the international community to be free and fair. All heads of regional government and regional legislatures, previously appointed by the president, are now democratically elected.

Institutional conflict. President Yeltsin's government and the lower house of parliament, the Duma, which has a majority of communists and nationalists, frequently differ over policy and legislative issues. Sharpened differences over tax reform and other legislation deemed essential to advance economic reform led to an effort by deputies to challenge the Yeltsin government through a vote of no-confidence in mid-October. Yeltsin's last-minute appeal to deputies not to follow through with the vote and his offer to hold "reconciliation" talks with parliamentary leaders averted a showdown for the time being. His subsequent public pledge to observe constitutional norms put to rest rumors that he might attempt to bait the Duma into a showdown with the government.

Religious freedom. More worrisome for Russia's political transformation is a new law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations." The law appears to restrict the activities of minority religious organizations -- including some under the Orthodox rubric -- and newer religions. The Russian government, however, claims implementing regulations will protect the religious freedoms to which Russia is committed under its international covenants. The law responds in part to concerns voiced by the Russian Orthodox Church and other conservative forces about activities undertaken by non-traditional religions and sects in the past few years. While

the government portrays the law as a compromise among all traditional faiths, most major Protestant groups and the Roman Catholic Church publicly opposed the law. We will carefully monitor implementation of the law and watch for cases that violate Russia's international commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements.

Economic transition. For the past six years, Russia has been in the process of transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy. While this process has brought greater economic opportunity and expanded goods and services available to consumers, it has also adversely affected people living on fixed incomes, those whose skills are no longer in demand, and persons who continue to be employed at inefficient state-run enterprises. Unemployment remains high, particularly in the countryside.

Social conditions. Some twenty-one percent of Russia's population -- 31.5 million people -- live below the poverty level of 402,000 rubles or 69 U.S. dollars per month. The elderly are extremely hard hit, with the average monthly pensions set at 55 U.S. dollars per month. Decreases in the availability and quality of health care and life expectancy, coupled with increased incidences of epidemic disease, higher infant mortality rates and death rates dramatically illustrate how the social safety net has frayed for Russia's neediest citizens.

Crime. Crime has also increased dramatically in Russia as state law enforcement authorities grapple with a shortage of resources to combat crime effectively and as society tries to cope with growing inequalities of wealth amid a deteriorating social safety network.

RUSSIA: WOMEN'S ISSUES

Despite Soviet rhetoric about women's equality, Russian society has been and remains extremely traditional in views about gender roles. Economically, Russian women in many ways have borne the brunt of the suffering associated with the transition to a market economy. Accentuating a pattern of the Soviet era, women have frequently been the first targets of layoffs and suffered discrimination in hiring as employers seek to save on maternity and child-care costs. According to Russian NGO's, women form a disproportionate number (62%) of Russia's unemployed and salary disparities have magnified in recent years, with women comprising 87% of those earning less than \$21 per month.

Educational and professional access. Women enjoy equality of educational opportunity and are not formally restricted in their choice of profession. The opportunities in Russia's new economy have also opened new options for women, some of whom have become successful entrepreneurs. In practice, however, the highest echelons of business, government and academia generally remain closed to women.

Domestic violence. Domestic violence -- compounded by pervasive alcoholism -- remains a major problem. The Interior Ministry estimates that 80% of all violent crime occurs in the home. Police are often reluctant to involve themselves in what are frequently regarded as domestic disputes. Medical personnel are also timid in seeking details about domestic violence because of the inconvenience of working such cases through the court system. Victims themselves are deterred from reporting such crimes because the acute housing shortage in Russia makes it difficult to find housing outside the family dwelling or to expel an abusive spouse, even after a final divorce action. The institutional response has thus far been inadequate as there is no law on domestic violence and little effort at changing the attitude of the police towards crime of this type. A draft law on domestic violence is reported to be worse than the current lack of any law.

U.S. assistance. United States assistance programs seek to address domestic violence with a multi-disciplinary approach that includes police, lawyers, physicians, mental health workers, social workers, politicians and NGO activists. These teams are developing a plan that will include the establishment of a network of shelters for victims of domestic violence. We have sponsored a project with the University of South Carolina to

develop ways to combat domestic violence as part of training in community-oriented policing and to train health care providers and law enforcement officials in ways to respond more effectively to cases of spousal abuse. In addition, in April 1997, the State and Justice Departments hosted a one-week seminar for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and leaders of NGO's from Russia and the U.S. to examine the phenomena of trafficking in Russian women internationally and the solicitation of child pornography via the internet.

Reproductive assistance programs. Reducing the high levels of maternal morbidity and mortality is another focus of our assistance efforts. This objective is pursued by increasing knowledge and use of modern contraceptives, which can also contribute to a reduction in the high abortion rate among Russian women. A key element of this program is the establishment of model family planning centers in six oblasts, including Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk. More than 70,000 women have made use of these centers and over 4,000 physicians have been trained in modern contraceptive technology and/or clinical and counseling skills.

International women's conferences. Participation by the Russian Government delegations at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and at the 1994 and 1995 prepcoms in New York and Vienna, was minimal. The Russian delegates were for the most part silent; what few interventions they made focused on ensuring that "economies in transition" were recognized, along with references to "least developed countries, particularly Africa" whenever the subject of outside assistance, especially financial assistance, was raised. In contrast to other delegations from the former Soviet bloc, Russia's delegations did not have dynamic women willing to play public and visible roles. At the New York meetings, in fact, Russia was represented predominantly by men from Russia's UN mission. Russian NGOs have also not been active participants at these sessions. The few represented at the Vienna ECE meeting voiced concerns about decreasing levels of women's political participation.

U.S.-Russian cooperation on women's issues. More recently, however, the Russians played an active role at the U.S.-hosted G-8 Democracy experts meetings in September/October on expanding women's political participation. In addition, following a bilateral discussion on human rights earlier this year, Russia proposed conducting a joint US/Russian conference on family violence. Discussions with the Russians on this proposed conference are underway.

RUSSIA: SPACE ISSUES

History of cooperation. U.S.-Russian bilateral space cooperation began in the early 1960s, with agreements on meteorology, communications, magnetic survey and life sciences. The 1975 Apollo-Soyuz Test Project marked the first instance of human spaceflight cooperation between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. It involved coordination to enable rendezvous, docking and interchange of astronauts, and the conduct of five joint science experiments.

Expansion of cooperation. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the lessening of tensions in the post-Cold War era opened the door to an expansion in space cooperation. The high priority and prestige accorded by the Russian leadership to its space program has provided a unique opportunity to advance our interests across a spectrum of important areas, including: developing new and expanded cooperation in space as an element of our new relationship; furthering our missile non-proliferation strategy; engaging Russia in market-based activities, such as commercial space launches; enhancing our ability to acquire unique Russian hardware and technology; and encouraging Russia to re-orient its space sector from a military focus toward civilian applications.

Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. The Space Committee of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission has achieved impressive results in pushing back the frontiers of civil space exploration. The Space Shuttle and the Mir space station have now docked seven times, providing crucial experience in working together in space. The Russian Space Agency is developing important flight hardware for the International Space Station (ISS) in support of a scheduled first element launch in 1998. In December of this year, the U.S. will sign an Intergovernmental Agreement with Russia, Canada, Japan, and the fifteen nations of the European Space Agency to formally establish cooperation in the ISS program.

Scientific and environmental research. Life and microgravity sciences and applications are supported through the U.S.-Russia Scientific and Technical Advisory Council. The U.S.-Russia Space Biomedical Center in Moscow has achieved significant results in tele-medicine and tele-education programs, and continues research in gravitational and environmental physiology and pharmacological. A better understanding of how the Earth's environmental processes work is also a priority. The analysis

and application of data obtained from space remote sensing are essential to understanding the changing global environment. We are jointly working on satellite missions to measure the ozone layer, monitor natural disasters, and study the condition of the world's forests, and oceans.

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
STATEMENT UPON ARRIVAL IN ROMANIA
BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
JULY 1, 1996**

This is my first visit to Romania, and I am delighted to be here. I bring with me a message of hope and solidarity from the American people, who support the courageous efforts underway in Romania to build a new and lasting democracy.

During my stay in Bucharest, I will have the opportunity to meet with many men and women in government and non-governmental organizations who are working to improve health care, education, and civic life in Romania. Their efforts are crucial to the success of Romanian democracy and to the future of the Romanian people, particularly women and children who suffered most during the dark years of authoritarian rule.

It is with great excitement and eagerness that I make this visit. I thank the President Iliescu and his government -- and all the Romanian people -- for extending such a warm welcome to me.

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
STATEMENT UPON ARRIVAL IN SLOVAKIA
JULY 6, 1996**

I am very pleased to visit your beautiful country today. In the last several days I have visited Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic. I have seen how the people of Central Europe are striving, sometimes against great odds, to make freedom and democracy work for their societies.

In recent years, Slovakia has been through two momentous changes: its freedom from the tyranny of communism, and its emergence as an independent nation. Today Slovakia aspires to join the democratic family of nations, and we support that aspiration.

During the Velvet Revolution, the people of Slovakia made it clear that they embrace the principles of democracy. Now they must assure that those principles take root and allow for the growth of a civil society with respect for human rights, rule of law, an independent judiciary and a free press.

I bring with me a message of encouragement from the American people. During this visit, I will meet not only with your government leaders, but also with private citizens. In particular, I will meet with the representatives of non-governmental organizations who will play a crucial role in the building of your democracy.

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
STATEMENT UPON DEPARTURE FROM SLOVAKIA
JULY 6, 1996**

I am glad to have had this chance to visit Bratislava, a city that has played an important role in European history, and to have met with people striving to make a difference in this period of historical opportunity.

During my brief stay, many people told me of Slovakia's accomplishments and of the challenges still confronting the nation as it seeks to rejoin the democratic family of the West. Democracy depends on the full participation of all segments of society, and I was gratified to meet with so many Slovak citizens and representatives of non-governmental organizations who are embracing the principles of democracy and trying to integrate them into the life of their country. I also met with President Kovacs and Prime Minister Meciar, who were generous in sharing their views about Slovakia's aspirations for progress.

To the government and people of Slovakia, I offer thanks for the hospitality and warmth extended to me today.

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
STATEMENT UPON ARRIVAL IN ESTONIA
TALLIN, ESTONIA
JULY 8, 1996**

This is my first visit to Estonia, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be in a country that has left behind a terrible legacy of totalitarianism in favor of democracy and freedom.

To the Estonian government and people I bring a message of encouragement and support from America. We admire your courage, tenacity, and commitment to democracy and free market economics. And we will stand by you as you complete your democratic journey and rejoin the free nations of the West.

While in Tallin, I will meet with government leaders, representatives of non-governmental organizations and others involved in the building of democratic institutions in Estonia. I also hope to learn more about the rich history and culture that speaks to Estonia's European heritage and orientation.

To the government and people of Estonia, I convey my sincere thanks for the warm welcome you have shown me.

FINAL

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
STATEMENT UPON DEPARTURE FROM ESTONIA
TALLINN, ESTONIA
JULY 9, 1996

I leave Tallinn today inspired by Estonia's example as a country that has lifted itself from the darkness of occupation to a place among the democratic nations of the West. Even on this short visit I could see that Estonia is enthusiastically embracing the democratic values so necessary to reuniting Europe in the post-Cold War era.

While problems remain, particularly in the area of inter-ethnic relations, I talked to many government leaders and private citizens of different backgrounds who are confident that Estonia can prosper and thrive as a free, democratic and multi-ethnic society.

I will return home with high hopes about Estonia's future, and a warm place in my heart for the Estonian people. This is a beautiful country, one which I look forward to visiting again. To President and Mrs. Meri and the people of Estonia, I offer my deepest thanks for making my visit so special.

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