FOREIGN RELATIONS AUTHORIZATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000–2001: REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MARCH 9, 1999

Serial No. 106–22

Printed for the use of the Committee on International Relations

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
56-897 CC WASHINGTON : 1999

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office, Washington, DC 20402
ISBN 0-16-058578-3

H461-83

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, New York, *Chairman*

WILLIAM F. GOODLING, Pennsylvania
JAMES A. LEACH, Iowa
HENRY J. HYDE, Illinois
DOUG BEREUTER, Nebraska
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey
DAN BURTON, Indiana
ELTON GALLEGLY, California
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida
CASS BALLENGER, North Carolina
DANA ROHRABACHER, California
DONALD A. MANZULLO, Illinois
EDWARD R. ROYCE, California
PETER T. KING, New York
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
MARSHALL "MARK" SANFORD, South Carolina
MATT SALMON, Arizona
AMO HOUGHTON, New York
TOM CAMPBELL, California
JOHN M. McHUGH, New York
KEVIN BRADY, Texas
RICHARD BURR, North Carolina
PAUL E. GILLMOR, Ohio
GEORGE P. RADANOVICH, California
JOHN COOKSEY, Louisiana
THOMAS G. TANCREDO, Colorado

SAM GEJDENSON, Connecticut
TOM LANTOS, California
HOWARD L. BERMAN, California
GARY L. ACKERMAN, New York
ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA, American Samoa
MATTHEW G. MARTINEZ, California
DONALD M. PAYNE, New Jersey
ROBERT MENENDEZ, New Jersey
SHERROD BROWN, Ohio
CYNTHIA A. McKINNEY, Georgia
ALCEE L. HASTINGS, Florida
PAT DANNER, Missouri
EARL F. HILLIARD, Alabama
BRAD SHERMAN, California
ROBERT WEXLER, Florida
STEVEN R. ROTHMAN, New Jersey
JIM DAVIS, Florida
EARL POMEROY, North Dakota
WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT, Massachusetts
GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York
BARBARA LEE, California
JOSEPH CROWLEY, New York
JOSEPH M. HOEFFEL, Pennsylvania

RICHARD J. GARON, *Chief of Staff*
KATHLEEN BERTELSEN MOAZED, *Democratic Chief of Staff*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey, *Chairman*

WILLIAM F. GOODLING, Pennsylvania
HENRY J. HYDE, Illinois
DAN BURTON, Indiana
CASS BALLENGER, North Carolina
PETER T. KING, New York
MATT SALMON, Arizona
THOMAS G. TANCREDO, Colorado

CYNTHIA A. MCKINNEY, Georgia
ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA, American Samoa
EARL F. HILLIARD, Alabama
BRAD SHERMAN, California
WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT, Massachusetts
GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York

GROVER JOSEPH REES, *Subcommittee Staff Director*
GEORGE COLVIN, *Pearson Fellow for Ranking Member*
DOUGLAS C. ANDERSON, *Counsel*
CATHERINE A. DuBOIS, *Staff Associate*

CONTENTS

WITNESSES

APPENDIX

FOREIGN RELATIONS AUTHORIZATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000–2001: REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1999

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. [presiding] The Subcommittee will come to order. I am very pleased to convene this hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights. This is the second in a series of hearings on a Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. The topic of this hearing is the State Department's refugee budget, and the refugee programs and policies that budget supports.

Our lead witness today is Assistant Secretary of State Julia Taft. Those of us who work in this area welcomed the appointment of Secretary Taft, because we know she understands that refugee protection is not just another facet of foreign policy. Unlike most other domestic and international issues, and even unlike many aspects of immigration policy, refugee policy is not primarily about how to weigh competing social or economic considerations. It is about right and wrong, about good and evil. To return refugees to persecution is simply wrong, just as it is always wrong to inflict grievous harm on another innocent human being.

The last 10 years have seen dramatic changes in our refugee policy. For the first time in the U.S. history, we have undertaken the mass forcible return of people who have managed to escape from blood-thirsty regimes such as those in Haiti, Cuba, China, and Vietnam. These actions of the United States, in turn, have served as an example and an excuse to other countries which have repatriated people by the thousands and tens of thousands to places like Rwanda, Burundi, Afghanistan, and Burma. At the same time, the United States has dramatically reduced the number of refugees we accept for resettlement every year, from about 150,000 10 years ago, to only 75,000 this year, despite broad bipartisan support in Congress for a return to the traditional level of at least 100,000 refugees per year.

Assistant Secretary Taft, we welcome the modest increase for projected refugee resettlement in the Administration's budget request for Fiscal Year 2000, from 75,000 up to 80,000, as well as the 3 percent increase in the refugee budget request. I think you know, a strong bipartisan group of refugee advocates in Congress, Democrats, Republicans, liberals, moderates, and conservatives alike, are hoping that this is a sign that you may finally be having an impact, that U.S. refugee policy may be finally turning the corner.

Unfortunately, there are many signs that our efforts have not yet been successful. We know that your career has been devoted to refugee protection, and we know that your two deputies, Alan Kreczko and Marguerite Rivera, are dedicated to the same goal. Unfortunately, you inherited a bureau that has been all too well known for its ingrained institutional culture, a culture of denial. One of the saddest things about those forced repatriations to Haiti and Cuba, to China and Vietnam, was that they were carried out with the enthusiastic participation of people who worked for the U.S. Government and who still do, and who have the word "refugee" in their title. Every generous impulse, such as the ROVR program to rescue some of the people who were wrongfully returned to Vietnam, or the recent effort to increase the number of African refugees accepted for resettlement in the United States, has met with foot-dragging and sometimes active resistance from some of those same people. This is not how it ought to be.

The Washington Times recently ran an editorial calling attention to some unfortunate statements by our director of refugee programs for Vietnam. Refugee advocates have objected to an order to destroy the files of rejected Amerasian applicants, many of whom claimed their cases had been wrongly denied. This official not only defended the destruction of the files, but urged his State Department colleague in a tone that can only be described as a sneer never to negotiate with those who advocate more generous treatment of refugees. This is very, very insensitive and wrong.

I would like to describe this communication as extraordinary. But the most depressing thing of all is that it may represent just another ordinary day in the life of a State Department refugee official. In the course of investigating this matter, for example, I came across another communication in which this same official reacted to a report that a young Vietnamese woman had stabbed herself to death immediately after her repatriation. This official's advice to his colleagues was that "we shouldn't have any beating of the breast or recriminations" about the repatriation program, because "people do not commonly commit suicide by stabbing themselves in the chest," and because the only witness was the woman's 3-year-old child. The communication also contains a jocular and wholly inappropriate discussion of various ways in which people do commit suicide. It is signed "cynically yours."

Even more disturbing, I have also learned about two other recent efforts to destroy Vietnamese refugee files, including some files about which refugee advocates and Members of Congress had begun to ask questions. Both of these orders apparently came from a high-ranking refugee official here in Washington. One of them, in August 1996, was to destroy all Vietnamese files in which the applicant had been deemed "not qualified." It demanded that com-

pliance be immediate, which I am informed is an unusual procedure, and it came just a few days after the Senate had adopted the McCain amendment, which eventually had the effect of reversing many of these "not qualified" decisions. The other order, in November 1998, was from the same official, and it was an order to destroy still more Vietnamese files about which questions had been raised. I am happy to say that Secretary Taft reversed that order as soon as she found out about it. But if top officials must wage a constant battle just to keep their subordinates from destroying evidence, it is easy to understand why progress on substantive issues come so slowly.

This culture of negativism is not limited to the Vietnamese refugee program. There is a resurgence in virulent and often violent anti-Semitism in the states of the former Soviet Union—one recent illustration is the campaign of General Albert Makashov. As a matter of fact, we had a hearing in this room not so long ago with the Helsinki Committee, at which time we saw a video tape of this general shouting "Death to the Yids." He is very, very high ranking, as you know. Refugee denial rates have gone up dramatically during the last 2 years in the former Soviet Union.

I remember being shocked to hear of a 1992 meeting, before your appointment, I would point out, called to work out the operational details of the U.S. in-country refugee program in Haiti at a time when the illegal military government was slaughtering its enemies. The State Department refugee official who presided at this meeting was reported to have announced, "Those of us in this room know there is no such thing as a Haitian refugee. But we have been instructed to find some." It should come as no surprise that they did not find very many.

Assistant Secretary Taft, I want to reiterate I have confidence in your vision of what the U.S. refugee program can and should be, and I pledge my support and cooperation. But I don't believe the program can achieve its potential unless it is staffed from top to bottom with people who really care and have a deep sensitivity to refugees. I know there are many such dedicated people in the State Department and in your bureau. As for people who suffer from cynicism or compassion fatigue, or whose goal in life is to manage down programs, they may have brilliant careers ahead of them in other fields, but it is imperative that they be assigned to duties in which they no longer have the lives of innocent people in their hands.

This is a difficult message to deliver, but I hope you will accept it in the spirit in which it is offered. In particular, I want to make clear that I am grateful for your efforts to address some of the problems in the Vietnamese refugee program, although I think it still has a long way to go. I know I speak for my colleagues on the Subcommittee when I say that if more resources are needed to do the job, we are prepared to authorize those resources, to fight to get that authorization and an appropriation through the Congress. Indeed, last year, as you will recall, the House passed the authorization for Fiscal Year 1999 of $704.5 million for the MRA account, which was $54.5 million over the Administration's request.

If the Administration will provide the necessary leadership, Congress will act consistently with American values. In the words of

President Ronald Reagan, the United States can still be that shining city on a hill.

I would like to yield to my very distinguished friend, the ranking lady, the gentlelady from Georgia, Ms. McKinney.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I join you in welcoming to our hearing today Assistant Secretary Taft, as well as the distinguished representatives of organizations so well known for their concern for those who are often forgotten by others. To participate in the hearings we are conducting on the State Department authorization bill is to appreciate that while the activities of the government agencies and bureaus from whom we hear are essential, so are the tasks undertaken by the many non-governmental organizations with whom they work.

In looking over the documentation for today's hearing, I concluded that what is most needed is more. For one thing, we need more complete information about the background of the problems we're facing in refugees and migration, and what we have done to meet them. The Department of State would help us more by including in the documentation longer timelines for funding for numbers of refugees resettled, for persons of concern, for bureau staffing numbers, and for other categories of information. I am sure that the Department would be willing and able to provide such information, and I do request that it be provided.

Refugee situations are often long-term events. It would help if the Department's presentation took more account of this fact. We also need more attention to places where refugee demands are clearly outstripping our ability or our willingness to meet them. I particularly think of the refugee situation in Africa, where we are addressing the situation of 3.5 million refugees by magnanimously offering to resettle 12,000 of them. In particular, the situation in Sierra Leone, with 400,000 refugees, seems to rate barely a mention in the Department's presentation, and about the same amount of actual attention on the ground. This situation can not be allowed to continue. I will look forward to hearing what plans the Department of State has to address it.

Also urgently needed is more engagement between U.S. Government entities and their non-government partners. I am struck in this regard by the great gap in their respective views of the refugee and migration scene. To the NGO's, the refugee situation is one of large problems largely unaddressed. The government, however, seems to see a generally improving situation being effectively addressed with increasing resources. While some of this no doubt reflects general differences in outlook, the gap is so wide as to make me wonder if everyone is talking about the same situations.

More answers to questions are also needed. Why, for example, is the denial rate by INS in Russia for religious minorities escalating to one out of every two applications, even as we are seeing religious intolerance increasing on the part of the government itself? Are we as sure as the Department proposal suggests that we can phase out our resettlement programs in Vietnam without missing people we should include? And why do we still require all refugee applicants in the former Soviet Union to cross several time zones to go to Moscow for their interviews, rather than sending someone from Moscow to meet them? A few years ago, we were sending representa-

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

tives from Paris to southern France to interview Basque shepherds who had worked in the United States about their Social Security claims. Surely we could do something for people with claims even more important.

Finally, we need more resources. As good as it is that the State Department is requesting modest additional funding for refugees and migration, and proposing to increase somewhat the number of resettled refugees admitted to the United States, neither of these increases gets us back to the numbers of a few years ago. I don't believe that the problems in refugee issues that we are addressing are much smaller than they were then. We should be making greater efforts to find at least equal resources.

I appreciate the opportunity to go over these concerns with our panelists, and I look forward to hearing your comments. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Ms. McKinney.

I would like to yield to Mr. Ballenger.

Mr. BALLENGER. I have no statement.

Mr. SMITH. I would like to ask Mr. Delahunt if he has any opening comments.

Mr. DELAHUNT. No.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Berman is here as well.

I would like to ask our very distinguished Secretary to come forward. Julia Taft has been Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration since November 1997. Before becoming Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Taft was president and CEO of InterAction. Her involvement with refugee issues began in 1975 when President Ford named her director of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Indochina Refugees. The refugee resettlement program which Mrs. Taft directed brought more than 130,000 Indochinese into the United States. She did an extraordinarily fine job.

I'm delighted to have you here today, Secretary Taft. Your full statement will be made a part of the record, but please proceed however you would like.

STATEMENT OF JULIA V. TAFT, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES AND MIGRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. TAFT. Thank you very much. I really appreciate this opportunity to be here today to discuss the Administration's Fiscal Year 2000 budget request for refugee assistance and protection. Before I begin I want to convey a note of thanks to this Committee for your support of refugees and conflict victims worldwide, and to you, Mr. Chairman, for your personal interest and leadership on this Subcommittee.

The issues that you and Ms. McKinney have raised are ones that we can talk about in the Q&A, but I think that the whole program, ever since I became involved in it in 1975, has been a real exercise of working with the NGO's, working with Congress, working on a bipartisan basis so that we collectively put together our best ideas about how we go forward. In spite of the criticisms which we can discuss later, I really view this as an opportunity for us to learn, as well as to explain where we are and how we should move for-

ward. As you noted, I have a longer statement, and I would like to introduce the full text for the record.

Unhappily, since last February when I last testified before this Subcommittee, we have had to face new refugee emergencies involving Sierra Leone, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and several others, but that mentions only a few. Refugee protection has continued to erode in many parts of the world. Civilians are increasingly at risk of armed attack, and humanitarian workers risk their lives every day to bring life-saving assistance to those in need. The constraints on our work are many. But today I would like to talk to you not just about the numbers, but the people behind the numbers.

The Migration and Refugee Assistance appropriations, together with our emergency account, which is the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance, are two of the major instruments of U.S. humanitarian response. Secretary Albright has often said that the humanitarian response is the human face of our U.S. foreign policy. Our budget that we will talk about today is designed to increase and improve that response.

The request includes $660 million for MRA, and $30 million to replenish the President's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance fund. You will recall from Fiscal Year 1997 to 1999, our budget had remained constant, in spite of the fact that problems had increased. We stretched our human and financial resources as far as we could, and therefore, this year I said "Help. We need some more money." We are in fact requesting a $20 million increase over last year.

These funds support four primary activities. First is overseas assistance. Second, the admissions of up to 80,000 refugees to the United States. Third, a grant of $60 million to support refugee resettlement in Israel. And last, $13.8 million to cover the administrative expenses for my bureau.

Let me first speak about the assistance and protection for refugees and conflict victims. Regarding overseas assistance, we have requested $463.3 million, an increase of $8.6 million over the set 1999 estimate. This request will support continuing assistance to populations of concern and follow initiatives to better protect and assist the refugees and conflict victims worldwide. Among the special initiatives that we are undertaking is improving the standards of care for all refugees, regardless of where they are in the world. We want to make sure that there is a basic international standard for life saving assistance, and that we do not discriminate against anyone, regardless of where they live in the world.

Second, we want to work more with other governments, international organizations, and NGO's, to enhance protection for the vulnerable groups, and to protect the humanitarian workers that are in the field and are in such jeopardy.

Third, we want to enhance basic education opportunities for refugees worldwide, especially for women and girls. Later this afternoon, I am testifying on the Senate side on Afghan refugee programs. One of the emphases there, for instance, is to increase a focus on education for women and girls.

Fourth, we want to increase population—I mean our activities in migration policy that promote basic human rights for migrants,

and educate them about the risks associated with irregular migration. This includes several initiatives on trafficking in women, which has become a really grave problem around the world.

Finally, we want to expand our consultation and coordination with other donors and international organizations so that we can get them to also make more contributions to the humanitarian requirements.

Refugee admissions, which I know is of particular interest to you, Mr. Chairman, is a key feature of our humanitarian portfolio. I would like to say that the United States is, and will continue to be the most generous place on earth for refugees. Resettlement continues to be a foreign policy priority of the U.S. Government. In the budget presented before you, we are requesting $122.9 million for refugee admissions, which is an increase of over $20.54 million from our last year's estimate. This budget would fund up to admissions of up to 80,000 refugees; 5,000 beyond what we are currently budgeted for this year. The exact number and composition of course of the admissions will be determined through our congressional consultations process later this year, but the Administration wants to signal this level of request to show our interest in increasing the refugee numbers. We are hoping that Congress will support us.

In the last 6 years, the U.S. resettlement program has become more diverse. This year, 60 percent of the refugees will come from Africa, the former Yugoslavia, the Near East and South Asia, and Latin America. Admissions in fact for these groups have grown from 20,000 in 1993, to a target of more than 40,000 this year. Only 40 percent of the authorized admissions will come from Southeast Asia and countries of the former Soviet Union.

Our resettlement program in Africa is an example of this diversity. In Fiscal Year 1999, the funded admission ceiling for Africa jumped from 7,000 to 12,000. I will be glad to explain why it is not more than 12,000 when we have questions. Last year, we provided access in Africa to more than 19 different nationalities. We hope to do even better this year.

Turning to another region of the world, we faced considerable questioning recently from Members of this Committee regarding our plans to complete the Orderly Department Program (ODP) from Vietnam, and to complete the processing of the resettlement opportunity for Vietnamese returnees, called ROVR. I want to address those concerns directly and underline my intention to conclude that program in an honorable way, making sure that it is done consistent with all past commitments that we have made.

Over the past 20 years, ODP has provided resettlement opportunities for more than 500,000 Vietnamese. Parenthetically I might say that since I began the program in 1975, more than 1.2 million Indochinese refugees have been welcomed to the United States. The ODP program started in 1980. We believe now that we are almost ready to complete the caseload that has been eligible during those years.

For those cases which can not be completed out of our offices in Bangkok, they will be processed at a small resettlement assistance unit in Ho Chi Minh City, attached to the consulate, which will also handle Amerasian and Visa 93 cases. Even after the comple-

tion of those cases, we will maintain a program to offer resettlement to persons facing recent persecution.

I deeply understand that this transition must be accomplished in a manner which will continue to provide adequate protection and services to Vietnamese seeking refugee status. Building upon recommendations by this Committee and others, I am looking to supplement the resettlement assistance unit staff by drawing on experienced expatriate staff to help refugee applicants prepare for their interviews, by ensuring that all interviews are conducted with expatriate interpreters, and by working with INS to ensure that INS adjudicators receive special training similar to the training they have received on the ROVR teams.

The current ODP director will soon be involved in opening the full-service consular section at the consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, which will require him to focus primarily on immigration matters. Therefore, we are planning to send to Ho Chi Minh City, a refugee officer who will report directly to Washington to oversee for the Department of State the implementation of the U11s, who are former U.S. employees, and other related programs.

Let me turn a moment to our program in the former Soviet Union. It also is undergoing changes. We have over the course of that program resettled more than 360,000 refugees. For the past several years, however, the number of annual applicants has declined. In view of political changes in the former Soviet Union since the initiation of this program, the Administration has taken a year-by-year approach to the renewal of the Lautenberg amendment which underlies the FSU program. However, as was mentioned earlier, with disturbing reports of anti-Semitic and some anti-evangelical sentiments in Russia, the Administration will again support a 1-year renewal of the Lautenberg amendment.

Responding to many humanitarian emergencies requires substantial resources, but their impact is literally life saving. I am deeply appreciative for the strong bipartisan congressional support for our humanitarian programs. It is essential for our continued U.S. leadership on these issues. I look forward very much not only to working with you now and learning your views, but collectively working together to promote the humanitarian face of our foreign policy. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Taft appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Secretary Taft, thank you very much for your testimony and for your good work.

I would like to yield to the distinguished chairman of the Full Committee, Mr. Gilman, for any opening comments he might have.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for conducting this hearing. I want to welcome Julia Taft before us, our Assistant Secretary of Refugees and Migration. I think it is so important that we review where we stand on our problems involving foreign relations authorization for refugees and migration.

Mr. Chairman, I support the modest increase from $640 million to $660 million that the Administration proposed in the refugee budget. I would hope that Secretary Taft will tell us if this figure reflects her request or if the Administration made cuts from that request.

I also support the increase from 75,000 to 80,000 for refugee resettlement. Both of these numbers, however, have decreased substantially in the last 5 years. It is very disappointing that the Administration has not returned to the traditional range for resettlement of at least 100,000 refugees which is where they were from the late 1970's until 1995. Last year, the Congress passed and the President signed this Committee's authorization of $704.5 million for the Migration and Refugee Account. That would have been enough to resettle 100,000 refugees and to enhance overseas protection as well. Yet the Administration has not matched this number in the Fiscal Year 2000 request. I have some questions as to why we are facing this situation.

In addition, we need to continue to be open to the needs of new flows of refugees from every part of the world. Right now, I have been looking at some of the needs of the Jews in the former Soviet Union. This means keeping a watchful eye on the environment, the attitude, and the treatment of those folks. As Alek Gerba, a human rights activist and former member of the Duma testified recently, "hate was the first industry to be privatized in Russia." I think that is a pretty proper comment. There has been a resurgence of anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalism. We must remain engaged on those issues and be willing to assist the new flow of refugees who will come about as a result of that.

Similarly, the primary beneficiaries of the Vietnamese refugee programs are people who fought side by side with our Nation, and then served years in re-education camps. There are still many thousands of these people, including their immediate families, being persecuted in Vietnam. I have been skeptical about the break-neck pace at which the Administration has been normalizing our diplomatic and economic relations with Hanoi. In response, the Administration has constantly reassured us that an increased U.S. presence in Vietnam will enhance our ability to help victims of human rights abuses, especially those who are in trouble because of the demonstrated commitment to American values.

So please, Madam Secretary, when ODP is moved to Saigon, let's not use this as an excuse to walk away from those people. In particular, I hope our ODP applicants will continue to have the assistance of a joint voluntary agency preparing their cases for adjudication by the INS. I hope the State Department component of the program wil' be headed by a full-time refugee coordinator with a proven record of commitment to the refugees.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Department to step up its effort to identify and resettle African refugees. In particular, I understand that although there are over 400,000 refugees from Sierra Leone, we have not established any joint voluntary agency to identify refugees from that group who are in need of resettlement. Nor have we even designated any categories of refugees from Sierra Leone who are of special humanitarian interest to the United States. I am hoping the Department will quickly address that humanitarian need.

So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today. I look forward to hearing from Assistant Secretary Taft on Thursday, when she testifies before this Committee in her new capacity, as the Special Coordinator on Tibet. Welcome, Secretary Taft.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Chairman Gilman.

Ms. TAFT. It's a busy week.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just start with some opening questions, and then yield to my colleagues. The Administration's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2000 request, as you pointed out in your testimony, $660 million for refugee programs and another $30 million to replenish the ERMA account. In constant dollars, this is an increase of just under 3 percent. However, in real dollars with inflation, it probably is pretty much a flat request.

In Fiscal Year 1995, as you know, we spent $733 million on these same programs. So the Fiscal Year 2000 request represents a 6-percent cut from 5 years ago, even in unadjusted dollars. In real dollars, the decrease in buying power is more like a 15 to 20 percent cut. In each of the four Fiscal Years between 1996 and 1999, the refugee account was the only major State Department account for which the Administration did not request even a modest increase to compensate for inflation over the last several years.

I wonder if you can tell us why this is the case, especially when, as we all know, we are awash in people in need of protection and resettlement. If the issue is burden-sharing at a time when we are trying to encourage our friends and partners, our allies to do more, why don't we set the example by doing more ourselves? Because I meet with diplomats frequently, who just say "Well, you guys aren't doing what you could do. Why do you expect us to do more in your absence?"

Ms. TAFT. Well, thank you for those questions. Let me first say something about the decrease from the $733 million in previous years, a previous year high. You know, one of the things that is quite interesting about the refugee problem and program is it vacillates. Part of the reason our budget has gone down is that there is some good news in the refugee field. In the past 10 years, millions of refugees have been able to return and are no longer under the assistance requirements of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. For instance, we had millions returning to Mozambique. We had almost 4 million returning to Afghanistan. We had others in Africa returning to peaceful resettlement. So those requirements have been reduced for the assistance account.

Also, with regard to the funding that we had for the highs of refugee admissions to the United States, we had two very, very large programs with huge backlogs. The first was the former Soviet Union program, which had—well, we brought in 350,000, but the bulk of those people came in a few years after the program started. We now are current with only 1,000 applications a month. So the pool has reduced. We have also seen the pool reduce for the refugees from the former Soviet Union that we paid to migrate into Israel. It was at 149,000 a few years ago. Now, last year was only 52,000. So the requirements have been reduced.

In Southeast Asia also, while I know we still have a number of pieces of the ODP program to complete, the bulk of those people have come through the program in this generous past 24 years. By the way, I don't think the earlier reference that we are going at break-neck speed to re-establish our relationship with Vietnam is valid. Twenty-four years doesn't seem like break-neck speed to me,

but what we try to do is be very realistic. Our budget has been low. Last year we were particularly strapped, so that is why we asked for the extra request.

Regarding the discussions about how one develops a budget, you know better than I do how this is done in the Administration, but I do think the agreement on budget caps did affect us. But I would like to say that my bureau and the money that we request has the largest program in the entire State Department. We manage this bureau with 99 people. I think we do a pretty darn good job of trying to keep up with it.

Mr. SMITH. Madam Secretary, you mentioned the pool has been reduced. Many of us who have been following this, and I have been in Congress now 19 years and have always been a very strong refugee advocate, believe that the mindset has changed, both in the United States as well as abroad, that we are talking less of resettlement and more of repatriation, even if that contains a not so subtle kick to get people across the border. We had hearings, as you know, during the terrible debacle in Rwanda, and raised the very serious question about interviews, whether or not any person who found themselves in a refugee camp had any opportunity whatsoever to find a country of resettlement, including the United States. We were told rather bluntly nothing was being done; these people were in holding patterns, and at the proper time, they would be kicked back across the border. Many of those people died, many of them were shot as we know. We had very compelling evidence. We asked Phyllis Oakley, I'll never forget, during December when we were out of session, to come back because we had compelling information from the refugee community that many of these people were being killed. Everybody was looking askance, as if nothing was happening. But the bottom line is that very few, if none, were offered any opportunity to find a safe haven anywhere else.

So my sense is that the mindset has changed. Maybe it is compassion fatigue, maybe the Bosnias of this world lead to that. You might want to comment on that. As you know, I led the effort to increase to $704 million the authorization for this Fiscal Year. There was an effort during the immigration bill to practically halve the number of people, to cap the number of refugees. I offered the amendment there. When we did our whipping, we found that we would have won that vote probably by a two-to-one margin. Clearly showing bipartisan, strong support for increasing those numbers for refugee admissions.

I know what the official position is, but you as an advocate, as someone who cares deeply for the refugees, have lived with them, know their plight, do you believe it is justified—not is it the position of the Administration—but is it justified to bump up the number to $704 million and to bump up from the 80,000 to 100,000 those that we would admit next year? Is it justified?

Ms. TAFT. Well, I am glad you included the phrase that I am a recognized advocate for refugees. I care profoundly that our country does what it can to support refugee assistance and refugee admissions. I have around me people who also subscribe to that. I believe I can't really manage more money than this at this point with the staffing I have. I have asked for additional staff to be able to man-

age the program. That is included in the budget. So that is really important to me.

The second is that by and large, much of what we contribute is to a fair share of international requirements. We have maintained over the years, at least a 25 percent rate of assistance through the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. One of the reasons our budgets are going up a little bit is I want to also add more NGO direct programming to our portfolio. But we give about a quarter for the UNHCR and I think you can ask Ms. AbuZayd about whether they are asking for enough money. In fact, I have gone on a number of field trips, including last summer to Sierra Leone and Guinea, where I thought the UNHCR wasn't asking nearly enough. I created quite a stir. I said I wanted to give more money, and wanted more projects out there. It resulted in a special ERMA drawdown. We have really remediated with the UNHCR a lot of quality of care services for the Sierra Leoneans in Guinea.

I would say on the issue of whether or not we're trying to find cases around the world, let me just give you a few examples of what we are doing. If you have ideas about what more we can do, we are really looking for them. Africa is a perfect example. In past years, Africa had, through the OAU Convention, the most generous framework for refugees of any place in the whole world. Refugees, internally displaced persons, were not penalized for crossing borders. The countries of first asylum were very generous about allowing the masses of people to go, and also to return.

We have seen a change in the last several years about the receptivity of a number of African countries to be willing to receive refugees in first asylum or receive back refugees. It is because of that phenomenon that we are trying to find pockets of people who really can not go back and who are not going to be available for repatriation. We have established a permanent JVA, a permanent IOM presence with UNHCR in Dakar, Africa, to deal with West African processing. We have an office in Nairobi which we are increasing in staff to try to deal with the number of very important and complex refugee flows there. We have an office in Cairo for handling Sudanese Christians; we processed 1,000 of them last year, and hopefully 2,000 this year. We have INS agreeing and being very forthcoming in trying to do circuit rides throughout Africa. As I say, we are processing 19 different nationalities. We take referrals from UNHCR. We are taking direct referrals from ambassadors. We have also established a number of P–2 special categories of people. We have funded UNHCR to hire more people. We have had training programs on how to identify the Africans that need to be resettled. I think the network is doing a remarkable job.

Now, at the root of this is 12,000 enough? I don't know. No one believed we would reach almost 7,000 last year. We did. I believe that there are valid candidates out there.

I would like to say one final word, and then refer back to you, sir, on Sierra Leone and the refugees in Sierra Leone. We have now a temporary protected status for all Sierra Leoneans who were in this country before December 1997. This TPS has been extended, and will expire in September. One of the things, quite frankly, we are trying to explore is whether or not there are more recent arriv-

als that are in the United States that also ought to be availed to those who were here after 1997. We are looking at that.

With regard to resettling Sierra Leoneans, we have expressed our willingness and in fact, our real forthcomingness to the UNHCR for them to refer cases to us of Sierra Leoneans, particularly those that are in Guinea. I personally have been to the places. I have seen the victims of amputations. I am horrified by what is going on. We have already received five referrals. Europeans are taking quite a few. We are prepared to take as many as can be admitted, and to be serviced in our country through torture facilities and special mental health facilities, and with rehabilitation.

So while we don't have a P–2 for all Sierra Leoneans, we are really focusing on our rescue capacity and doing this through the UNHCR. I think that addresses some, but not all the questions.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I will ask one final question. Then we will go to a second round after we have each Member ask any questions they might have.

As you know, I have strongly advocated that we keep the services of a joint voluntary agency for our Vietnamese refugee programs. I believe that the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) has done a great job. But on a broader level, I believe that the programs in which we use JVAs are more transparent, and more dynamic than those in which the refugees never meet anyone who is not a government employee. I am also informed the JVAs are very cost-effective. How exactly do you decide for each program whether or not to use a JVA or to hire people directly to screen and to prepare the cases?

Let me also make a point, and I would hope you would respond; there was recently an e-mail that made some comments that I find extremely distressing by a high ranking person who oversees the program, in which he refers very disparagingly to "true believers," people who care deeply, and live their lives to aid refugees. It starts off by discouraging "any dialog with the USCC or the ICMC or any other refugee advocacy organizations on Vietnamese refugee or ID processing." I may be sounding paranoid here, but yes. It does sound a little paranoid after reading this and juxtaposing with other comments that have been made in the past.

It also refers to a person as "reptilian." I mean I find that extremely disconcerting, that somebody would refer to somebody else in such derogatory terms. This is the kind of thing that if I were to say about anyone with whom I deal that he's reptilian or to make other disparaging comments, people would be calling for my ouster I think very, very quickly. It would be justified. We should never deal with others with such insensitivity.

But I catch in the flavor of this, and in the Zeitgeist of the work that is being done, a move toward disallowing, pushing people off, destroying documents. It seems to me, this isn't the Manhattan Project, where there is hypersensitivity and you have got to destroy documents out of fear that they may fall into the wrong hands. It is a very passive process in terms of those documents just laying dormant. I don't know why there needs to be this push to try to destroy these documents.

But I am very concerned, and I do believe I have some standing on this, Madam Secretary. I, along with some others in this Con-

gress, and I look at Howard Berman over there, who is very helpful and has been a very staunch refugee advocate. When we were told that the CPA was going to be ended by your predecessor, and there was this move to just shut the door and upwards of 15,000 to 20,000 real refugees looked like they were going to be dealt with unjustly and sent back; not only did I offer legislation on the floor, after a bitter floor debate, we won that. People did not want our money being used for that repatriation.

The Administration and many other people—and I believe you, had you been there, would have been very strongly in our favor here—felt that there needed to be a follow-on program. That came to be known as the ROVR program. Obviously I would have liked that your interviews would have been done in-country, where the refugees were, but as long as they are done and people are screened in who are true refugees, that is my hope.

But I detect a very strong insensitivity here to refugees, the very people that one is empowered and entrusted to protect, on the part of this individual and perhaps others, by their very words "reptilian," I mean that is an offensive remark to make about anyone, and to talk about not negotiating with them. To deal so cynically with people. I mean there has to be openness and transparency. I said as I was beginning the question, that is one of the parts that we like so much about the JVA. They are transparent. We need more transparency in all of our relations. When it is done behind closed doors, no matter who it is, it raises concerns. You know, absolute power corrupts absolutely, as was said back in the 1850's or so.

So I would hope that maybe you would want to respond about the JVAs, and about this individual making these outrageous remarks about a very good person. And let me give you one other footnote.

I will never forget, Madam Secretary, when I was dealing with Romania. I led the fight to take Most Favored Nation status away from Nicholas Ceausescu when scads of people in the State Department and many people on the Ways and Means Committee and everywhere else, were singing his high praises. You find anybody now who would tell me that Ceausescu was a great guy, the book was out on him in the early 1980's. The human rights community was uniform in condemning him. I went over to Romania five times. One trip I brought a whole number of cases of family reunification cases. In speaking to our person who was there, a woman who clearly had compassion fatigue, she was dissing and just throwing cases out because she said, "I don't want to deal with that." I raised an issue there. Thankfully, there was a change made. I am not saying we should be bleeding hearts, and accept people who are not refugees, but when somebody has passed the point of being able to recognize true refugees, it is time to move on. That person clearly did not have it in Romania. I think we are dealing with it again right here.

Ms. TAFT. Well, if I can respond. I got a copy of that e-mail the other day. I found it unspeakably offensive. I don't know why some people, and this person in particular, felt he needed to vent in the way he did. My singular experience, however, with him, and he is not my employee but he does in fact oversee the ODP program and

the ROVR program, my experience with him was last year in January, before I went over to Vietnam, we had a conversation about ideas on how we can get ROVR really moving, because it was not moving well and we had a lot of things that you and others made suggestions about how we could really make that program work. I went over there with my colleague, Pam Lewis. We spent 3 weeks there in Vietnam, Cambodia, and in Thailand. We spent most of the time trying to negotiate with the Vietnamese and to work with the JVA, to the IOM people, with the INS people, and with Mr. Dewey and others, to find a way to get that program off dead center and get moving. In fact, we set forth the parameters for that, laid out the policy, and I am very pleased to be able to say that while this time last year we had processed about 200 people through the ROVR program, more than 12,000, almost 13,000 have already arrived in the United States. We have had approval for 19,000 interviews. We are proceeding on that program in a very fine fashion. This could not have been done without the man that you are referring to.

I believe one thing about this program. It is about as complicated as the U.S. tax code. There are many different categories. It is the most complicated thing, even preparing for this hearing you can see my briefing book. Most of this is about all the different categories that exist in the ODP and the ROVR program. It is complicated. I think what happens and what makes it appear as though people are losing dynamism in it is we never seem to come to closure. There is always another group. There is always another question.

As painful as this hearing is, one of the things I think I would like to compliment you on is in getting ready for this hearing and in trying to respond to all of the different memos and letters we have received from the Senate and the House and the NGO's about the ODP and ROVR program, I honestly do believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I believe we can work through all of the final details, and that we can end this program as compassionately as it started.

I don't want to be too symbolic here, but it does seem to me that since 1975, we have been extremely generous. The JVA process has worked very well. The whole program I think on balance has worked well. But it is time now to start looking at completing the pipelines that we have and really focusing our attention of how are we going to find recent cases of persecution or prospective cases of persecution, and go forward with a refugee program for the future through in-country processing. We don't have all those details worked out. We are consulting with the NGO's. We want to consult more with you as we go forward.

Let's finish what we have been doing and all the categories we have been working on. Then let's really look at how do we keep the pressure on to continue for a real rescue program in the future. That is where I want to go. It doesn't express compassion fatigue. It is trying to make sure we are really getting the honorable closure to those that have been in process and that we keep a window open that recognizes that things are still difficult in Vietnam, although many things have improved. We need to have a program ongoing. We need to figure out how we get there from here.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just say in follow-up. I have always believed that it is what people say in private when all the lights are gone, what they say in memos that they expect others never to see, that we get a real glimpse into someone's heart and soul in terms of what they really believe about something. That is why, when somebody makes a racially offensive remark which was supposedly off-the-record to some reporter in a bar somewhere, that everybody reacts with horror, because now all of a sudden we get a snapshot of where the real thinking may lie. The same goes with gender and other kinds of prejudices that are out there. That it's when you strip away the lights and the cameras are gone, well these memos paint a picture that's not flattering about the mindset of this individual which greatly disturbs me, and I think it disturbs many other people as well.

Now officially he can say whatever he wants, but we now have for want of a better word, a smoking gun, from someone who is saying "Don't dialog with the advocates," with the very people who have given their lives. And they don't make all that much money in that work as you know so well, out of pure concern for their brothers and sisters who are disadvantaged around the world. You know, it is inconceivable to me that somebody can be in that position and continue to have credibility when these kinds of things come forward. I was shocked when I read this. If somebody on my staff or somebody over which I had some power over in terms of making decisions had written this, I would move them somewhere else.

Ms. TAFT. I don't. But I will convey your concerns.

Mr. SMITH. Well everything he does now is suspect, I have to tell you.

Ms. TAFT. I understand.

Mr. SMITH. Because you know, we are really concerned about refugees, and I know the concern is bipartisan. Now everything must be looked at through these eyeglasses of wait a minute, how does this fit into this prism?

Ms. TAFT. All I can say, sir, is you have my pledge that I am going to keep this program as focused and compassionate and fair as it can be. I can not control people who do not work for me. But I will convey your concerns.

I want to also say, I have a great deal of respect for the whole JVA program. But we don't use JVAs all over the world. We use them where there are large caseloads. In fact, the JVAs are used for large caseloads in Africa—well, in Nairobi and in West Africa, but they are not used in Cairo. We use them in Zagreb, ICMC works for us in Zagreb and in Frankfurt, but not in Cuba. We don't have a JVA in Moscow. That's been a large program. We have had one for Southeast Asia, but as it evolves from a large refugee program with a lot of caseload to one that is going to be more modest in Ho Chi Minh City, I don't think we need to have a JVA. We are still looking at how we would configure the staffing for this and how we would manage it. If it looks as though we are not able to complete the caseloads we want in time, we may well have a JVA there for at least a year, but I'm not sure.

What I will say to you is that I believe we are working well with the NGO world. I come from the NGO world. I want to make sure

we do OK. But we aren't always going to agree on everything. There is one other area where we don't have a JVA, but we have hired someone from ICMC. That is in Pakistan. So it's not a given that there has to be a JVA. I think what I need to hear from you is a comfort level that you will have when we show you the design of our staffing pattern, the reporting pattern, and who we are going to hire. I will share that with you as soon as it is fully staffed—fully developed.

Mr. SMITH. I certainly appreciate the consultation, but many of us believe if it ain't broke, why fix it. I am not convinced that replacing the JVA before it can be shown that its time has passed is prudent policy. I mean you yourself have said what a great job they have done.

Ms. TAFT. Yes, but there are 100 people in the JVA in Bangkok. This program is not going to be managed in Bangkok once we get a consulate going in Vietnam. You can't imagine how complicated it is to be moving people back and forth and files back and forth.

Mr. SMITH. The additional concern is not only transparency, but also the advocacy role that it plays. I am vice chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, so although it is a completely different issue, problems with people very often are similar. For years during the Reagan Administration and then into the Bush Administration, we found that during the adjudication process of veterans, people who had good, solid cases were being told "No, thank you. You are not going to get your service-connected disability payments." Thankfully, we had in effect BSOs and others who were advocates. Had it not been for that, people, smart people, some high ranking people in the military who are now veterans, were clinging for help. Those advocates helped them.

It seems to me that when you have someone who is a refugee or potential refugee, the JVA offers an additional assurance that every "I" is dotted, and every "T" is crossed. I would hope there could be an extension of its life. That would be my sincere request of the Administration, to make sure, just like with ROVR, that there is follow-on. We were assured almost in a blood oath that we were missing the whole point, that these people were economic migrants, the 40,000-plus who were scattered throughout the refugee camps. I was assured by UNHCR people: don't worry, you are missing the boat. Yet I had in hand the testimonies of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, and Refugees International, and all the other human rights groups and refugee groups, stating that meritorious people were screened out. That is why we stuck to our guns. I believe it is premature to be closing this. I would hope you would take that into consideration.

I yield to the gentlelady from Georgia, Ms. McKinney.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I would like to defer some of my questions, because I have several of them, to my colleague from California, Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. Well, I thank the Ranking Member for doing that. I appreciate it very much. Let me just start out by saying that with refugee policies in the House focused on you and the Chairman, I think it augers well for the strength of our commitment to refugee assistance and refugee resettlement. The Chairman and I have many different disagreements on issues, but I think it should be

said that—and the State Department should agree, much better to be hit by somebody whose commitment to the refugee programs is so great than to be hit, as you are so many other times, by people who really want to scuttle the whole thing, who think we have taken enough people. So you should count your blessings.

Ms. TAFT. I do. I do. Believe me, I do.

Mr. BERMAN. It may not feel like it every day.

I do want to associate myself with the remarks of the Chairman, of the Ranking Member, Ms. McKinney and of Chairman Gilman on this whole issue of Sierra Leone and the importance of getting some commitment to priority numbers for resettlement there. We should be a full-fledged participant in that effort, providing assistance, as you talked about, and also committing to resettlement. I was happy to hear some of your comments that are starting to go along those lines, including getting some high priority numbers committed to the refugees from that country.

But what I really wanted to ask about was Vietnam, and to get a little sense of exactly what is going on. Where the Chairman and I did have a disagreement last year was I had thought there were enough improvements in terms of Vietnamese Government cooperation in our ROVR program in terms of granting visas and allowing the United States to more effectively interview the people who had been returned from the camps and who had not really been adequately screened in those camps, that it justified taking a chance, providing MFN status, recognizing the improvements that the Vietnamese had undertaken.

I am now told that there are serious fall-offs from that position since this time, and I have received some letters from constituents in my area of Los Angeles indicating that. Unfortunately I don't have that letter with me. But I think Mr. Smith and others have also raised some of those issues in terms of the ODP, in terms of the ROVR program, and in terms of other categories of people. I was wondering if you could give us your evaluation of to what extent the Vietnam Government is complying with some of the representations that were made by Ambassador Peterson and others regarding the improved state of their cooperation.

Ms. TAFT. Thank you very much, Mr. Berman, for asking this question. My sense is that they are being really quite cooperative. We have noticed a real willingness in terms of the referrals for interviews. For instance, on the ROVR program just in the past year, when we went out there we weren't getting any approvals. Now we have 19,471 who have been cleared for interviews. We have about 490 cases that haven't been cleared yet, representing about 700 people. We originally thought that those would be people whom, you know, they may not, for political reasons, want us to have access to. But we have come to find out that almost all of them are ones they can't find addresses for.

We have gone back. We have been trying to find addresses for these people, as have the Vietnamese officials. Some of these people may have already left, but there are very few cases now which fall into questionable status. Ambassador Peterson and our representation in Hanoi worked consistently with the Ministry to press them on access to the cases that have not yet been approved. I think they have done quite a stunning job so far.

Now we have heard other problems that existed in terms of corruption. That is probably one of the letters that you have, that there are allegations of bribery, et cetera. This has plagued the program for two decades, I guess. But in 1997 there was a real effort on the part of the Vietnamese to say since most of those allegations were coming from local officials, that they would bypass local official approval for the interview access or exit permits. Those are all done now by the Ministry of Public Security. They have been sending out notices about corruption, bribery, not being tolerated. They have been trying to take this under their wing. Quite frankly, we have not heard of any recent examples.

If any of you here has any examples of where they find that there are corrupt officials trying to extort money, we have assurances that they will be followed up on. So I think that is also good.

Now we haven't gotten into, but I'm sure we will, the issue of the former U.S. Government employees.

Mr. BERMAN. Yes. That is one of the issues.

Ms. TAFT. Right. There was some question as to whether or not the Vietnamese would give us approval to go back and to interview those cases that have not yet been interviewed. It represents about 5,000 people. We have made informal demarches to the Vietnamese, to see if they would give us access to these former employees. We have every indication that they will be forthcoming and be willing to do it.

I think they, like us, want to finish off all the pieces of ODP and ROVR, and get on with the normal immigration program. I think the signaling of the opening of our consulate later this year in Ho Chi Minh City is their effort also to say, "Let's just regularize our whole immigration relationship."

But I don't have any outstanding issues—well, I have some issues, because they relate to people whom we haven't gotten a decision on yet, but they are working on them and we are working on them. But I do not see any real barriers.

Mr. BERMAN. I am told that actually, a note was passed to me here that would indicate the biggest problem with the Vietnamese Government is their failure to do anything really to combat the extortion by local officials, the $400 for an exit visa.

Ms. TAFT. Well, I am not aware of that. I mean I am aware that there are allegations about that, but those fees are not, at least as far as I know, are not extorted at the national level.

Mr. BERMAN. No, no. The argument is——

Ms. TAFT. At the local level, but we have bypassed local level approvals now, so they shouldn't be involved in being able to have the graft and corruption. That is, by centralizing it, it is supposed to get those people out of the way.

Now if there are examples where that is not working, I would love to know about it. But that was the whole reason it was centralized, so that the people wouldn't have to go and get all of the final exit permits from the local officials.

Mr. BERMAN. Well, thank you for that. I join the others in admiration for your commitment to this over the years. It has been a stellar one and well known to all of us.

Mr. Chairman, if it is all right, I would like to submit a few questions that come from some folks in my area regarding different

aspects of the program that I am not recalling right now, and don't have the letter with me, so that perhaps we could get a written response to some of those questions.

Mr. SMITH. Sure.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Berman.

The gentleman from New York, the chairman of the Full Committee.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Assistant Secretary Taft, in your bureau performance plan for Fiscal Year 2000, you note that the PRM has fewer employees than it had 10 years ago. Is that correct?

Ms. TAFT. Yes, sir.

Mr. GILMAN. Although it is administering now a far larger program. And you add that a 1997 Coopers and Lybrand study recommended a 10 percent increase in your staff, and conclude "It is time that we acknowledge that most of our work is non-discretionary and addresses the fact that we are not adequately staffed to carry it out." Is that your statement?

Ms. TAFT. Yes, sir.

Mr. GILMAN. How much more staff does your bureau need to manage the refugee program? How much would that cost? Why didn't the Administration recommend an increase in the budget request?

Ms. TAFT. Well, they did recommend an increase in our administrative account, which also includes authority to hire nine more people. Those would be permanent employees, or foreign service employees. We also in our increased administrative budget have made some provisions so we can do some local hiring or hiring of people off-shore. For instance, some of the translators that we need in various programs. I think we will be in a lot better shape. I can also say that I think maybe we're managing it as efficiently as we can, but I think the extra nine people will be extremely helpful.

Mr. GILMAN. You still actually need more than that. Isn't that correct?

Ms. TAFT. That is what I have asked for. If I need more, I will appeal.

Mr. GILMAN. So you feel that nine is sufficient right now?

Ms. TAFT. I don't have them yet. As soon as I get them and I find they are really terrific, maybe we'll be all right.

Mr. GILMAN. How many Tibetan refugees have been resettled in the United States during the last 5 years? Does that number accurately reflect the need for resettlement among Tibetan refugees?

Ms. TAFT. I think there was a special provision which allowed 1,000 Tibetan refugees to come to the United States. We have no specific applications pending for Tibetan refugees to come to the United States. If you have any cases, let me know.

My sense is that because of the generosity and tolerance of the Government of India to allow the refugees to stay there, and they really do have a large community or several communities there, they want to be close to Tibet and they want to be together. However, if there are any particular rescue cases that you would like to refer to us, we would be glad to do that.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you. We may be calling on you for that.

One last question, Mr. Chairman.

It has been reported that a large percentage of ethnic Montagnards re-education camp survivors, at least some 40 percent, maybe as high as 90 percent, are being denied refugee status. The most important reason for those denials is that many of these applicants, after fighting alongside our special forces until 1975, continued to fight the Communists on their own for several years before being captured and put into re-education camps. ODP personnel apparently assume in these cases that the re-education sentence was imposed only on account of the post-1975 activity and not for the pre-1975 activity. So they adjudicate the applicant "not qualified for interview."

Apparently this interpretation of the law has been adopted without benefit of any legal opinion from the INS Office of General Counsel. Can I ask you, Madam Secretary, will you be working with INS to see to it that a legal opinion is issued on this point, and that any Montagnards who have been wrongfully deemed not qualified for interview on account of post-1975 service are interviewed, and will be accepted for resettlement?

Ms. TAFT. This issue is one that surfaced fairly recently, at least in my mind. But as I understand it, the Montagnards that worked with us before 1975, and then had a re-education camp experience, there is no issue with them. Almost all of our ODP program has been for people who have had a pre-1975 experience with us. Somewhere along the program, it is my understanding, and I'm sure Joseph Rees knows better than I since he, I think, started writing the regs. for this, but there was an agreement that re-education camp had to occur between April 1975 and the end of that year, and that any activities that were done by resistance forces later, that weren't connected to our presence, would not be entitled to be considered for a refugee under the re-ed program.

I may have mis-cast this, but what I will do is we are going to work with INS to find out a clarification administratively. I also want to know whether it was quite clear that the dates that we are talking about are April to December 1975. I am not aware of that history. But there is a question about it, so we'll get a clarification and opinion, and share it with you.

Mr. GILMAN. Well, I hope it's not just a matter of saying which date applies, but trying to find a way to help these Montagnard people, who would like resettlement.

Ms. TAFT. Well, I think we need to be fairly clear about this, sir. There are a lot of people who were part of a resistance force after the United States left Vietnam, a lot of people. Some of them were subjected to persecution, maybe some of them weren't. What I want to do, and this gets to the issue of the files, what I would like to do is say that what happened in 1975, 1976, 1977, that may be interesting now, but what is most important is what has been happening in the last couple of years to these people, or what is their prospect to be able to be part of the society in Vietnam. If, because of their background and a variety of other things they are now or recently experiencing persecution, we have got to find those people. Yes, they should be considered for resettlement. That is what I would like to do, not to go back to persecution which occurred 20 years ago. I mean how many millions of people are in Vietnam.

What we need to do is figure out for those that didn't have a direct relationship with the United States, and were not part of our current programs, how do we find a way to be receptive to their recent or current persecution?

Now the reason I say this has to do with the records is that I believe if somebody comes forward under a new P–1 program and says "I have had a pattern of discrimination since 1975, 1976 or in the 1980's" it would be good to have those records so that we could at least verify that they had in fact done that. So we are going to look and see how many of these records we can just keep on disks, because it may be really important as part of the credentialing for new cases that come up.

Mr. GILMAN. Well, I am encouraged by your response. If you find that these Montagnards fought on our side pre-1975, and should not have been screened out, regardless of what they did afterwards, I hope that that would be an important aspect of your determination.

Ms. TAFT. Before we complete this, we will come back to you, sir, and this Committee, with what INS has reviewed and what our own historical records show. We will try to deal with this in a way in which you are as comfortable as we are.

[Ms. Taft's answer below was submitted following the hearing.]

Since January 1980, eligibility for a refugee interview under the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) has required that detention in re-education be due to association with pre-1975 USG programs and policies to Vietnam. Persons detained in re-education for their involvement in non-USG associated activities have not been eligible for refugee processing under the ODP. However, we do not believe that otherwise-eligible individuals have been denied an interview merely because their re-ed started after 1975. Instead, INS officers have reviewed the applications of persons that were detained after 1975 on a case-by-case basis to determine if their imprisonment was due to their pre-1975 association with USG policies and programs in Vietnam or for other reasons.

While we do not believe it appropriate now to redefine the eligibility criteria for ODP to benefit specific groups, such as the Montagnards, we, of course, do not fail to recognize that there may be some Montagnards or others whose cases fall outside standard ODP eligibility criteria but whom may have compelling refugee claims based on recent or current persecution. Such individuals will be eligible for consideration under the new program we are establishing in Vietnam. Our goal is to create a rescue program that will be responsive to the protection needs of such individuals.

Mr. GILMAN. And I hope your personnel is reminded of the fact they fought side by side with us, and because they were fighting side by side and happened to carry over their resistance, that should not preclude them from being considered.

Ms. TAFT. Well, I think we have to be careful that we not open up at this stage, 24 years later, yet another entitlement program. If in fact there is sympathy for these people, as I know there is, but they don't fit one of the existing boxes and they are still having problems, that is what we want to look for and see how we can deal with that. Some of the people who were involved in Vietnam are getting on fine with their lives. I do have a special interest of course, as you do, in the Montagnards because they were particularly identified with us in 1975. I will do some more research and get back to you.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you for your assurances.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Chairman Gilman.

Ms. McKinney.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I noticed in your remarks that you mentioned the extension of the Temporary Protective Status for Sierra Leoneans and the expiration in September. I am wondering how they are informed of these decisions, the Sierra Leoneans. I have received a number of requests from my constituents on information about whether or not the status had been extended. They didn't know. Some of them knew. But most of them didn't know. So how is this information communicated?

[Ms. Taft's answer below was submitted following the hearing.]

TPS has been in place for Sierra Leone since November 4, 1997. Its current expiration date is November 3, 1999, although the Attorney General is expected shortly to sign a redesignation which would extend that date for an additional year. The redesignation will also bring forward the date by which a Sierra Leonean had to arrive in the United States to be eligible for TPS. The new cut-off date will be the date the Attorney General signs the new designation. Thus, any Sierra Leonean who has arrived in the United States since November 4, 1997 up to the new redesignation will become eligible for TPS. At present, INS estimates that nearly 3,000 Sierra Leoneans enjoy TPS in the United States.

Ms. TAFT. Well, let me ask. It is indicated on INS circulars. It is in various consulates, et cetera. But that is a good question. I mean maybe one of the things we need to do is—well, it's on the Internet too for INS. But these people might not have Internet access. If you have some recommendations, I would welcome them. But we should as a matter of normal operating procedures, circulate to you all when we are making these decisions so your people can answer letters too. Let me come up with some ideas about what more we might do.

But the problem that we have on the Sierra Leoneans isn't so much the people that we know have TPS, because they were here before in 1997. What we are nervous and worried about are the people who arrived in the United States last year and can't really go back to Sierra Leone. It's a very dangerous place right now. They seem to be caught in the middle. So we are looking into that. I think we can get an extension from September onwards. The decisions of course on TPSs are made by the Attorney General, but I will convey your concerns. We are trying to see how we deal with the group that is caught in the middle.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you. Now I have a question about UNHCR's operation in Sierra Leone. It is my understanding that UNHCR has made a request for its operation in West Africa. How much has the United States contributed in response to this request?

Ms. TAFT. Well, I hope you will be pleased to know that we are the most forthcoming of any of the donors. We have invested as the U.S. Government, more than $60 million last year for Sierra Leoneans in their country, in Guinea and Liberia. We are giving more than 25 percent of the UNHCR's request. We have tried to be responsive on things like trucks. Our military is looking for used trucks and has actually provided a number of trucks to help the Guineans and help the UNHCR move thousands of people that are in this very dangerous internal peninsula—it's called the Geckedou region—to move them away from that, because it's right next to where the war zone is. So we have provided trucks, we have provided the WFP with food, and we are generously giving to the

UNHCR. In Sierra Leone, we have already given $32 million this year.

You know, the situation there gets eclipsed in the media by the Kosovo issues and the Hurricane Mitch issues, but when we look at crimes against humanity and look at a country that is struggling with a democratic government to survive, it is really very difficult. We are working really hard on the diplomatic side to try to get the regional leaders to work on this. There are donor missions. I led a multi-donor mission in June. There have been subsequent international meetings to talk about Sierra Leone.

I think a focus on that country is really important because it does impact Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria, the whole security of West Africa. But the humanitarian side, as generous as we have been and will continue to be, is not going to solve this. It has got to be a political reconciliation and a way to support some peacekeeping presence until the government can get itself on its feet.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Further, it is my understanding that the United States has only processed about 700 refugees from Sierra Leone for resettlement this year, and that none or almost none of them have been from Guinea, where most of the refugees are. What can the United States do to identify more eligible refugees, and will we identify Priority-2 categories for Sierra Leone? And, will we retain a JVA to help us identify and screen eligible refugees?

Ms. TAFT. Most of the people who are in Guinea are in camps indistinguishable from anyone else. I mean there are hundreds of thousands of them. They come from rural areas in Sierra Leone, who had their lives destroyed, and are in first asylum. It is very difficult, as we have found in the past, to try to take a camp of 50,000 people and say, "Gee, I wonder if we can select 50 people to resettle in the United States." It starts riots, as you well know, and has started riots in other places. We have to be very careful. That is why we rely on the UNHCR to refer cases to us. Most of the cases that they are referring for international resettlement at this point are ones who are special trauma cases, ones who really can't go back.

Now whether or not there is a P-2 category, we do have a JVA in West Africa that can be helpful on this. But we don't yet have a P-2 designation. I think I would like to get more information from you in terms of the advisability, but there is a P-3 category for relatives. So if relatives are in the United States, people can come out and resettle as refugees.

Now on the issue of the JVAs, I believe you are going to hear some testimony from one of the agencies that is a JVA for us—I think the challenge in Africa where we have these large complex camp systems is to find some way to get the agencies that are doing assistance on the ground to be able to identify people who may actually have relatives in the United States or be particularly appropriate for resettlement, that don't really fit in with the rest of the group. Relief agencies should make demarches to the UNHCR to prepare documents.

We have offered to second voluntary agency personnel to work with the UNHCR to do that, and provide other services. I think it's still in the discussion stages. It would be very useful for you to explore how they see this evolving. We stand ready to provide the fi-

nancial resources to expand the net, and use voluntary agency personnel to assist in identifying cases for resettlement. But in Africa, it is really important that we have a dominant role of the UNHCR, so ensuring that their capacity is expanded is in our interest too.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Finally, on Sierra Leone, those individuals who have been severely mutilated, will we categorize them as Priority–1 refugees?

Ms. TAFT. Yes. And let me also say they would be Priority–1. We also have discussed with the Office of Refugee Resettlement in HHS and with some of the voluntary agencies, the fact that we will need special resettlement packages for these people. I am pleased to say that there are 14 torture centers. There are ways to get special rehab, prosthesis, et cetera. We want to work on this.

You know, the Nordics always take the credit for dealing with the rare torture victims and the difficult rehab refugees. I want the United States, which has wonderful capacity, to also reach out to these people.

Ms. MCKINNEY. In looking through the other testimony from the second panel, I see that Mr. Hammond has mentioned Somalia in his remarks, and suggests that we have not responded to UNHCR recommendation on Somali refugees, the Bantu ethnic minority. Have we decided whether or not to designate them as Priority–2 category for resettlement?

Ms. TAFT. They are not on my list. We are working on another group which I know Mr. Hammond is also very interested in. That is the Lost Boys of Sudan, who are in Dadaab Camp. There was an effort, a joint effort last year to try to identify how we can find more unaccompanied minors and how we can deal with this problem. We are working on that right now.

But I don't know about the Bantus. Can I submit that for the record?

Ms. MCKINNEY. And so since I was going to ask you about——

Ms. TAFT. There is no decision yet. Sorry. That's right. There is a team in Africa that is looking at this. In fact, last week we did have a meeting of all our African refugee coordinators and the UNHCR in Nairobi to design our resettlement program, that everybody understands what the ground rules are, that we all are looking for the right kind of cases, and we are all prepared to move them. The person that was on the team from my office will check on the Somali Bantu, and we'll get back to you.

Ms. MCKINNEY. I notice that Mr. Rosenblatt also mentions the Lost Boys of Sudan. So are we considering accepting any of them for resettlement?

Ms. TAFT. Yes. Although the image of Lost Boys isn't what you might think. I mean most of these are young men now. The youngest I think is about 17. But when I was working in government in the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, those boys came out of Sudan while we were there trying to deal with disaster assistance. So they have been in this camp a long time.

There are those that have reached majority, and there are those that are still minors. We are working on the best kind of placement for them. We think they maybe need some group homes, something special—they have sort of grown very close over the years. So we

are trying to find some very special placement. But we plan to go ahead and we will do that.

Ms. MCKINNEY. OK. This question comes from Congressman Berman.

We have heard from NGO's that work in West Africa that there is a real concern that UNHCR has not made many P–1 referrals of Sierra Leoneans. Given the magnitude of the crisis and compelling cases, victims of mutilation, in your opinion why hasn't UNHCR increased P–1 referrals of Sierra Leoneans?

Ms. TAFT. I think you better ask Ms. AbuZayd this. We just got five referrals yesterday. So I think they are now moving.

Ms. MCKINNEY. And we do have UNHCR here. Good. We'll ask them as well.

Finally, I would just like for you to tell me what you are doing with Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ms. TAFT. Well, you know, the humanitarian workers have very few windows of access. We used to have a UNHCR program because there were returning refugees coming back into Angola. Now we have got refugees that are leaving Angola. The security situation is so bad in Angola that now most of the food that has to go for internally displaced persons has to be flown in. As you know, even that has its risks, and recently WFP lost some people.

I think we don't really have a refugee problem in Angola. We have an internally displaced and a chronic and accelerating civil strife situation. I think the diplomats are going to have to be really zeroing in on this, working with Savimbi and Dos Santos. The U.S. Government hasn't diminished our funding for those agencies that can still work on the ground, but I don't have any good news about Angola.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, the news is slightly improving in eastern Zaire—excuse me, eastern DROC, as we call it, where the United Nations has now established a framework for NGO presence and international organizations to go in and try to do some coordinated assistance. But it is still very fragile, and with the events that just happened in Uganda last week, I don't know what is going to happen.

One interesting thing about Democratic Republic of Congo, relates to trying to find special groups of people. You will recall that last summer when all the new troubles occurred with Kabila, there were a lot of accusations made about ethnic Tutsis. Many were rounded up and put in prisons, two key prisons, one in Lubumbashi and one in Kinshasa. My staff identified very early on that these people, while they are not refugees, they are Congolese in their own country, they were at really very severe risk. In fact, Frances Deng, who is as you know, a Sudanese professor at Brookings now, his two sons were swooped up in this "anti-Tutsi" effort. We were told that everybody was being brought together so they could be protected from the maddened crowd.

Well, it appears there are about 1,000 of these people. We have been working very, very hard to establish them as a P–2 category, but we have to get them out of Lubumbashi and Kinshasa to do that. We have been working for months to try to find a way to get agreement from Kabila to let these people go so that we can work with the UNHCR to process them as refugees. We found other

donor countries. We are working on it, but we haven't been able to get them out. So we are still working on that.

Yet from a humanitarian assistance standpoint, we don't have a lot of activity going on because of the security situation. Of course there's no formal AID assistance to the government because of the situation. Bad news.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ms. Taft.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. Delahunt.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief.

If you can, Madam Secretary, I know that you have had an opportunity to read the testimony of those that will serve on the second panel—you haven't? OK.

Ms. TAFT. But I talk to them all the time, so go ahead.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Fine. Often times when you are the first, you don't have a chance to respond to the testimony of others. I just wanted to know if you have any comments on the testimony, what you anticipate to hear from others, if you wanted to comment on what they have to say.

Ms. TAFT. Well, I know them all very well.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And I am sure they are all very nice people.

Ms. TAFT. And they are all very nice people.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But you might want to comment on what they testify.

Ms. TAFT. And there is some creative tension sometimes in the way we run our programs.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I understand that. That happens everywhere, in every institution.

Ms. TAFT. I do know that there will be some criticisms that we are not doing enough or we should be asking for more, bringing in more refugees. But I think on balance, I honestly believe that we collectively have made an incredible humane statement in a world that is characterized by a lot of inhumanity. That includes the UNHCR, the NGO's, the government. I think we have really done just—not all we could, but we are really——

Mr. DELAHUNT. You are trying hard.

Ms. TAFT. We are trying. I am sure that there will be some questions that will come to your mind based on the other panel. I will be glad to answer those.

Let me just say that several of the people who will be speaking or who represent agencies who are speaking, have worked with me in this field since 1975. I think that we all tend to get so——

Mr. DELAHUNT. Passionate.

Ms. TAFT. Passionate. I think that is good. Because I think with passion, we will come up with some ways to get this stuff resolved.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let me just follow up with a concern that was expressed by Mr. Smith. He referred to it as a change of mindset. I think that was his term. In your testimony, you indicated that you have noted a diminution of receptivity by African nations in terms of acceptance of refugees. I also have some concerns about attitudes here in the United States about immigration. I wonder if you see—and again, I am confident as expressed by the Chairman

and others, that you clearly have a passionate commitment to this kind of work, and I am sure the entire network, not just government, NGO's, and the United Nations also share that commitment. But, as the poet said, you are not an island entire of yourself, or whatever Donne did say, I forget right now.

Ms. TAFT. It's close enough.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DELAHUNT. It's close enough. You understand the import of that question.

Ms. TAFT. Yes, sir.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I wonder if the Chairman has hit upon something when he says there is a change in mindset, a cultural change in terms of acceptance, receptivity, in terms of these crises that we all decry obviously and are all concerned about. I would just be interested in your comment.

Ms. TAFT. Well, let me just say I think the United States did go through a down period around 1995–1996, when the economy wasn't so good and there were some anti-immigrant concerns. I think with the economy going up, I haven't seen much anti-refugee sentiment. In fact, I think one of the problems that we have had for a number of years is public confusion over what is distinctive about a refugee which is different from an illegal alien or even an immigrant.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would suggest that to many Americans that is a very nebulous distinction. It's somebody else.

Ms. TAFT. It's somebody else. But I think the more—well, the voluntary agencies can explain it. But I guess what I want to say though is that one of the strengths of our program for many, many years has been the fact that refugees are resettled in virtually every community of the United States, and have been for years. There are 450 local affiliates at the 10 agencies we deal with. So every community has had an experience and has welcomed refugees. So I think when they see how affirmative their experience is and how much survivors they are and how well they do, I don't think that is much of a problem.

Where we have a real problem is in Europe, where they have less flexible rules, and don't really have immigration programs and have less flexible approaches to how governments provide permanent resettlement of refugees. We spend a lot of time in our migration dialogs with the Europeans in trying to help them have a higher comfort level for both asylees as well as refugees. I think that we are making some progress—we share information, we try to give them ideas about how we resettle people in our country. But I think you will find that Europeans are much less receptive than they perhaps should be, given their history.

Mr. SMITH. Would my friend yield briefly on that point?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Certainly.

Mr. SMITH. My comment was primarily focused on the U.S. Government's change in mindset. Yes, I know my constituents and yours probably have people who are pro and con on refugees, and probably have not understood adequately the distinction between illegal immigrants and refugees. In fact, when the illegal immigrant bill came up, many of us fought very hard to separate that because somehow they were trying to fudge that line of demarca-

tion to say anybody coming in, in a very xenophobic way, ought to be kept out.

But my concern is, as I mentioned—and I appreciate the gentleman for yielding—is that we have gone from 150,000 down to 75,000 to 80,000 when the world is awash. If we want to truly be leaders, I would respectfully submit, we need to keep our doors open and our numbers at least at the 100,000 level, which I think could be justified from here to breakfast, and maybe even more. I would like to see it closer to 150, in all candor.

Ms. TAFT. Since I work for a refugee, I know her sentiment is that we should be very supportive of refugees. We think America is the best place in the whole world, but some of the refugees don't necessarily want to come to us in first instance. But I think there is a balance. I really appreciate the fact that you are so receptive. It does help us a whole lot. I think I am probably the only person in the State Department that gets to testify on their budget in front of a committee that says "Why don't you ask for more money?" This is really wonderful, and "Ask for more numbers."

Two years ago, we brought in 70,000 refugees. Last year we brought in 77,000. This year we are going to bring in more. I think you are seeing the trend that I am hearing you endorse.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And let me just associate myself with the remarks of the Chairman in terms of encouraging, because I think what has made this Nation so particularly distinctive in terms of any place on the globe, you alluded earlier to the Europeans, of course, that we are a Nation that embraces. I think that is something we can be very proud of.

I happen to be new to this Subcommittee, new to this Committee, and I am certainly new to this particular issue, but in a personal way I am not new to it because my own daughter, who arrived in this country when she was 4 months old, some 24 years ago, was a refugee from Vietnam.

Ms. TAFT. Oh.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I noted in your biography——

Ms. TAFT. So one of the Baby Lift children?

Mr. DELAHUNT. She was one of the Baby Lift children.

Ms. TAFT. I started that program.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, thank you. You have my eternal gratitude.

Ms. TAFT. Well, isn't that wonderful.

Mr. DELAHUNT. So thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Delahunt.

Just let me make one comment in passing, and hopefully you can be helpful on this. Last year the Congress passed a bill that I had introduced, the Torture Victims Relief Act. You made mention of dealing with people suffering from mutilations and the heinous aftermath of torture. There is a $7.5 million authorization, another $7.5 million internationally for centers that treat torture victims. The $7.5 million domestically is to come out of the HHS budget. I know you are aware of it, but anything you could do to try to make sure that that is fully allocated, we would appreciate that.

Ms. TAFT. I must say I don't know whether they have had a problem with that allocation. But we work really closely with Lavinia Limon in ORR, particularly on some of the clustering issues and some of the difficult resettlement approaches. They

seem to be very receptive to doing whatever is necessary. But I will check on this.

Mr. SMITH. And AID as well, on the international side.

Ms. TAFT. Yes, OK. All right.

Mr. SMITH. Because our contribution dwarfs what is being given by some of the Nordic countries. So finally we are back in there with some real money. Hopefully it will be forthcoming.

Ms. TAFT. OK.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask you some additional questions, and then allow any questions my colleagues might have.

In her testimony, Diana Aviv makes a very, very strong and compelling statement that anti-Semitism in the successor countries of the former Soviet Union today is virulent, pervasive, and increasingly violent. In March 1999, the situation for Jews in the former Soviet Union is as dangerous, if not more so, than it was under Communism. It is certainly more unpredictable and uncontrollable. The rule of law has not taken hold in many republics. Some governments, including Russia's, are unable to enforce effectively their own laws or protect their own citizens. Local authorities responsible for law enforcement are too often arbitrary and capricious in their actions. She talks about a resurgence of deeply ingrained anti-Semitism and makes the point that the most dramatic shift is taking place in Russia, where the majority of Jews reside.

I actually cut my eye-teeth on human rights work on a trip to the Soviet Union in 1981, with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry on behalf of Refusniks. Obviously it was bipartisan, as I believe it is today, and we were concerned about Jews being mistreated in the Soviet Union. Many people think that that page has been closed. Yet we have had hearings, our Subcommittee and the Helsinki Commission, which I chair, have had hearings. We had 1 day-long hearing on the rising tide of anti-Semitism, and heard how it was systematically coming back in Russia, as well as in the other republics. Yet when we look at the number of applicants for refugee status in the former Soviet Union, denial rates were 3 to 6 percent in 1990 and 1996. Currently they are about 50 percent.

As was pointed out by my good friend and colleague from Georgia, there is one processing center in Moscow. You know, that's like if any of us were potential refugees, we would have to travel to San Diego or Fairbanks. As my friend Joseph Rees pointed out, when you have very limited means, that becomes a veto over your ability to secure refugee status.

Do you agree with Diana Aviv's assessment as a snapshot of where we are in March 1999, in Russia and the republics? Why is that number low in terms of acceptance? What about the processing center, in having perhaps roving processing capability?

Ms. TAFT. All right. Let me start with the climate. It is not only anti-Semitic. It is anti-evangelical. And there have been some very disturbing senior officials who have made statements. But there is a court case right now on a Jehovah's Witness registration issue in Moscow that appears to be siding in favor of the Jehovah's Witness. This will be a very interesting—the first big case on whether evangelicals can register or not. So I think we have to watch it. I can't say there is a pattern, but there are incidents. We are monitoring them regularly through our embassy. We are working close-

ly to get any information from NGO's and human rights groups. If you have extra information, please let us know. We want to deal with that.

On the issue of the Jewish faith, it is one of the religions that has been approved now. When I was in Moscow about 11 months ago, synagogues were all being used. I mean it is now a recognized religion. Perhaps it was Moscow that was better off than some of the places in Siberia. But again, it is spotty. We are concerned.

Now from our standpoint, when we look at our program, we can bring people in under Lautenberg still, and have that authority. That is one of the reasons we want to extend it one more year. But the measures of how bad it is for the people that would be of special interest to us is that we still have a very large backlog of people who have been approved for our program who have chosen not to leave yet. As a matter of fact, at this time last year, we had 39,000 mostly Jewish, 80 percent Jewish caseload, that had been approved for admission, totally approved and medicals done and everything for our program, that had not left the former Soviet Union.

We have started working very closely with the relevant agencies, World Relief and HIAS, in particular, to send out letters to these people, to say if things are so bad, why aren't you leaving. Five thousand people have left this year that were on the 39,000 backlog. So that is one indicator. I hope more will come, not because they are feeling particular pressure now, but because we welcome them and we want them to avail themselves to the program.

The other measure, and I don't know how good this is, is what has happened to the UIA caseload that goes to Israel. It has gone down, even now in these times, which appear to be more sporadic in terms of incidents of anti-Semitism. Their levels have gone down substantially. So I think those are two things we look at.

Now on the issue of rejection rates, our caseload now, 70 percent of our caseload is evangelical. The major reason for denial is when these people have declared their evangelical faith and whether they are credible witnesses, we are finding that there are denials because of non-credible cases. I can submit for the record the particular experience with regard to the denial rates. But we still expect this year to bring in between 20,000 and 23,000 people from the former Soviet Union.

Now finally, on the issue of going from——

Mr. SMITH. Could you just hold on for 1 second?

Ms. TAFT. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. I am sorry to interrupt. Just on that point in terms of denials of evangelicals. In adjudicating those cases, is it because they have not been recognized by the government or perhaps not gone through the process under their new law which in and of itself is a violation of the Helsinki Accords? I mean, are we claiming perhaps that they have not properly signed themselves up with the Russian Government?

Ms. TAFT. No. That would have nothing to do with it. It would have to be on whether they were being persecuted. Because of Lautenberg, the standard is much looser.

I think, and one should never think in a formal hearing, but it is my impression that the problem has to do with the credibility

of the cases and whether or not these people are in fact evangelicals or eligible. Let me please submit to the record what INS's determinations have been, and what the denial rates are, and if we can get some more specific information to you about the rates.

[Ms. Taft's answer below was submitted following the hearing.]

As the attached statistics show, approval rates fir FSU Refugee Program applicants in all categories declined annually, particularly from 1995 to 1998. During that period political openness, renewal of religious life and economic opportunity boomed. Applicants were less able to make credible assertions of fear of persecution. After the collapse of the Russian ruble in August 1998, a number of anti-Semitic statements by elected officials followed by anti-Semitic incidents and neo-Nazi group gatherings and local incidents of denial of visas or church registration to Evangelicals, the approval rates again rose as FY 1999 began (averaging about 70% at this writing). In the climate of uncertainty, the memory of repression and the fear of persecution again gained credibility in Russia and in some other countries of the FSU as well.

However, there still are and will be higher levels of denial than were characteristic of the beginning of the program. There are false claims to Evangelical faith and even to Jewish ethnicity by applicants to this program. There are individuals who, despite their claims to Evangelical faith or Jewish ethnicity, did not experience persecution and who fared very well during the Soviet and post-Soviet period. Their applications may fail the test of credible experience and fear of persecution. And there are applicants who use fradulent or tampered evidence to support their claims to eligibility who will be found both ineligible and excludable.

The Department of State and the Immigration and Naturalization Service analyzed the locations of applicants and the options for circuit rides with the intention of initiating those as soon as INS resources permitted. In supporting this, PRM contacted the embassies that would need to support the circuit riders for their concurrence. In addition, we explored with the International Organization for Migration those services it might be able to provide to complete the processing and travel of approved cases through its network of offices in the former Soviet Union.

The projected sites for these circuit rides are priority order: Tashkent, Uzbekistan; Almaty, Kazakhstan; Tbilisi, Georgia (for the three Caucusus states); Riga, Latvia (for the three Baltic states); and Minsk, Belarus. In Russia, cases located east of the Urals number fewer than a dozen per year and do not have no-show rates as high as applicants from Moscow and St. Petersburg. It is our view that in individual cases of extreme financial need, it would be far less costly for us to consider financing travel to Moscow or expanding loans, as we are now doing for approved applicants who need financial assistance to depart, than to provide INS circuit riders to those locations.

IOM has made medical examinations available in Almaty, Kazakhstan and hopes to extend its network of medical examination services to several other locations in the countries of the former Soviet Union. As soon as those facilities are available, the option to use them, despite the higher per-exam cost to the USG, will be available to approved applicants in this program.

On the issue of how far it is from Vladivostok to Moscow, you are right. It is really an incredible distance. And the processing has, in fact, always been done in Moscow, except for Ukraine where we have outward flights from Kiev and the medicals done from Kiev. Most of the caseloads, by the way, come from Ukraine, St. Petersburg, or Moscow. Fifty percent of the caseloads are from those areas. But responding to your concern and also the fact that we're hearing that it is really quite complicated for some people to go to Moscow, we have instituted travel loans now so people can go. It used to be they only got the loans from Moscow to New York or wherever, but now they can get their travel loans from their homes to their resettlement locations in the United States. We pay to—well, we are setting up IOM health screening in additional places. I will submit to you the names of those places, because what we are initiating are circuit riders, in effect, IOM for the health, and

circuit riders for INS. INS has been very forthcoming, so has IOM. I think we are going to find that in the next month or two, we will be able to provide five or six processing places from Minsk to Siberia. We will submit to you what those are. We believe that will be responsive to the concerns that the program has been Moscow-centric.

Mr. SMITH. Just let me add, I would hope that there is an early warning sensitivity that with the Duma elections upcoming and the Presidential elections, and many of the key contenders openly espousing an anti-Semitic perspective, that that is nothing but a harbinger of more refugees and hopefully we'll be ready for that, and very sensitive to that.

Ms. TAFT. Yes, sir.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask just a few final questions, and then take any other questions from my distinguished colleagues. Then we will go onto the second panel.

Will PRM work with INS and JVA to issue standards for the consideration on a case-by-case basis of late ODP and ROVR applications, as well as for reconsideration of denied cases? Will these guidelines be generous? For instance, will late applications be considered by people who did not learn of the 1994 ODP deadline because they were in the internal exile in remote areas of the country?

Ms. TAFT. On a case-by-case basis, we will review those. We are not going to just say everybody who says that they were late is entitled to interviews. The important thing is, we are going to bring all of these cases back to Washington. We have a Washington processing center, which has been doing all of our FSU caseloads. They are going to receive all these documents. They are going to be hiring caseworkers and Vietnamese translators to work on these cases because of the concern that you all have had that perhaps they weren't getting the proper review out of Bangkok. We are going to look at those cases.

For the late applications, let me just say that we believe if the late applications are the ones you referred to under ROVR, I wasn't involved in the program at the time, but we have a number of people on our staff and people in INS and elsewhere, who really do believe just about every effort in the world was made to reach these people. Now there was some question about people that were in Siku Camp. Some of those people did apply for the program. We will be delighted if you have specific examples of people who said that they didn't ever get the message or didn't sign up by June 30, 1996. We will certainly look at those.

I don't want us to seem so inflexible, but you can imagine a lot of people are saying, "Gee, we didn't think ROVR was going to work, and gee, it's working, so maybe we should apply now." I think we have to, again, look at who is having a really tough time in Vietnam, who is being persecuted now, and how do we make that the focus of our program. So that is what we are going to try to do.

Mr. SMITH. Will those guidelines or standards be made known to us as the Subcommittee?

Ms. TAFT. Everything we write down, we will make sure you get.

Mr. SMITH. Will the new rescue program in Vietnam be a generous one, calculated to identify and resettle not just a few famous dissidents, but everyone who genuinely needs rescuing?

Ms. TAFT. I won't say everyone who genuinely needs rescuing, because I don't know how to define that. The important thing is I agree with what you imply, that we are not just talking about 20 people who are in prison. There are other people who have real needs. What we have to figure out is how do we design a P–1 category which doesn't signal to the Vietnamese authorities that we think everybody in their country is a potential refugee and being persecuted. That is not the case. They are really making a lot of progress.

But we need some help with you in crafting a P–1 category. Before it is promulgated, we will seek the guidance of this Committee.

Mr. SMITH. I keep stressing "generous" because we all know that ascertaining whether or not there are repercussions to those who have gone back, remains a very difficult issue. I mean we were told when we were fighting against premature closure of the CPA that there were these "repatriation monitors," only to discover there were a little over half a dozen of such people, probably well meaning, but always with somebody from the government, a secret policeman, if you will, in tow, hearing everything that a person might be divulging to the repatriation monitor. I mean we actually even had one of those people testify. They came supposedly to respond to "my concerns," and that person actually became my witness in terms of what was revealed.

Ms. TAFT. Sir, you may not have heard this yet, but you are going to probably hear about it. There has been another flap about whether or not we should go and try to find people who are no-shows. There are about 140 candidates for interviews who haven't shown up. We have sent them three letters. We have tried to find out where they are. We need to know they are not interested, since they have been approved for interview. The refugee coordinator—or not the coordinator, the person who does this for us in Bangkok, went to Ho Chi Minh City and went out to try to find these people. I hope that is the right thing to do. One wants to make sure that we are not putting people in jeopardy by going house to house to try to find them. At some point though, we have got to find out why people have not availed themselves to the program. That is something that we are seeing now, more no-shows. If you have got some ideas about the best way to proceed with those, we would appreciate some guidance.

Mr. SMITH. I look forward to our dialog. Let me ask two final questions. One with regard to Chinese refugees. As you know, after the repatriation to China of the passengers of the *M/V Eastwood* in 1993, about 100 people were imprisoned, despite promises from the Chinese Government that no retribution will be taken against returnees. What steps do we take to ascertain whether or not people, once we send them back, are not thrown into prison, fined, detained, made persona non grata, or some other bad fate? Do we have somebody in our embassy in Beijing, for example, or in other countries, such as Cuba, to make sure that returnees are not retaliated against?

Ms. TAFT. We generally rely on the UNHCR in terms of the normal repatriation. Of course we don't endorse forcible repatriation. I will have to get back to you on the specifics on the China example. I don't know that. For instance, in Vietnam, for the people who have gone back, UNHCR had monitors on the ground. We are working in a very good way to track and make sure they didn't have any particular difficulties. Then of course we had quick-impact programs and micro-credit programs for a lot of the vulnerable refugees. So there is a monitoring system that goes on there. But on the China example, I will have to submit.

Mr. SMITH. If you could, and if you could also note whether any of those 100 or so people are still in prison as a result of that return.

Ms. TAFT. OK.

Mr. SMITH. Last month, the Thai Government pushed back several thousand refugees into Burma, as you know. The United States and the UNHCR immediately protested and the Thai Government relented, and made an announcement to the effect that its policy was still to provide refuge for people fleeing. Do we know what happened to those people who were returned to Burma?

Ms. TAFT. No. But I would like to say that UNHCR is not operating on the Burma side, but they are on the Thai side. In addition to that, we have a number of NGO's that are working on the assistance side in Thailand.

Thailand has had refugee problems for decades. They have done a really credible job on the Burmese issue on the border. There have been some difficulties. Our indication is now that they have officially asked UNHCR to be present, and they are present, that things are much better.

Mr. SMITH. Last question, and I may submit a number for the record, if I could.

Ms. TAFT. Why am I not surprised?

[Laughter.]

Mr. SMITH. The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as you know, requires that all State Department and INS officials who adjudicate overseas refugee cases be given training in refugee law, interview techniques, and related subjects, equivalent to that which is now given to INS asylum officers. Has this requirement been implemented?

Ms. TAFT. It is my understanding it has been. At the National Foreign Service Training Institute, there are courses for consular officials and others on this. INS is doing the training for the asylum officers. We have found that the involvement of staff here and the NGO's has been really excellent, to make sure that the very special character of refugee requirements and concerns are met by all the people who are involved in the adjudication and screening process.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. McKinney.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, Madam Secretary, I would just like to congratulate you on your demeanor and your forthcomingness, and your straightforwardness. It is so wonderful to see a real person sitting down there as opposed to the talking heads that just drone on who are mostly males and who are boring.

[Laughter.]

I thought I was done with you, except that——

[Laughter.]

Ms. TAFT. Why don't you leave it at a high point?

[Laughter.]

Ms. MCKINNEY. You mentioned the number of 12,000 you were going to explain. So with that, and then I will be finished, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. TAFT. You want me to explain what?

Ms. MCKINNEY. Yes. The 12,000, the number of admissions of only 12,000.

Ms. TAFT. Oh, well the 12,000 is because we are trying to find people who are in special situations where they can not return home, and they can not stay in first asylum. We have done this with P–2 categories. We have done this by UNHCR independent referrals for 19 different nationalities. I think we have now three—well actually, I have got a really good chart somewhere. I won't be able to find it now.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Not a chart.

Ms. TAFT. Not a chart. Well, I won't be a talking head with a chart, but I will submit it to you because what you will see is the variety. We have 19 different groups, and some we take family members. Most of them we take family members as Priority–3. We take rescue referrals from ambassadors and the UNHCR for 1s. Then we have many categories of Priority–2.

[The fact sheet and chart submitted by Ms. Taft appear in the appendix.]

The problems that we have got right now in this program are not just meeting 12,000. But we have to get INS officers and doctors to do the proper screening for these people all over the continent. For instance, we get these backlogs. Right now we have got about 22 people in Kinshasa that are ready for their medicals, but you know, Kinshasa is not a great place to find a doctor who is going to give a medical screening and to get the INS to do the final screening.

Everyone of these places where we find the refugees, there often is a civil strife problem, and INS has certain standards about security. We do too. We have had a hard time trying to find the right kind of medical screening, because it is very important that that be done right.

As part of this meeting I was telling you all about what went on last week. The Centers for Disease Control were out there with us to try to figure out how we involve them more so that the screening can be done in a more efficient way. The last thing we need are people thinking that refugees are bringing exotic diseases. I think our medical screening is excellent. The problem is we don't have it as universally in coverage quickly enough in Africa. But we are working on these problems.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Delahunt.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I didn't have a question, but now I do.

[Laughter.]

As I indicated to you, I am an adoptive parent, thanks to you, Secretary Taft. Do international adoption agencies have access to

these camps, these refugees in terms of children that are parentless? Is this an avenue that we should be exploring?

Ms. TAFT. First of all, they don't have access. That is by design. There are agreements with the UNHCR and UNICEF about the treatment of unaccompanied children and orphans in a crisis situation. One of the worst things that could be done is to take these children away from their fostering parents or their environment, particularly in a crisis. So there are very specific guidelines which we comply with because they are the right ones for the child.

Now in terms of the camp situations, we are receptive and we have told the voluntary agencies and UNHCR that we want to take unaccompanied children. We have a really excellent foster care placement network in the United States. We can use them. One of the problems we have is finding unaccompanied minors, particularly in the African context, because it is so natural in African communities to do the fostering. So what do you want to do, you bring this child who had a foster mother, and then you separate them when they come to the United States? I mean it is very, very difficult.

But we do not encourage the adoptions directly from refugee camps. If you get questions about it, please let us know. We have got some guidance to send out. But it really doesn't help the children.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I want to thank you and my colleagues for today's tutorial. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Delahunt.

Secretary Taft, thank you very much for your testimony. The Subcommittee, we look forward to working with you in the coming weeks and months. We will have an in-country processing hearing in the not-too-distant future. We hope you will be available for that. Hopefully some of these questions we will have answers for before then.

I look forward to working with you.

Ms. TAFT. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

I would like to invite our second panel to the witness table. Beginning with Karen AbuZayd, who is the head of the regional office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees for the United States and the Caribbean. Karen has worked with UNHCR for 17 years in various capacities, devoting much of her career to African refugee issues. She previously served as head of the Kenya and Somalia desk, and head of the South African repatriation unit in Geneva.

Reynold Levy is the president of the International Rescue Committee. Before coming to the IRC in 1997, Dr. Levy authored two books on philanthropy and corporate social responsibility, one of which will soon be published by the Harvard Business Press. Previously a senior officer with AT&T, he has taught law, political science, and management of non-profit institutions at Columbia and New York University. A graduate of Hobart College, the University of Virginia, and Columbia University, Dr. Levy has served on the boards of over two dozen non-profit organizations.

Donald Hammond is the senior vice president for World Relief Corporation, and chair of the InterAction Committee for Migration

and Refugee Affairs. Mr. Hammond served overseas with World Relief in the early 1980's, and was the project director of the Philippine Refugee Processing Center from 1986 to 1988. In addition to being past board member of the National Immigration Forum, Mr. Hammond is currently a member of the Nyack, New York school board.

Lionel Rosenblatt is president of Refugees International. He is an internationally known and respected advocate on refugee and humanitarian issues. Since 1990, Mr. Rosenblatt has taken Refugees International from its roots in Indochinese refugee problems to life-threatening refugee and humanitarian crises around the world. Mr. Rosenblatt, a former Foreign Service Officer, served in Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, and Canada. Mr. Rosenblatt has received a number of State Department honors, and holds a Royal Declaration from the Government of Thailand. Mr. Rosenblatt is a graduate of Harvard College.

Diana Aviv has been the director of the Washington Office for the Council of Jewish Federations since January 1994. Previously, she served as associate executive vice chair at the Jewish Council of Public Affairs, and the director of programs for the National Council on Jewish Women. A native of South Africa, Ms. Aviv earned her master's degree at Columbia University and studied at Haifa University School of Social Work.

Ms. AbuZayd, if you could begin. All of your statements will be made a part of the record, but please proceed as you feel comfortable.

STATEMENT OF KAREN ABUZAYD, REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE, U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Ms. ABUZAYD. Thank you. My longer statement I hope will be part of the record.

I would like to thank the Subcommittee for inviting UNHCR to testify today, since it gives me the opportunity to thank the U.S. Government for the excellent support it provides to refugees and to UNHCR. The occasion also allows me to pay special tribute to this Subcommittee for its successes in passing the implementing legislation for the Convention Against Torture and in passing the International Religious Freedom Act, both of which give additional protection to asylum seekers and refugees.

Today UNHCR has 290 offices in 124 countries, and is responsible for protecting, assisting, and finding solutions for some 22.4 million persons: 12 million of whom are refugees, that is, people who have crossed borders to escape persecution or conflict; 1 million asylum seekers; 3.5 million returnees, that is, those who have repatriated to their home countries; and 6 million internally displaced persons or war-affected, those who have been displaced by conflict within their own countries.

UNHCR works only in those countries where the government has invited its intervention to assist in meeting their legal and material obligations toward a refugee, returnee, or IDP population. Our budget for 1999 of $914 million, around one-third of which is channeled through over 400 NGO implementing partners, covers very basic protection and assistance needs. It is raised through voluntary contributions from governments, some of whom are becom-

ing increasingly reluctant to continue supporting what they see as intractable, recurring, or long-standing displacement problems, that mindset of change that you spoke of earlier.

For this reason, we are particularly grateful for both the political and the financial backing we get from the United States, which consistently assures us of around one-quarter of our annual costs, and on most issues, except that of keeping asylum seekers in detention, acts as a model and a leader for the rest of the world in helping to support what we call the three durable solutions for refugees.

Of these, the solution most preferred by refugees is that of voluntary repatriation, and perhaps we should keep this in mind when we think of resettlement. Refugees really do want to go home if at all possible. They often choose this option, even if UNHCR is hesitant about the conditions to which they intend to return. These are the operations which are often difficult to fund as well, because donors have no confidence in the sustainability of the return or in the political and economic stability of the country of origin. Still, once home, assistance is essential to prevent re-displacement, and usually returnees feel they are better off than had they remained dependent on assistance in a foreign land.

The second durable solution is local settlement, one which is poorly implemented nowadays, given either the large size of a refugee influx, or the poor economic conditions of the country of asylum. Since there is little chance for integration or even perhaps of moving away from a border, refugees often languish in camps under care and maintenance programs which guarantee them only a minimum amount of food and water, and meet only very basic shelter, health, sanitation, and if they are lucky, some education needs. In the health sector alone, much more needs to be done to reduce infant mortality, the incidents of respiratory, diarrhea, and infectious diseases, just one example.

The third solution is resettlement, where the United States takes the lead, despite all of the things you have been saying, accepting as many persons as all other countries combined, and using political, protection and family reunification criteria rather than like many countries, insisting on selecting people with skills or other quick integration attributes. The U.S. program I really find quite extraordinary because of the exemplary manner in which a whole variety of government departments, NGO's, and U.N. agencies cooperate to the advantage of refugees who require a new start in a third country.

UNHCR attempts to coordinate these programs, working with among others, donor and host governments, NGO's, and other U.N. and international financial institutions. WFP, for example, provides all the food for refugees; UNICEF, the vaccinations; UNDP and the World Bank take care of development planning. The NGO's work in their respective sectors, including advocacy, an activity we particular value in donor countries to raise awareness and in host countries where there are protection problems.

It may be of interest to give some indication of where we carry out our activities. The largest refugee group today is still the 2.6 million Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, where by now very small sums are expended by UNHCR, the host countries bearing most of

the costs. Although there was bad news in the paper this morning where the Pakistanis have announced they are going to keep the Afghans in camps. This is very bad news.

The next largest groups of refugees are the Iraqis, Bosnians, Somalis, the Burundi, Liberians, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, and Vietnamese, mostly in neighboring countries. The largest returnee populations, and this shows the good news of our work, where people have actually gone home, are Rwandans, Bosnians, Burundi, Afghans, Angolans, Somalis, and Congolese. You begin to see the overlap.

The IDPs with whom we work are the Bosnians, Sierra Leoneans, Burundi, Azeris, Russians, Afghans, Georgians, Somalis, and Sri Lankans. This list illustrates the breadth and complexity of our work, showing the vast geographical spread, and indicating how some of the same populations fall into all three categories.

What particularly concern us is that although we so very strictly assess the needs of these groups, no longer engaging in tertiary education or adult literacy programs, keeping income-generating and environmental programs to a bare minimum, barely attending to the special needs of groups such as unaccompanied minors and female-headed households and cutting back severely on our monitoring and protection tasks in 1998, out of a $995.6 million budget, we raised only $774 million in new money, and had to cut back severely on our sparse operations. Of this, the United States contributed $214.3 million in MRA, and $34.5 million in ERMA funds.

The two programs which demand most of our human and material resources at this time are Kosovo and West Africa, that is, Sierra Leoneans in Liberia, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire, and Liberians in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. A look at the similarities and differences of these two operations demonstrates some of the major issues facing UNHCR and the humanitarian community. Kosovo has captured the world's attention, thanks to its location and geopolitical importance, and therefore receives the money and the human power it needs, at least for humanitarian and monitoring activities.

Sierra Leone, like Liberia before it, despite the dreadful atrocities and huge and repeated displacement, is rarely on the world screen and the resources are not available to respond, even to the hundreds of horribly mutilated amputated victims of the conflict. In both places, however, humanitarian action is being used as a substitute for political and military action, and the conflicts are likely to linger with increasingly dire consequences until some serious political and military decisions are taken. Both regions are also dangerous, for both the local populations and for humanitarian workers, and stringent budgets mean the personnel and equipment which might afford better security are lacking. And in both, although much more in Sierra Leone, there is a question of whether the agencies are able, and the donors willing, to invest in rebuilding infrastructure and to engage in the long-term reconciliation measures necessary to end and prevent recurrence of conflict and repeat population displacements.

I paint a pessimistic picture of a changing humanitarian environment, where the nature of war, now internal with civilians as targets, and the nature of peace, now fragile and uncertain, means

that we can not be sure that the solutions we promote are durable. We must recognize that solutions must be political, economic, social, and humanitarian at the same time, and that we have to rely on a partnership between local and international actors, including the refugees or the IDPs themselves.

Addressing today's displacement problems comprehensively is not an easy or quick undertaking. It requires serious and long-term commitment. We believe we can count on such commitment from our interlocutors in PRM and among the NGO's, and, we hope, the Congress and other elected officials. Already, we have been led by them down new and creative paths from innovative projects, to broad institutional reform. For this partnership, both UNHCR and the refugees are grateful. We must not let the displaced, wherever they are, down, this year or in the year 2000. Let the United States continue to set the standard in providing a dignified environment for those who deserve a chance to rebuild their lives.

[The prepared statement of Ms. AbuZayd appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Ms. AbuZayd, thank you very much for that excellent testimony, and while it might lead to pessimism, at least you painted a picture that we have to react to. So I do thank you for that. I know we will have some questions, but I thought we would go through everyone, and then ask each individual some questions.

Dr. Levy.

STATEMENT OF REYNOLD LEVY, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Mr. LEVY. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I am honored to be with you. I would like to associate myself with the thrust of the exchanges between the Committee Members and the Secretary.

I would like to spend just a very brief period of time exploring several common myths about refugee protection and admissions. I do so from the perspective of the president of an organization that has been serving refugees for 65 years, and that has the privilege of both providing relief assistance in 25 countries around the world, and resettling refugees in 20 cities around the country, including in States like New York, New Jersey, Georgia, Massachusetts, and California.

The first myth is that the United States admits virtually all those refugees who require resettlement in our country. The Administration has proposed a Fiscal Year 2000 ceiling of 80,000 refugee admissions, 5,000 more than 1999. That is commendable, but as has been pointed out, it is still 40 percent less than the number admitted in 1993, and well below the levels in the 1970's and 1980's, which consistently exceeded 100,000. In our judgment, these levels are not justified by the absence of eligible candidates. To the contrary, refugee numbers are now on the rise, and those subject to persecution, if they return home, are rising as well.

Among others, the world's refugees include: Burmese languishing in camps along the Thai border, Afghan women taking refuge inside Pakistan, Iraqi opponents of Saddam Hussein scattered throughout the Middle East, Somali Bantus confined for years in camps in Kenya, Sierra Leoneans in Guinea, and still today Viet-

namese who worked with the American Government during the war.

Refugees who need resettlement in the United States and meet our qualifications number in the hundreds of thousands. What is at issue is not the need, what is at issue is not whether they exist, what is at issue is whether we have the will, the resources, and the mechanisms to identify these populations who meet the eligibility criteria of the U.S. refugee resettlement program. The current identification techniques and staffing are inadequate. They are slow. They are relatively inflexible. It would be not difficult, in our judgment, to significantly improve our current system if we all together as partners would make it a priority to do so.

The second myth, in our view, is that the United States can not afford to spend any more money on refugees in resettlement. It costs approximately $1,400 to process and resettle a refugee. So to increase our ceiling by 20,000 and return it to historic levels, would cost approximately $28 million more than the $122 million currently allocated. This additional amount would bring the State Department's Migration and Refugee Account appropriation to $688 million, still well below the $704.5 million authorization.

The third myth is that local communities and the voluntary sector would have a hard time absorbing more refugees. That we are at some kind of saturation point. In our view, private voluntary organizations, church groups, and community resources have built an extensive network in our country that has significant support in the private sector, and significant support in communities all across the country. We believe that we can absorb and integrate significantly more refugees than we are currently doing. Our employment data demonstrate the capacity and resilience of refugees to quickly become self-supporting. We believe the record warrants additional numbers.

The fourth myth is that if the United States agrees to take more refugees from one region, it must then reduce the number taken from other regions; that more Africans necessarily means fewer Eastern Europeans, and vice versa. Such statements, pitting one deserving group against another are the consequence of a lowered ceiling, not its cause. We believe there need not be a zero-sum game if admissions numbers reached higher levels and were more adequate.

The fifth myth is that there is limited congressional or public support for the refugee program. Polling by the National Immigration Forum reveals that when the public understands the facts and the underlying elements of refugee persecution and suffering, they support resettlement to the United States by a nearly three-to-one margin. As for Congress, key Members, including key Members of this Committee, wrote to the President requesting an increase in the current ceiling for Fiscal Year 2000 to be within their historic range of 100,000.

So the need is there. The United States can afford to do more. The local NGO's and communities would welcome more. And this Committee and the Congress is prepared to assist with more. Refugee resettlement and assistance are matters of life and death, health and illness, families reunited or ruptured by separation. The fate of tens of thousands of refugees languishing in third countries,

who can not go home again, is determined each year by whether we use an infinitesimal portion of taxpayer support to open the American door slightly wider to the oppressed and to the persecuted. They are resourceful, freedom-loving, resilient people, who in return for refuge, can make a great contribution to our Nation in the tradition of refugees, like our Secretary of State, Congressman Tom Lantos, and Intel founder and chairman, Andrew Grove.

I want to associate the International Rescue Committee with many of the remarks of Committee Members in their praise for the leadership of the bureau, and for the direction of the agency. We think we can do more. We think we can do better.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Levy appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Dr. Levy, for your excellent testimony.

Mr. Hammond.

STATEMENT OF DONALD HAMMOND, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, WORLD RELIEF

Mr. HAMMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. I will be summarizing my prepared statement, so I would ask that my prepared statement be included in the hearing record.

I am representing the Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs of InterAction, and also World Relief, which is the humanitarian assistance arm of the National Association of Evangelicals. I will try not to be a talking head. I know at 12:30 it gets tough, stomachs are starting to growl, but maybe that can remind us a little bit of some of the situations that those we are here to talk about deal with every day.

Before I begin, I would like to pay tribute to Assistant Secretary Taft. She brings a high level of expertise and a great energy and passion to her position. You saw that today. She does it wherever I see her. In Fiscal Year 1998, we surpassed the budgeted ceiling under her leadership. We increased arrivals and the ceiling for African refugees. We helped focus UNHCR on accepting their role of providing protection to refugees through resettlement, and revitalized an interest in the resettlement of unaccompanied minors from Africa. Her personal interest on behalf of Burmese refugees resulted in 700 additional people being moved into safe areas and being eligible for resettlement.

While she has helped the U.S. refugee program achieve these results, the bureaucracy continues to create barriers to resettlement. In reference to the memo, I am deeply concerned, but very proud to be one of those people that is called a true believer and advocate for refugees. But I am concerned that the memo doesn't only speak from one person's point of view, but also raises the concern for me that this may be a view that is in the rest of PRM. That is very distressing to me as an advocate and someone very concerned for refugees.

Many times in our deliberations on refugee admissions, we focus on budget issues, capacity issues, and areas that are somewhat bureaucratic in nature. Sometimes we forget about the people that our decisions affect. When pointing out the policy and budget issues, it is important for us to consider the people who suffer and languish in the refugee camps. With that in mind, I would like to

tell you some stories about some of those people that are being kept from entering the United States through our resettlement program.

The CMRA submits a recommendation for admissions to the Administration every year. This year, for Fiscal Year 2000, we have recommended a number of 119,000. It seems there is a lack of will and leadership that keeps us from increasing our numbers and increasing our capacity on the international side to resettle this number. As Reynold has said, it is not an issue that there are no more refugees. It is not an issue of domestic capacity. It is not an issue of UNHCR not finding and identifying cases. Sir, the numbers are there. The capacity is there. We must show that the United States continues to be committed to being that leader, to caring for vulnerable people who have no other chance for hope. This 40 percent cut is distressing to us. We must do better.

In 5 minutes, I cannot possibly go through and tell you the story of every refugee and every refugee group that this 80,000 number is keeping from entering the United States, but let me give you four categories, and then tell some stories. The first category is that of needing to build our international capacity to identify and process refugees. The second is the restrictive change in our family definition that INS has made. The third is the need for more numbers. The fourth is the denial of cases, which are similar to cases that were previously approved.

I must at this point pause to address the remarks that were made by Secretary Taft about situations particularly in the former Soviet Union, and those of evangelicals that have been denied. I will tell you some stories about those people that will counter some of those statements, and would be happy to give you more stories if necessary.

Let me start in Sierra Leone with Mrs. K, a widow with two young children. In the immediate aftermath of the May 25 military coup, soldiers looted and vandalized her home. She was brutally raped. Her husband was killed in front of her as he tried to protect his family. She fled to Guinea, was harassed by Guinean security personnel, and eventually made her way to Ghana, where she and her children were granted temporary refugee status, but given no financial support. In order for Mrs. K and her children to access the U.S. resettlement program, she must get a Priority–1 referral from the UNHCR. UNHCR is currently overwhelmed by meeting the assistance needs of refugees in these camp populations, and is not able to do that, as we understand.

A family of Eritrean background has been expelled from Addis, but could not return to Eritrea. Their documents were taken from them and destroyed, and they were told to leave the country. They traveled to Moyale in Kenya on the Ethiopian border. They have no documents to prove who they are. They have been expelled from Ethiopia and Eritrea won't accept them. Currently there is no policy by UNHCR or the United States for recognizing their refugee status. They do their best to avoid government officials and exist on help from friends. UNHCR estimates that there are about 30,000 people that are in this category.

From Azerbaijan, a mixed Azerbaijani-Azeri family resides in Azerbaijan and lost their homes and were forced to flee into the mountains. As Christian Armenians, they are a minority popu-

lation that have been historically persecuted. This family has been denied employment, and their children have been beaten. They live in constant fear of violence as mixed families are targets of rape, torture, and murder. They currently don't have access to our program.

Bosnians in Germany. You heard that the UNHCR asked for 5,000 admissions for Bosnians out of Germany. UNHCR estimates that in the absence of new resettlement places in the U.S. program, German authorities will likely refuse to delay deportations for these applicants. The UNHCR estimates that the impact of these voluntary returns from Germany would have a severe impact on some parts of Bosnia in which, and I quote from a letter they sent to our bureau, "Such returns are not occurring in safety or dignity and often are not sustainable." In spite of this compelling plea from the UNHCR, the State Department rejected the request from UNHCR.

Ms. McKinney, you referred to my testimony and parts of it on the Bantu refugees. That is again a request from UNHCR for those 10,000 people to be considered a P–2 category. We wait for the State Department to make a determination on that, and hope it will be positive. We have worked very hard with the UNHCR. UNHCR has made great steps in helping to identify refugees. We can't, as they are coming and identifying them, now say we will not respond to those that you have identified. That is the wrong message to send. We hope we can get a positive response.

Let me quickly talk about just some religious minorities from the former Soviet Union. Mr. Chairman, you know and heard testimony on human rights in Russia on January 11. I won't repeat some of those things that were stated to you. You have raised the issue of the increase in the denial rates, which are very confusing to us as we see some of the things that are happening.

Let me tell you some stories about those refugees that are being denied refugee status. Oksana is a Ukrainian Evangelical Christian who grew up in a Christian home, she is not a recent convert. Her family was exiled to Siberia in 1940. Her parents and older brother were jailed for their religious beliefs in 1945. While still a teenager, she worked to support her five younger brothers and sisters. In exile, she continued to attend church services. As an adult, she was persecuted for her beliefs and for taking her children to church. She was given the worst and hardest jobs and her wages were infringed on, her children abused in school and given undeservedly low marks. This family was denied refugee status because she failed to make a strong case of their many years of persecution. She is 75 years old and illiterate. She and her husband can not come to the United States to join their children, who were accepted before with the same case.

Jewish families are suffering the same thing, the same problems, and the same litany of persecution in their past. They are having to make choices of coming to the United States without their family members because of this change in family composition. The bureaucracy continues to create problems for people coming in.

I have more stories of Christians here, sir, who have been kept out, and of Jewish families who are being separated by these changes. From Vietnam, the Vietnamese employees, those that

have been persecuted for their association in the United States have been talked about. I know that Lionel will speak about them again.

These examples are the people for whom we must raise the numbers. We must raise them. We must come to the aid of these refugees who have no other choice. It is our responsibility as the greatest country on earth, we are called to answer the cry of the persecuted and the suffering people in our world. We can do it. We have the capacity. It just takes someone to make the decisions, make those tough decisions, those tough choices to raise budgets, to develop international capacity. I am convinced that we can do it, that the State Department, the immigration services, the NGO's, UNHCR, we are committed to saving refugee lives and we are committed to this program. We have the ability to bring in more refugees and to save more lives.

Thank you for listening and for your attention. We at the Committee, the CMRA, stand ready to serve you and the Administration. But most importantly, we stand ready to serve the refugees around the world as we seek to find them new homes, to protect them and to show the world that the United States is committed to making a difference.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hammond appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Hammond, for your excellent testimony as well. I think as Dr. Levy had mentioned, the myths that are propounded with regard to these issues, the perceived lack of support on Capitol Hill and things of that kind, are all bogus. Every one of them is a myth. I think if we could just get some leadership from the White House and from the State Department and from PRM in terms of upping these numbers, we would do everything we can. But what we will run into, in all candor, is the appropriators, who will say it wasn't requested, even if we authorize the amount like we did last year. We went at the lower number only because the appropriators were very heavily influenced by the State Department.

So we will continue to fight, but your testimony adds to that effort mightily.

Diana Aviv.

STATEMENT OF DIANA AVIV, SENIOR ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, COUNCIL OF JEWISH FEDERATIONS

Ms. AVIV. Thank you, Mr Chairman, and Ms. McKinney. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss issues related to the U.S. refugee program in the former Soviet Union. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you in particular for your steadfast leadership on issues related to protection and resettlement of persecuted and endangered populations around the world. The rescue and resettlement of Jewish refugees has been and continues to be one of the basic missions of the Jewish Federation system. Working in partnership with the Jewish community's migration agency, HIAS, we have resettled more than 250,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union since 1988, in addition to Iranians, Eastern Europeans, Bosnians, and others.

Mr. Chairman, we believe it is important to constantly renew and demonstrate our commitment by maintaining a generous admissions policy. My colleagues have talked about the numbers as well, but we believe that it is very distressing that the numbers have gone down so dramatically. The Administration's proposal for 80,000 admissions for Fiscal Year 2000 is a very small step in the right direction, but in our view is much too low, especially given the catastrophic events that have resulted in the persecution of so many people in Africa and Kosovo.

CJF believes that admitting at least 100,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2000 is both necessary and manageable. The need is there. The commitment on the part of the Congress is there. The modest increase in cost would surely not deplete the resources of our Federal Treasury. We urge Congress to press for higher admissions numbers and adequate appropriations for Fiscal Year 2000 and beyond, as you have also commented, Mr. Chairman, as well.

Now to the former Soviet Union. Last year, we testified that there were some positive signs for Jewish communities in the FSU. The return of some confiscated synagogues, the ability to worship and to study Hebrew openly, the building of schools, community centers and synagogues, and the willingness of leaders in some countries to condemn acts and expressions of anti-Semitism. Some of that continues to be true today.

We said that we were cautiously optimistic a year ago, but were withholding our judgment because compared with centuries of oppression and anti-Semitism, a few years is too short a time against which to measure the success of the fledgling democracies of the FSU. Regrettably, I must tell you that our caution was justified. In March 1999, anti-Semitism in the FSU is virulent, pervasive, and increasingly violent. How serendipitous is it that today, of all days, *The New York Times* should write about these very issues in today's newspaper. The election to leadership positions of extremists, nationalists, fascists, Islamic fundamentalists and Communists has resulted in a resurgence of deeply ingrained anti-Semitism, and scapegoating of Jews, as well as the persecution of other religious minorities. Nationalistic and fascistic rhetoric is spewed with frightening openness and impunity.

The biggest disappointment is in Russia, where President Yeltsin initially gave the Jewish community hope for its future by strongly denouncing anti-Semitism, meeting with the Jewish community, and supporting legislation to combat hate crime. But today, fear has replaced optimism, fueled by a weakened Yeltsin, and horrifying acts of violence and terror such as the following:

The bombing of the Marina Roscha synagogue for the second time in 2 years and physical assaults against two rabbis; the assassination of Duma member Galina Starovoitova, an outspoken opponent of anti-Semitism and other human rights violations; a public hate campaign waged by General Albert Makashov, the Communist party official and Duma member who openly courts political support using slogans such as "Death to the Yids" and statements such as, "I will round up all the Jews and send them to the next world."; the resurgence of the Cossack movement. A recent *News Day* article states, "Once the most trusted military force of the Czar, the Cossacks now want to regain their standing as a privileged elite

and see their virulent hatred of Jews as their route back to glory." The list goes on and on.

Other countries of the FSU are as bad or worse than Russia where anti-Semitism is concerned. As you know, in my full statement there are many additional examples.

Mr. Chairman, I am not an alarmist. I am not here to tell you that things are as bad as they have ever been, and that Jews are currently being rounded up and murdered in the streets by government-sanctioned anti-Semites. Rather, I am here to sound a warning bell that many of the components for exactly such a scenario are in place. They need only to be connected and detonated by the right demagogue and set of circumstances.

I disagree with the Secretary's comments with regards to how things are in the former Soviet Union, because what counts here are not the counts or the Duma or other governments. What matters much more are the local authorities and the degree to which they implement the laws and the degree to which they protect people from local citizens who have hate campaigns going on all the time. All of this and more leads CJF to conclude that the Lautenberg amendment should be extended beyond September 30, 1999. This law provides an effective means factoring in the historic persecution of certain groups when determining their refugee status. A context important to understanding the fears of the Jewish community and other groups, and essentially engaging the receptivity of the population at large to anti-Semitic rabble-rousing and calls to violence. Because the analysts tell us that the situation will get worse, CJF and our collegial agencies believe that it would be prudent to enact a 2-year reenactment of the law. We hope we can count on your support in this regard.

In regard to the comments by Secretary Taft about the flow to Israel, we must disagree with her. Allo Levy, who is the Jewish Agency for Israel's representative in relation to the FSU in today's *New York Times* mentions that immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union is 20,000 already as of this date, compared with 15,000 for all of last year. So I don't think that we are talking about the numbers going down. Indeed, in my personal conversations with them, they have indicated the numbers are going up and it is directly related to conditions on the ground in the FSU.

We also hope that you will play a role in monitoring the implementation of the Lautenberg amendment. For reasons that the INS or the State Department can not adequately explain, the denial rate for Lautenberg category applicants has risen dramatically from a range of 3 to 6 percent in 1990 through 1996, to 11 percent in 1997, 30 percent in 1998, and incredibly 50 percent currently. This is unconscionable, given the rapidly deteriorating environment for Jews and Christian minorities. Those who appeal this denial generally must wait more than a year for reconsideration.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that in light of the comments made this morning during earlier testimony, that the culture of denial is not limited to one person in one place. It appears, in our view, that it is not limited to one country either, but that it is a much larger problem that we think finds its way all the way back to higher levels here in the United States in the State Department, and possibly the INS as well.

Mr. Chairman, CJF is committed to bringing to the United States all Jews with refugee status who are able to depart. HIAS is working with relatives in the United States and through the office in Moscow to provide assistance to those who can travel. The Assistant Secretary talked about no-shows for interviews and departures. We would argue that serious barriers do exist for many people wanting to depart. We have been working with the State Department and the INS for months, trying to ameliorate some of these problems. The State Department has agreed as a result of these discussions that additional travel loans should be provided through the IOM to assist refugee families who can not afford to travel from outlying areas to Moscow for their flights to the United States. We hoped that these improvements would be in place by now, but we are still awaiting their finalization.

Finally, it is important to understand that some of the barriers relate to the geography of the region. There are now 15 bureaucracies, 15 borders, transportation systems or lack thereof, and rules for leaving and entering each and every country. The cost of travel now is so high that families may have to spend a year's salary to get to Moscow for the interview, again, to depart for the United States, while travel arrangements for the disabled and elderly are frequently impossible.

These complicated inter-state negotiations and the consequential heavy financial burdens are the cause of the many delayed departures that you have heard about, much more so than any change of heart on the part of these with refugee status. We are quite concerned that these impediments are undermining the operation of the refugee program, and even further dismayed that the necessary adjustments to deal with these difficulties are not being made. Even though our direct discussions with the principle Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Alan Kreczko has been a good beginning, Mr. Chairman, these problems began long before he was there. We regret to say that unless things change, we believe that they will continue long after Secretary Taft and her top colleagues have left as well.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, we have grave concerns about the safety of Jews and other minorities in the former Soviet Union. We are not optimistic that the situation will improve in the next year or two. It is our hope that the U.S. Government will continue to show vigorously its displeasure with these developments through the enactment of an extension of the Lautenberg amendment, implementation of additional departure assistance, and normal diplomatic communications.

Again, I thank you for your support and the opportunity for us to present our view.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Aviv appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your excellent testimony.

I would like to ask our final panelist, Lionel Rosenblatt, if he could proceed.

STATEMENT OF LIONEL ROSENBLATT, PRESIDENT, REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

Mr. ROSENBLATT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to testify today. The best may not be last, but I will be the briefest

and get to the questioning. We very much appreciate the sustained interest of you, Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman McKinney, and the entire membership of the Committee, the staff. I think you are making a crucial difference on the crises that increasingly reflect the post-cold war situation around the world.

We specialize at Refugees International in spotlighting the most vulnerable and least known populations. I won't go through the list in my written testimony which is submitted for the record, but I want to focus on just a couple of countries. On Sierra Leone, I would urge, as Congresswoman McKinney has been doing, to continue to focus on the reasons why the refugee admission rate is so low. There certainly should be a way to prioritize those most urgently in need of resettlement without attracting the belief in every refugee's mind that she or he is going to the United States. That is part of the problem I gather, but I think we can make much more progress on this. I appreciate your continued focus on that.

Second, I think on the substantive side, we need to figure out how to reform and reinforce ECOMOG. ECOMOG, you know, is planning to leave within a matter of weeks. If that happens, we will be back to below square one. I think it is a very important challenge to figure out how to reinforce it, but also to reform it. A start has been made. I gather the two units that have been put in from Mali and from Ghana have received U.S. training. I don't have the details on that, but we have to do much more to make sure that ECOMOG becomes a responsible and effective instrument to avoid the continuing bloodshed.

On Congo, I will skip to that because I think there, there are some things that the United States could be doing to assert leadership. We for years, ever since I sat down with Boutros Boutros Ghali one-on-one in 1995, I said if you really want to solve this problem, Mr. Secretary General, you have to have somebody who represents you at probably the ex-Head of State level, somebody who can walk into meet Presidents and Heads of State in the region and donor countries and really resolve the rather intractable problems of Burundi, Rwanda, and Congo. His answer to me was rather astonishing. He said, "Well I do that. That is my job." I said, "No, sir. That can't be your job. You are watching the entire world. You need somebody who can do that for you." My model for such an individual is Sir Robert Jackson, who so well handled the Cambodian crisis in 1979. He had access to the President in Washington, to the leadership in Moscow. He was able to travel in the region. He was able to cut through the kinds of barriers that we seem not to be able to do today using the United Nations.

Similarly, I think the United States ought to be taking a much more activist role in pushing the United Nations to do this, and to reassure Rwanda and Uganda about their security needs, which are real. It should not be impossible to put together a zone of neutrality to the west of Rwanda and Uganda, inside Congo, and to patrol it with a force along the lines of the multi-national force that has so effectively brought peace to Sinai.

Seeds for Somalia, small items, $700,000 worth of seed. Everybody is pointing to everybody else and saying "It's not my mandate, it's not my job." One of you asked a question as to where the seed for Somalia is. We think that AID is finally on the right track, but

in virtually every emergency we track, you get to this point where everybody talks about the relief to development continuum. It doesn't exist. It is still a huge chasm. We had a conference in Washington that achieved nothing, in my view. But seeds are often the last thing to be thought of, and yet you need the most lead time for them, because they have got to be the right type of seeds, delivered at the right time, directly to farmers, distributed across a particular country. That is not being done in the case of Somalia. We hope you will focus on that.

I would like to finally just reserve a few minutes for both Sri Lanka, where the emergency is continuing a pace, and where there is only limited access for the outside agencies to displaced persons there. Again, the United States ought to be able to press along with other countries for much more access for aid agencies, NGO's, and the press.

The preoccupation that I have had over the last several weeks has been with a very vulnerable group of returnees in Cambodia. Recently about 2,000 Montagnards were returned to the Mondulkiri area of eastern Cambodia. This is one of the most primitive, isolated areas in Southeast Asia, the habitat of the last remaining tiger and elephant, and a few people. These Montagnards have been on the run for the last 25 years, many of them still fighting on at the encouragement of the last U.S. officials in Vietnam, who said "Keep going. We'll support you." Of course that was not an official decision, and the mind was later changed. But these people never knew it, and fought on. They have probably suffered losses in the nature of 60 to 70 percent. The remnants fled to a UNHCR refugee camp not too long ago. They were returned to eastern Cambodia when I was there a few weeks ago. They each received 40 to 50 days of rice each, a few household items, a sickle/knife, ostensibly for household use and farming. Though as one Montagnard said, it would be hard to use the knife to cut a piece of meat, if they ever see any meat again. There is an ax with some nails, and with this, the returnees are told to build their homes. This is a woefully inadequate package from the UNHCR, and needs to be beefed up.

The World Food Program, to its credit, has actually finally figured out that these refugees will need a year's supply of rice until the next harvest. They are putting that into place. But we are going back to Mondulkiri to ensure that there is a warehouse and distribution established in the next few weeks before the rainy season makes the roads impassible.

One despairs that the international community, donors, and U.N. agencies are going to be able to resolve the relief to development problems when they can't even really do an effective job on this small group. In my view, accountability is one of the key conditions that this Committee needs to insist on in the way we do business in the emergency relief business. Nobody is in charge of this group. So UNHCR and WFP, and the Red Cross, are each able to sit around and say "That's beyond my mandate." That has got to stop.

This leads me finally into the way in which the remaining Vietnamese and Montagnard applicants under ODP are being treated. We have heard a lot about that. Let me just say a couple of things. First of all, Julia Taft is an old and admired friend and colleague.

We go back 24 years to the origins of this program. If it weren't for Julia Taft, there would be no Indochinese refugee program. We wouldn't be around here today talking about how to help the remaining Indochinese refugees. We never would have made the transition from evacuation to refugees, which she made. That was a very courageous decision.

Even Julia Taft has not been able to reverse the entrenched mentality within her bureau. She did say that this guy out there in Bangkok who specializes in the kind of cynical e-mails and messages we have heard, doesn't work for her. I would like you to find out who he does work for. He does, we know, take his guidance, his encouragement, his direction from the resettlement office in the Bureau of Refugees that Ms. Taft heads. That has got to be changed, and that has got to be changed quickly. Every day that goes by, this team in Washington that directs this guy out in Bangkok turns down more eligible refugees. That has got to be changed. As we said earlier, this means that there ought to be a JVA.

When we at Refugees International urged the continuation of the JVA model which has served us so well over the last 20 or so years, we have no vested interest in that. We accept no government money. We don't do JVA. That's not our thing. JVA gives you the transparency, the cross-check, the flexibility, and the ability to respond to refugees as people rather than as applicants, which is unfortunately the way the mentality develops in any government service toward applicants in a resettlement type program. So I urge you to stay with the JVA model. I urge you to get at the bottom of the kind of unacceptable mentality that is pervading the resettlement section of the bureau. There are many fine people in the bureau, but the resettlement section and their representative in Bangkok ought to move on to other assignments immediately. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rosenblatt appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Rosenblatt, I thank you for your fine testimony.

Let me begin. All four of our non-governmental organization witnesses have testified about this culture of denial or the sense of not having, as I think Dr. Levy put it, the will, resources, and mechanisms. They should be there, but they don't seem to be there, although there are staunch advocates on both sides of the aisle in Congress who would fight for that.

What do you think could be done to fix this? Mr. Rosenblatt, you talked about one particular individual. Ms. McKinney and I were just going over one of those e-mails, there were two of them. Frankly, if I or anybody else called somebody a "reptile" or made some other derogatory statement of that kind as the title "true believer," I think Mr. Hammond, you said you wear that with pride, as would I. A true believer in disenfranchised peoples is something that deserves praise, not ridicule.

What can be done now to get rid of this culture of denial? How do the rest of you feel about the sum of these statements coming out of Bangkok? As Mr. Rees points out very aptly, it obviously extends to people here in Washington as well.

Mr. ROSENBLATT. Can I just say one more word? I think that the messages do speak for themselves. You have them before you. I

think they are so outrageous, that I would encourage you to communicate directly with Mrs. Albright, the Secretary of State, herself an immigrant. I think if she knew this kind of thing were going on, she would help Julia Taft to clean house. I think Julia has been trying, but obviously she has not been successful. I think that Albright would go through the roof if she saw these kinds of messages coming from her people who are handling immigration and refugees, not just in Bangkok, but encouragement and the direction received from the resettlement office here in the PRM.

Mr. HAMMOND. As I stated, one of the most disheartening things to me is to see that that e-mail or memo refers to people here in Washington with whom we meet and advocate. If the attitude that is in that memo is also portrayed by them, and it is told go and check with them, it is very difficult for us to operate as advocates and to really be strong for what we believe in. It is very distressing to me to see that that is actually in writing and referred to that way.

Ms. AVIV. Mr. Chairman, I also think that the Committee as a whole in addition to you, under your leadership, should communicate this and make clear that you intend to monitor these kinds of situations so that it is not just the isolated event in Bangkok. One of the problems here is that here was an example that was very concrete and physical and you saw, so it was possible to see what needs to change. If there is pressure that is brought to bear by the Congress, I believe that that would help. Not just related to this hearing, but on a consistent basis over the next couple of months.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Levy.

Mr. LEVY. Mr. Chairman, in addition to whatever steps are taken with respect to this particular incident, I think we are talking about asking the Administration to raise its sights as we face a new millennium and a new century about this refugee program, where we have an extraordinary period of zooming economic affluence, we are talking not about deficits, but about the size of surpluses, not only at the Federal level, but at the State level. All the things that used to be said about the difficulty of absorbing refugees can no longer be said. It can no longer be said that the economy can't absorb them. It can no longer be said that there isn't a robust network that can help admit them. It can no longer be said that the country can ill-afford economically in terms of its budget to sustain them.

So I think we have taken a step in the right direction. It requires a lot of work as has been indicated throughout the testimony, to admit more refugees to this country, and to do so in accordance with our laws. I think it is important to note for the record that for the first time in some 15 years, an Assistant Secretary of State has led an effort to meet the refugee ceiling. We have fallen shy of the ceiling for almost every year for the last 15. It was Julia Taft's leadership that made it possible. Having demonstrated that the ceiling can in fact be met when there is will, I think if we set the appropriate goal, just as one does in business, the gap between what is necessary to accomplish that goal and where we are today will be met. I simply think we have been too timid and too shy about both the need and about what we can accomplish together.

Moreover, I think the mindset is a necessary but not sufficient condition. The motivations and adequacy of employees working in this area is a necessary but not sufficient condition to make a significant breakthrough. Sufficiency resides in goal setting, which can not happen at the level of the bureau where we are now discussing. It needs to happen elsewhere in the Administration.

Ms. ABUZAYD. I just, maybe a little more prosaically, would like to say I think one of the things we need to concentrate on, as Reyn mentioned earlier, is the mechanisms. I do believe the will and the resources are there.

I have just come back to the United States after 32 years abroad. I have been really excited by what I see as broad support for refugees all over the country. That is something we want to encourage. But I think all the seeds are there. I think if we want to talk about 100,000 persons in the year 2000, we need now to begin working on how we are going to do it. There is a procedure now, and I complimented that procedure and the cooperation among the agencies. But that is a procedure that takes a very long time. There are lots of obstacles within it.

Our Director of International Protection has been here this last week. We spent some time with INS yesterday talking about their inability, because of security regulations, to go to Lebanon to process 3,200 people who really need to get out of there, have been there for years. These sorts of things.

So that is where we need to go as partners. I think we all have to work together on this.

Mr. SMITH. I appreciate that.

Mr. Rosenblatt mentioned the JVA model for Vietnam. I wonder if, in addition to wanting to retain that, you feel that there is a trend line, which I would find to be very disturbing, to replace JVAs incrementally and put something else in its stead.

Getting back to Dr. Levy, I learned a very important lesson in my first term when under the Reagan Administration, Medicare reviews were underway to determine whether or not men and women who had been found to be with a disability to get Medicare, disability Medicare, not just because of their senior citizen status, disability payment, Social Security, that they had to be reviewed. There was an enormous number of people who were thrown off the rolls. I had 700 in my own constituency alone. I checked out many of them. We had casework on 700 that we knew of, others that never came to us. I had one man in the city of Trenton who had five doctors saying he had a heart ailment that precluded work, and he was told by the SSA "Doctor, you have to go back." Then we found out that there were quotas, that there was a very unfair situation where certain people were being rewarded for their rate of denial.

We found that in the VA, which led to an independent court. Now we are seeing it in the JVA, which allows for that. I think Mr. Rosenblatt said that in terms of transparency and accountability, replacing JVAs with government bureaucrats—however well-intentioned—who are susceptible to pressure could lead to some very negative outcomes for refugees.

We eventually reformed, by the way, that Medicare deal. All of a sudden the reviews were dropped like a ton of bricks. All these

people that were thrown off, many of them were put back on the roll and a very unfair system was made fair.

I am concerned that we may be heading in the wrong direction right now. Vietnam being one example where all of a sudden there is a push to get rid of the program, just like the CPA, got to shut it down. Meanwhile, refugees are screened out that otherwise would be screened in.

Mr. ROSENBLATT. Might I add on that point, Mr. Chairman? Just a brief interjection. Actually, it is going to be faster to close down the program, which is our mutual goal, using the JVA than to go to this new unit and restructure and start over again, and start shipping files to Washington for review. All that ought to be changed. You ought to use the JVA out there with the expertise, and deal with the problem now and not lose any time.

Mr. SMITH. Would any of you like to comment on that?

Mr. HAMMOND. The JVA concept I think we can all tell stories about how our agencies have helped advocate for refugees on the ground that have allowed people to come in, categories of people. We were in Haiti in Les Cayes, and worked very closely with the government. It was not that we were against them. We were working with them to identify things. Sometimes it is confusing to me that there would be a trend toward taking the NGO's out of it. I think we have been helpful and really have helped the process work well, identifying people, identifying the right types of people, being in the communities, seeing where, knowing the people and the refugees better than they can in the embassy or in a bureaucratic setting where they are not in the field. That is the thing that we bring to this. It's always confusing to me that the role of the NGOs is viewed skeptically by the State Department.

Mr. LEVY. I would just like to add to that. I have been heading the IRC for, it will be 2 years in May. I am fascinated by the under-utilized capacity of NGO's to be supportive in this whole area. Particularly so in the agency I head, which has a large relief infrastructure. So in addition to our capacity to resettle refugees, we have hundreds of employees all around the world who are living and working in relief settings in which these refugees can be identified. So we have developed a variety of proposals to a variety of efforts to be helpful here. I do think that to meet the refugee ceiling last year and to significantly exceed it, and to reach a new and higher ceiling, I don't think we can proceed in precisely the same ways as we have historically and just do them better. I think we will need to develop new JVAs, and I think we will need to invent new ways to properly identify new populations. It will be a challenge for all of us. What concerns me, and what motivates my testimony, is that very challenge has been used as a reason not to raise the ceiling instead of making a commitment to raise the ceiling, and then let's go about together meeting that challenge, which we have done historically and which we can do again going forward.

Ms. AVIV. And just finally, Mr. Chairman, I was conferring with Don Hammond. We would welcome a JVA in Moscow. There is an example of a situation where there isn't one. Again, the transparency, the resources, the access to files and materials, having that official status would be extremely helpful. Instead, it is up to our agencies to provide that information.

I just might add to that, that it makes it even more difficult for us because when we identify problems and situations there, then we have to compare it with their experiences over there. We sit over here in Washington making those comparisons. Whereas in fact, if there was a joint voluntary agency there, I think it would be very helpful to us on the ground there, because our data could compare right there and then rather than coming back here disagreeing and further delaying things.

Mr. SMITH. Again, this is why I raised the concern, especially vis-a-vis this letter by a Mr. Pendergrass, when he made the point that he would discourage any dialog with USCC. Then he points out, "You should never think in terms of negotiating issues with them"—you are the them—"or splitting the differences. These advocacy groups do not split the difference. They take the half you offer and then start working on the other half you have left. They want it all, and will settle for anything less only temporarily. You are dealing here with true believers." Then it goes on with the reptilian and all the other lousy remarks.

That to me says that we have got a major problem inside the building. All the more reason why I think more Members of Congress have to be aware of this kind of mindset because we are pulling and they are pushing. That means paralysis and very little progress. There is nothing to be fearful of, I would submit, when dealing with true believers. People who believe in refugees ought to be given the widest latitude to do their best because they are doing it for humanity. So this again is more than discouraging. This is an outrage.

I would like to yield to the Chief Counsel of the Subcommittee. I would note parenthetically Mr. Joseph Rees used to be the General Counsel of INS, and certainly knows the inside of that building like the back of his hand. I would like to yield to Mr. Rees.

Mr. REES. With the Chairman's permission, I am going to go back to my INS roots and be the devil's advocate on this JVA issue, because I think there are some aspects of it that are important to bring out.

I too have had trouble understanding in the context of Vietnam why, when they have a system that's working, they are moving it from Bangkok to Saigon, and why do they have to make the change. We haven't been successful in getting an airtight case from the State Department about why they want to make that change.

But in thinking about it, it is clear to me that things that might look like an advantage to you and to us, might look like a disadvantage to people who are trying to manage the program. This issue of transparency is maybe at the heart of it.

I remember when I was at INS and we ran the program in Guantanamo, we had a problem with interpreters. We were actually much better than the Vietnam program has been because we of course didn't use interpreters who worked for the Haitian Government who were hired, but the Haitian interpreters we had tended to be perceived as upper class. They were blancs instead of noirs. So a lot of the applicants, a lot of the asylum seekers didn't want to talk to these people because they were afraid they might have some connection with the government. So what we did was we tried to use for a brief period of time, interpreters who were

university professors and former Peace Corps people, that weren't Haitians at all. There aren't a whole lot of people in the United States who speak Creole who aren't Haitians at all. It turns out that almost all those people had a strong sense of identity with the asylum seekers. They were clearly on their side. They wanted to have a high screen-in rate. They were dissatisfied with a lot of the rules that we had set up at INS. So they sort of developed a joint role of advocates cum interpreters, and perhaps cum journalists, because suddenly it was a lot more transparent place than it had been. I think some good might have come out of that, but it did make the program more difficult to manage.

What do you think about that? I mean I want to stress that I have never had, as far as I can recall, nor has anyone in our office, an unsolicited push by a joint voluntary agency anywhere in the world. They do not call us up and say "Look at these awful things that the State Department is doing." But I have found them more responsive. I mean when you call them for information, you do get the information usually very quickly, and you find often that they do agree with you about what you are concerned about. So that is increased transparency.

Let's assume you can get good, capable people by a contract without going through a joint voluntary agency. Would you speak to the concerns of managers who think that if you have got one player who is not really on the team, you are going to have chaos? Because I think that may be the concern.

Mr. HAMMOND. Just a comment. Are we about managing a program or are we about saving people's lives and bringing the right people into the country? I think that is the question that I ask when the management issue comes up. To me, we are about trying to help the refugees that deserve to come here, not about managing a program so that we get numbers and everything runs smoothly, so we can get in and out. We are about finding the right people and about saving their lives. That would be the issue to me.

The transparency means that we are going to get the right people. It is not going to be a clean management process per se, but we are going to be interacting to try to find out who are the right people, and how do we get them in. The transparency to me is so important to the program, that I can't understand why you would want to just manage it, because these are people, not a process.

Mr. REES. It does make congressional oversight easier.

Does anyone else have a response to that?

Mr. ROSENBLATT. I would just say this leads me to just make sure we have for the record the situation in Bangkok clearly portrayed. The JVA has the capacity there to verify the former U.S. Government employees that Mrs. Taft says now will be considered. She has pushed hard for that and deserves credit. I don't think that the verification need include sending files back here for review at some sort of National Documentation Center. The JVA gives the capability to put in place somebody that will interview the refugee. Within 10 minutes, if that interviewer has served in Vietnam, you will know whether the person applying is a legitimate former employee or not.

So JVA gives the ability to cut through the red tape that the government normally has to go through. I think in this particular in-

stance, those files ought to stay in Bangkok, and they ought to be reviewed out there by people who meet the applicant face to face, and make the determination.

Mr. REES. The National Documentation Center, I don't know an awful lot about it. It has really first come to my consciousness in the context of shipping these Vietnamese files there.

Can I ask any of the witnesses who have had experience with the program in the former Soviet Union what their experiences with the documentation center have been? Whether it has been doing a good job, whether that is a place that you would want to send your kid's file?

Ms. AVIV. Are you talking about the Washington Processing Center?

Mr. REES. Yes.

Ms. AVIV. Well, one of the problems that we have had in the past couple of years—although recently it has improved slightly, we remain slightly skeptical, I want to see if it improves over time—is the difficulty in getting information. That when we were first told that there were a number of people who were so-called sitting on their suitcases and hadn't left the former Soviet Union, we wanted to see the data to see exactly what was being talked about, because our numbers didn't correspond with what we were being told. It took us many, many months to get that information. We thought that that information should be easily available to us.

That speaks to the larger problem that we find, two sets of problems. One relates to the fact that you have got both the INS and the State Department so that there's one time when the one will say it is their responsibility, and the other will say it's their responsibility. In the meantime, people's lives are at stake here while everybody is deciding whose responsibility it is. It falls between the cracks.

The other issue—as it relates to getting information. So the end result is that we have the sense that if they are withholding information, there must be an agenda, because why else would they not provide us with information that would enable us to empower those refugees who have that status to be able to come here or find out why they haven't come if there are some significant obstacles with which we can help them. We know that they qualify. That was one of the reasons why we thought that this was part of the problem as well.

Mr. HAMMOND. The WPC has been a very efficient way of running the program through with the Lautenberg amendment. I think it has been very efficient up to this point. But the problems that Diana states, I think are real. We are not able to get information. We hear about why cases are being denied. We have been asking these questions for a year and a half. For 18 months, we have been asking for review of files and denials. We hear about why they are denied through statements that are made to the press or here. They are not things that we can put our hands on and deal with.

The State Department (we have been working with Alan Kreczko, the principal deputy, who has been very helpful in our discussions), has moved us along, as Diana has stated in her verbal testimony. We have been working with them to put not a JVA, but

some counselors in Moscow to help with the program. For some reason, we can't agree. The budget is too high from their perspective. It is not high enough from our perspective. I don't mean to cast whose fault it is, but we can't seem to get the people there to do what they need to do.

There is some movement there with them, but the WPC and the lack of good processed information, has made it difficult for us to operate our advocacy and programs, and our response to our clients here in the United States.

Mr. SMITH. I have some other questions, but I will restrict it just to one, and then submit some for the record.

Ms. AbuZayd, let me ask you, you mentioned the lack of resources for the mission for Sierra Leone, at least I believe that is what you said. This is something maybe best suited for the record. You indicated a shortfall generally for a lot of your missions. I'm sure the Administration is routinely advised when your requests go out for additional money when there is a crisis, but we very seldom see that. We are left with getting a request that has been through one filter, and maybe it's the most well-meaning filter, but they are juxtaposing and arranging what their priorities are at all times. It would be nice if there could be a way that we could know exactly what the shortfalls are, and where they are, by mission because I know Mr. Hammond mentioned that there were very few referrals because they are so overwhelmed with just meeting the basic humanitarian crisis that is going on there. So if you could do that, that would be most helpful in our work.

Ms. ABUZAYD. That's fine. One reason, you may not hear a lot about it of course, is the shortfall doesn't usually come from the U.S. donations. This, as I said, is the most generous donor we have. You are the single largest contributor. If you look at our chart even from far away, that is you, and the rest is the rest of the world. You know, we don't keep coming back to the United States because we do believe that other nations should share this responsibility.

Mr. SMITH. I understand, but when people are dying we must do all we can. You are very kind to say how generous we are, but as you know so well, we are a Nation of refugees and immigrants. Who better to respond than the country where everybody except for Native Americans migrated to?

Mr. LEVY. Mr. Chairman, I couldn't appreciate more the sentiment which drives your question, having just come back from West Africa and having had colleagues just go into Freetown. It is clear that enormous damage has been done that we can assess. There are areas of the country we have no access to that we can't assess, and that this issue of a gap between needs and resources will arise again. So your question is very, very pertinent to that crisis.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. Rees.

Mr. REES. I apologize. I just want to ask one more question because I think two or three of you may have some information on this. In 1997, we had a congressional staff delegation to a number of refugee camps in Kenya. We learned, among other things, that women in the Dedaab Camp were being raped by criminal gangs when they went to gather firewood in the camps. We asked why. In other refugee camps, they supply cooking fuel or firewood. In

this camp they weren't, the reason was financial. Shortly thereafter, PRM, the U.S. Department of State announced that they would provide, I think it was $1 million that was supposed to supply the firewood that was needed in the camp. We all celebrated and congratulated ourselves having helped to bring this issue to public light. I later heard a few months ago that actually the way they structured it was that the million dollars, they could either spend it all in 1 year or stretch it out over 3 years, and so they decided to stretch it out over 3 years by giving firewood only to one-third of the households. I could be wrong about this, but it is what I heard. And that therefore only the elderly and perhaps the disabled got the firewood, and that a lot of the women still have to go gather.

Is that true? I hope not. Ms. AbuZayd.

Ms. ABUZAYD. I would like to detail a response for the record later.

[The response of Ms. AbuZayd appears in the appendix.]

But it has been a very difficult program and problem. One of the reasons to spread it out over 3 years is that there is a lack of firewood even to get in the area. It is an area that has already been totally devastated by the large refugee population there for many years. So that is one of the things. There have been a number of different responses to try to help the women of Dadaab so that they are not raped—not just when they go for firewood, it is even closer to the camp and inside the camp.

Mr. REES. And is it still happening?

Ms. ABUZAYD. Yes, in some ways I can't say that it's not happening. It is a very lawless area. There has been some reduction of it. The firewood contribution has certainly helped. But much more needs to be done in the whole area in being able to respond to this kind of problem. It is particularly severe in that area, that particular camp. I mean in many, many camps we don't supply firewood, people do safely go and collect their own firewood.

Mr. REES. But in Dadaab, some of them still have to go gather firewood?

Ms. ABUZAYD. They still have to go. That's right.

Mr. ROSENBLATT. May I just add to that? We have a representative in Nairobi. She thinks that part of the solution may be to increase local procurement of the firewood, that it is available at a price, and that using local market probably makes some sense.

I would add, although I haven't discussed this with her, that we ought to—since this is not the only camp that has this problem of firewood and the degradation to the environment, as well as the risk to the women, we ought to be looking at other ways to provide cooking fuels. I think that there are lots of alternatives that ought to be looked into, from solar, to briquettes, to other ecological advances.

Mr. REES. No. I think they are in that camp. They have got experimental uses. I don't know why they decided to go with firewood instead of the——

Ms. ABUZAYD. Resistance to the new technology.

Mr. REES. I see there are still a couple of representatives from PRM and UNHCR here. Maybe we can continue to work on that. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Rees.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ms. MCKINNEY. I'm sorry, but I would like to hear the response that was Mr. Berman's question on why UNHCR has not recommended for resettlement the Sierra Leoneans?

Ms. ABUZAYD. It is not that we're not. The group that we are actually looking after, particularly of the amputees and the mutilated persons from Sierra Leone, is a smallish group of about 120 in Conakry. As you realize, our Sierra Leonean program is outside Sierra Leone. Of course most of these, the majority of them, are inside Sierra Leone and being looked after by other agencies.

So these people are, if they haven't already been referred, about to be referred. It does take time to do their histories, establish what has happened to them. And then to convince them that the best thing might be to go somewhere else. I saw the people myself early in June. The young men standing there with their two hands missing saying "What is my future? What shall I do? Who is going to look after me? Who is going to help me? I can't even do basic things for myself." So that worries them a little bit about going abroad for help.

Also, I think Julia also referred to these sorts of cases we often refer to the Nordics, who are the ones that take the difficult victims and the torture victims and so on, that is why it is very good that we are now able to refer these to the United States. But again, the process needs to be one where we can refer them to the right places, look for places that will be able to rehabilitate them, will take their families with them, these sorts of things.

So the process takes a bit of time, but all of the ones that are known to us are going to be referred as a whole group over the next weeks and months.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Ms. McKinney.

Would any of you like to add anything?

Mr. HAMMOND. Just a thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your holding these hearings, for asking the questions and pushing us on stuff. We really appreciate that. And that we will be happy to respond to any questions that you would have for us.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. As I mentioned to Secretary Taft, we hope to hold a hearing, if not a series of hearings on in-country processing. Like Diana Aviv mentioned the importance of having a JVA in Moscow, and that the numbers or the rate has so increased of those going to Israel, contrary to what the Secretary may have thought. I think you made an excellent point, if I could just make a point of this, that sometimes we get a snapshot as to how something is and how we hope it is proceeding. We all thought that Russia was moving in the right direction with regards to religious tolerance.

As I found out in my rude surprise visiting the country a year ago with Dr. Billington from the Library of Congress, who is an accomplished Russian expert, who speaks fluent Russian, they are very aggressively moving in the wrong direction. The rise of anti-Semitism and the intolerance toward evangelicals and others needs to be recognized for what it is and countered in every way humanly possible. Just because some of the Hebrew congregations seem to

be filled does not necessarily mean that things are OK. So I think we need to be very aware of that.

Ms. AVIV. Mr. Chairman, may I just make one comment in regard to what you are saying? I think also when countries change, the former Soviet Union being one country, it was difficult enough as it was then, but when you have got 15 countries and all have to be processed, as Joseph likes to say, the equivalent of Anchorage, Alaska, for people in New York having to go there, you know, to travel all those time zones. If we don't have circuit rides, when countries far smaller than that there are circuit rides for, then what ends up happening, and it's not just true in the former Soviet Union, I think it is also true in Africa. That what ends up happening is that the management of the program begins to undermine the integrity and the intent of the program. If there is a way in which we can fix those issues, then we will reach our ceilings and we can go beyond that and meet our commitments commensurate with the public's interest and support of this kind of program.

Mr. ROSENBLATT. And let me just underscore on that. I think we have to remember that this culture of negativism and denial doesn't stem from Mrs. Taft. She is the best Assistant Secretary we have had. Her deputies, Alan Kreczko and Marguerite Rivera are excellent. Let's focus in on where the problem is. But I really appreciate that focus because unless we change that focus, we are not going to get anywhere.

Mr. SMITH. I want to thank all of you for your excellent testimony. But more importantly, for the good work you do each and every day on behalf of refugees and other people who are suffering very often at no fault of their own. Thank you. I look forward to seeing you again.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:43 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2370 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS
1540 KUSER ROAD
SUITE A9
HAMILTON, NJ 08619-3828
(609) 585-7878
TTY (609) 585-3650

100 LACEY ROAD
SUITE 38A
WHITING, NJ 08759-1331
(908) 350-2300

COMMITTEES

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
CHAIRMAN - INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

VETERANS' AFFAIRS
VICE CHAIRMAN
HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
CO-CHAIRMAN

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515–3004

STATEMENT OF REP. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Chairman, Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights
Foreign Relations Authorization for FY 2000-2001: Refugees and Migration
March 9, 1999

I am pleased to convene this hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights. This is the second in a series of hearings on a Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. The topic of this hearing is the State Department's refugee budget, and the refugee programs and policies that budget supports.

Our lead witness today is Assistant Secretary of State Julia Taft. Those of us who work in this area welcomed the appointment of Secretary Taft, because we know she understands that refugee protection is not just another facet of foreign policy. Unlike most other domestic and international issues --- and even unlike many aspects of immigration policy --- refugee policy is not primarily about how to weigh competing social or economic considerations. It is about right and wrong, about good and evil. To return refugees to persecution is simply wrong, just as it is always wrong to inflict grievous harm on another innocent human being.

The last ten years have seen dramatic changes in our refugee policy: for the first time in United States history, we have undertaken the mass forcible return of people who have managed to escape from bloodthirsty regimes such as those in Haiti, Cuba, China, and Viet Nam. These actions of the United States, in turn, have served as an example and an excuse to other countries which have repatriated people by the thousands and tens of thousands to places like Rwanda, Burundi, Afghanistan, and Burma. At the same time, the United States has dramatically reduced the number of refugees we accept for resettlement every year --- from about 150,000 ten years ago to only 75,000 this year, despite broad bipartisan support in Congress for a return to the traditional level of at least 100,000 refugees per year.

Assistant Secretary Taft, we welcome the modest increase for projected refugee resettlement in the Administration's budget request for FY 2000, from 75,000 up to 80,000, as well as the 3% increase in the refugee budget request. Refugee advocates are hoping that this is a sign that you may finally be having an impact, that U.S. refugee policy may be finally turning the corner.

Unfortunately, there are many signs that your efforts have not yet been successful. We know that your own career has been devoted to refugee protection, and we know that your two deputies, Alan Kreczko and Marguerite Rivera, are dedicated to the same goal. Unfortunately, you inherited a bureau that has been all too well known for its ingrained institutional culture --- a culture of denial. One of the saddest things about those forced repatriations to Haiti and Cuba, to China and Viet Nam, was that they were carried out with the enthusiastic participation of people who worked for the United States government [illegible] and who still do --- and who have the word "Refugee" in their title. And every generous impulse --- such as the ROVR program to rescue some of the people who were wrongfully returned to Viet Nam, or the recent effort to increase the number of African refugees accepted for resettlement in the United States [illegible] has met with foot-dragging and sometimes active resistance from some of the same people. This is not how it ought to be.

The Washington Times recently ran an editorial calling attention to some unfortunate statements by the director of our refugee programs for Vietnam. Refugee advocates had objected to an order to destroy the files of rejected Amerasian applicants, many of whom claimed their cases had been wrongly denied. This official not only defended the destruction of the files, but urged his State Department colleague [illegible] in a tone that can only be described as a sneer [illegible] "never to negotiate" with those who advocate more generous treatment of refugees.

I would like to describe this communication as "extraordinary." But the most depressing thing of all is that it may represent just another ordinary day in the life of a State Department refugee official. In the course of investigating this matter, for instance, I came across another communication in which this same official reacted to a report that a young Vietnamese woman had stabbed herself to death immediately after her repatriation. This official's advice to his colleagues was that "we shouldn't have any beating of the breast or recriminations" about the repatriation program, because "people do not commonly commit suicide by stabbing themselves in the chest" and because the only witness was the woman's three-year-old child. The communication also contains a jocular and wholly inappropriate discussion of various ways in which people do commit suicide. It is signed, "cynically yours."

Even more disturbing, I have also learned about two other recent efforts to destroy Vietnamese refugee files, including some files about which refugee advocates and members of Congress had begun to ask questions. Both of these orders apparently came from a high-ranking refugee official here in Washington. One of them, in August 1996, was to destroy all Vietnamese files in which the applicant had been deemed "not qualified." It demanded that compliance be "immediate" --- which I am informed is an unusual procedure --- and it came just

a few days after the Senate had adopted the McCain amendment, which eventually had the effect of reversing many of these "not qualified" decisions. The other order, in November 1988, was from the same official and it was an order to destroy still more Vietnamese files about which questions had been raised. I am happy to say that Secretary Taft reversed that order as soon as she found out about it. But if top officials must wage a constant battle just to keep their subordinates from destroying evidence, it is easy to understand why progress on substantive issues comes so slowly.

This culture of negativism is not limited to the Vietnamese refugee program. Despite a resurgence in virulent and often violent anti-Semitism in the states of the former Soviet Union [illegible] one recent illustration is the campaign of General Albert Makashov, who was elected to the Duma on the campaign slogan "Death to the Yids!" [illegible] refugee denial rates have gone up dramatically during the last two years in the former Soviet program. And I remember being shocked to hear of a 1992 meeting, called to work out the operational details of the U.S. in-country refugee program in Haiti at a time when the illegal military government was slaughtering its enemies. The State Department refugee official who presided at the meeting was reported to have announced, "Those of us in this room know there is no such thing as a Haitian refugee. But we have been instructed to find some." It should come as no surprise that they did not find very many.

Assistant Secretary Taft, I want to reiterate that I have confidence in your vision of what the U.S. refugee program can and should be, and I pledge my support and co-operation. But I don't believe the program can achieve its potential unless it is staffed from top to bottom with people who really care. I know there are many such dedicated people in the State Department and in your bureau. As for people who suffer from cynicism or "compassion fatigue," or whose goal in life is to "manage down" programs, they may have brilliant careers ahead of them in other fields, but it is imperative that they be assigned duties in which they no longer have the lives of innocent people in their hands.

This is a difficult message to deliver, but I hope you will accept it in the spirit in which it is offered. In particular, I want to make clear that I am grateful for your efforts to address some of the problems in the Vietnamese refugee program, although I think we still have a way to go in that effort. I know I speak for my colleagues on the Subcommittee when I say that if more resources are needed to do the job right, we are prepared to authorize those resources and to fight to get the authorization and an appropriation through Congress. Indeed, last year the House passed an authorization for FY 99 of $704.5 million for the MRA account, which was $54.5 million over the Administration's request.

If the Administration will provide the necessary leadership, Congress will act consistently with American values. In the words of President Ronald Reagan, the United States can still be a shining city on a hill.

CYNTHIA A. McKINNEY
4TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
WESTERN HEMISPHERE
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
MILITARY READINESS

WASHINGTON OFFICE
124 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-1605
FAX (202) 226-0691

DISTRICT OFFICE
246 SYCAMORE STREET
SUITE 110
DECATUR, GA 30030
(404) 377-6900
FAX (404) 377-6909

INTERNET ADDRESS
cynthck@hr.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1011

Statement of Representative Cynthia A. McKinney
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on International Operations
and Human Rights
March 9, 1999

I join with Chairman Smith in welcoming to our hearing today Assistant Secretary Taft, as well as the distinguished representatives of organizations so well known for their concern for those who are often forgotten by others. To participate in the hearings we are conducting on the State Department authorization bill is to appreciate that while the activities of the government agencies and bureaus from whom we hear are essential, so are the tasks undertaken by the many non-governmental organizations with which they work.

In looking over the documentation for today's hearing, I concluded that what is most needed is "more." For one thing, we need more complete information about the background of the problems we are facing in refugees and migration, and what we have done to meet them. The Department of State would help us more by including in the documentation longer timelines for funding for numbers of refugees resettled, for persons of concern, for bureau staffing numbers, and for other categories of information. I am sure the Department would be willing and able to provide such information, and I do request that it be provided.

Refugee situations are often long-term events. It would help if the Department's presentation took more account of this fact. We also need more attention to places where refugee demands are clearly outstripping our ability or our willingness to meet them. I particularly think of the refugee situation in Africa, where we are addressing the situation of 3.5 million refugees by magnanimously offering to resettle 12,000 of them. In particular, the situation in Sierra Leone, with 400,000 refugees, seems to rate barely a mention in the Department's presentation, and about the same amount of attention on the ground. This situation must not be allowed to continue. I will look forward to hearing what plans the Department of State has to address it.

Also urgently needed is more engagement between U.S. Government entities and their non-government partners. I am struck in this regard by the great gap in their respective views of the refugee and migration scene. To the NGOs, the refugee situation is one of large problems largely unaddressed. The Government, however, seems to see a generally improving situation being effectively addressed with increasing resources. While some of this no doubt reflects general differences in outlook, the gap is so wide as to make me wonder if everyone is talking about the same situations.

"THIS MAILING WAS PREPARED, PUBLISHED, AND MAILED AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE"
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

More answers to questions are also needed. Why, for example, is the denial rate by INS in Russia for religious minorities escalating to one out of every two applications, even as we are seeing religious intolerance increasing even on the part of the government itself? Are we as sure as the Department proposal suggests that we can phase out our resettlement programs in Vietnam without missing people we should include? And why do we still require all refugee applicants in the former Soviet Union to cross several time zones to go to Moscow for their interviews, rather than sending someone from Moscow to meet them? A few years ago, we were sending representatives from Paris to southern France to interview Basque shepherds who had worked in the United States about their Social Security claims. Surely we could do something for people with claims even more important.

Finally, we need more resources. As good as it is that the State Department is requesting modest additional funding for refugees and migration, and proposing to increase somewhat the number of resettled refugees admitted to the United States, neither of these increases gets us back to the numbers of a few years ago. I do not believe that the problems in refugee issues that we are addressing are much smaller than they were then. We should be making greater efforts to find at least equal resources.

I appreciate the opportunity to go over these concerns with our panelists, and I look forward to hearing your comments.

Testimony of
Assistant Secretary Julia V. Taft
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Department of State

March 9, 1999

House International Relations Committee
Subcommittee on International Operations and
Human Rights

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am delighted to be with you today to discuss our FY 2000 budget request and plans for the United States to remain the world's leader when it comes to refugee assistance and protection. Before I begin, I want to convey a note of thanks to this Committee for its unfailing support for refugees and conflict victims worldwide, and to you, Mr. Chairman, for your personal interest and leadership of this Subcommittee.

Unhappily, since last February when I testified before this Committee, we have had to face new refugee emergencies involving Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Refugee protection has continued to erode in many parts of the world. Civilians are increasingly at risk of armed attack and humanitarian workers risk their lives every day to bring life-saving assistance to those in need. The constraints on our work are many. At the same time, we must recognize the achievements of the international community in continuing to extend the limits of our humanitarian efforts to reach populations in need. Last December we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Soon, in 1999, the world will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions which guide the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the 50th anniversary of the founding statute of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We are proud that the program we are discussing today provides strong U.S. support for these two fine and essential institutions.

Today, I want to talk with you not just about the numbers, but the people behind those numbers. The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) appropriation, together with the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund (ERMA), are two of the major instruments of U.S. humanitarian response. The Secretary has often said humanitarian response is the human face of our U.S. foreign policy. Our FY 2000 budget request is designed to strengthen that response.

Our Goals

International protection. Conflict victims need international protection, either as refugees or as non-combatants in close proximity to a conflict. Unfortunately, many asylum seekers cross borders into countries without effective legal protection regimes. One of our priorities is to support the campaign of UNHCR to strengthen the laws and practices in countries throughout the world, not least by promoting accession to the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees.

International protection also includes physical protection in complex humanitarian emergencies, a factor that can complicate access to populations in order to provide assistance. In all of these cases, we emphasize the protection of the vulnerable people in any population, such as women heads of household or unaccompanied children. Sexual violence and children forced to be combatants in armed conflict

are two of the most challenging protection threats facing us today. Armed attacks on refugee camps are a continuing security threat. As a recent report on Africa by the UN Secretary General pointed out, preserving the civilian nature of refugee camps is crucial. In this regard, for example, last year, we made a special contribution to UNHCR to protect against militarization of camps in Tanzania. This year, we will continue to support efforts by UNHCR and the Governments of Guinea and Liberia to limit vulnerability of camps for Sierra Leonean refugees, keeping the camps neutral and secure.

In this decade, the international protection agenda increasingly has had to include physical security for humanitarian workers; tragically, even the Red Cross emblem is no longer its own guarantee of protection. We are taking steps to ensure that appropriate security measures for humanitarian workers are included in programs we support.

Resettlement. The Refugee Act of 1980 provides the authority for the U.S. to offer a permanent solution to individuals who have been persecuted because of their religious or political beliefs, race, ethnicity, and association with the U.S. We have used this authority to resettle refugees who were political prisoners, persecuted former USG employees, religious or ethnic minorities, or family members of U.S. citizens. Active U.S. resettlement has demonstrated our willingness to share the burden and encouraged host countries to maintain asylum for other refugees. U.S. refugee resettlement is at the heart of the interest of the American people and of Congress. Since World War II, one source of exposure to U.S. foreign policy for hundreds of thousands of Americans has been what they have seen on the faces of refugees that they have welcomed in their communities and homes. We are also working hard to make our program more responsive to immediate protection needs that are made known to us by UNHCR or by our Embassies overseas. Permanent resettlement in any country provides a refugee with a new lease on life; we are working to strengthen and expand the number of resettlement offers from the international coalition of refugee resettlement countries. This effort requires an investment of resources in UNHCR to expand its own ability to identify and refer cases to us or to other countries for resettlement.

Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration. As part of the connection between humanitarian actions, resolving conflict, and preventing future conflict, we have seen the importance of refugee return and successful reintegration to a sustainable peace in the country of origin. Despite the obstacles created by those in the Former Yugoslavia that oppose the creation of viable multi-ethnic states, U.S. support for return of ethnic minorities in Croatia and Bosnia, including the Bosnia "Open Cities" initiative, has resulted in more than 50,000 minority returns. We have worked for years to lay the groundwork for coordinated approaches among relief and development agencies. That work will continue and we will emphasize the importance of community-based development to achieve effective

reintegration, as well as tolerance and reconciliation activities, whose importance has been clearly recognized in Bosnia and Rwanda, to cite a couple of examples.

Standards of Care. Most of the funding we provide to international organizations and NGOs goes to provide the basics of life to refugees and conflict victims who are not in a position to care for themselves and their families. We seek to ensure that the level of assistance provided is determined by the actual needs of the population, that it does not exceed to an appreciable degree from the level of care of the surrounding population, that it does not vary appreciably from region to region, and we seek to ensure that it meets basic established international standards. A new set of basic minimum standards (so-called "Sphere" standards) are now being compiled by a group of cooperating international and non-governmental organizations. We believe that providing education, particularly to women and girls, has a significant impact on their futures and on the development of their countries upon their repatriation. This is a major priority for us in the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, particularly in view of the restrictions that the Taliban has placed on girls' education inside Afghanistan. We look forward to a time when all humanitarian responses take into account the needs and abilities of women and the needs of children, and continue to work to make that a reality as well.

Response Capacity. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, we have worked even harder to improve the emergency response capacity of the international community. The multilateral consensus on humanitarian response has been shaken slightly, and produced a decreased funding trend that is worrisome and that we will address with other donors. We cannot allow the international community's emergency response capacity to be weakened. Funds must be available for an effective, agreed multilateral response, and we will work with both donors and agencies to solidify the international response capacity. With our international and NGO partners in humanitarian response, we have also focused attention on identifying what might be done to prevent such human calamities from happening again. Among the major conclusions has been the importance of political will in the international community to take political action either to help prevent or bring to resolution the conflicts that necessitate the humanitarian response. We are determined to ensure that the political and humanitarian elements of a crisis are integrated.

International Migration. The prominence of migration issues whenever senior officials, from the President on down, visit Central America and Mexico provide proof of the importance that our hemispheric neighbors place on the subject of migration. In the regional migration dialogue that we have established in North and Central America, we have joined the priorities of our neighbors to discuss migration and human rights, and migration and development, with our interests in addressing trafficking in migrants and in interdiction and return of undocumented

migrants from outside the region. The 1998 Summit of the Americas includes a new chapter on Migrant Workers for which PRM will be the coordinator not only for the USG, but for the entire hemisphere.

We are working hard to promote a balance between the law enforcement elements of migration (the interests of the state) with the protection aspects (the interests of the individual). The 1996 CIS Migration Conference was an enormous success in gaining international consensus in this regard. We have established a dynamic dialogue with the European Union on migration in which we will continue to stress the benefits that legal migration brings not only to the migrants themselves but to the recipient country. We will continue to explore ways of establishing comprehensive approaches to migration issues, for example, through our support to the Government of Thailand's decision to host a regional migration conference for South East Asia in April. We also will promote special care taken to protect the most vulnerable migrants. Our pioneering efforts in drawing USG and international attention to trafficking in women has spawned enormous attention and activity both to protect its victims and to prevent the practice.

Population. This hearing is focused on the refugee and migration elements of my Bureau's portfolio. But, although all program and associated staff costs are paid through other government accounts, PRM is the focal point in the USG for international population policy. Therefore, I believe it is important to spend a moment outlining our goals related to population and the connections to other elements of the PRM portfolio. You know that peacebuilding in the aftermath of an emergency, or linked to refugee repatriation, is positively affected when sustainable development can be established. Population activities are crucial to effective development. The historic consensus reached at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development by 179 countries on a 20 year Program of Action replaces human numbers with human needs, replaces coercion with choices, and moves from a demography-centered to a democracy-centered approach to stabilizing global population growth while safeguarding the environment and advancing economic growth. It recognized that reproductive health and reproductive rights, women's empowerment, migration, technology and research, and economic and social development underscore the integral and mutually reinforcing linkages between population and development.

FY 2000 Budget Request

With those overall goals in mind, let us move to specifics of the budget request. While the total number of refugees and conflict victims has, we hope, peaked for this decade, there continue to be known problems that the Administration is requesting additional funds in FY 2000 to address head-on. Our FY 2000 request includes $660 million for Migration and Refugee Assistance or "MRA" and $30 million to replenish the President's Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund or "ERMA." From FY 1997 to FY 1999, our budget remained constant,

while we stretched our human and financial resources to address the needs. Therefore, we have requested $660 million for MRA (an increase of $20 million from FY 1999). These funds support four primary activities: overseas assistance, the admission of up to 80,000 refugees to the United States, a grant of $60 million to support refugee resettlement in Israel, and $13.8 million to cover administrative expenses of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Assistance and Protection for Refugees and Conflict Victims

Regarding *overseas assistance*, in FY 2000, we have requested $463.3 million, an increase of over $8.6 million from the FY 1999 estimate. This request will support continued assistance to populations of concern and the following initiatives to better protect and assist refugees and conflict victims worldwide:

1. ensure basic international life-sustaining *standards of care* are provided in all geographical regions, particularly in Africa;
2. work with other governments, international organizations, and NGOs to enhance international *protection* for vulnerable groups and address the physical security of refugees, conflict victims, and humanitarian workers;
3. enhance basic *education* opportunities for refugees worldwide, especially for women and girls;
4. increase our *migration policy* activities that promote support for basic human rights of migrants, and educate them about the risks associated with irregular migration; and,
5. expand our consultation and coordination *with other donors* and international organizations to ensure that the collective international effort meets critical humanitarian needs in the most efficient manner possible.

To accomplish these objectives, we will continue to support programs of UNHCR, ICRC, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), refugee-related activities of the World Food Program (WFP) and other international organizations. Our support to NGOs that carry out relief services overseas to populations of concern continues to increase.

To give you an example of a region requiring substantial MRA overseas assistance resources and possibly ERMA funds in the future, let's examine events of the last months in West Africa and Sierra Leone, in particular. The eight-year civil war in Sierra Leone has evolved into a tragic humanitarian emergency. Fighting escalated again in December when rebels launched an offensive against the Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping troops supporting the democratically elected government and protecting civilians from rebel depredations. The rebels captured the city of Makeni, and then attacked the capital Freetown, burning 80% of the east end of town and committing a series of horrific human rights violations before being driven back by ECOMOG forces. The war has produced approximately 460,000 refugees in neighboring countries and perhaps as many as

one million internally displaced, including 150,000 in Freetown. The recent fighting has so far produced more than 4,000 new refugees in Guinea and Liberia. As many as 5,000 civilians lost their lives during the fighting for Freetown, and many were burned, raped, mutilated, and/or kidnapped by rebel forces. The USG's humanitarian response has been coordinated and swift. So far this fiscal year, the USG has contributed some $32 million in earmarked funds to the Sierra Leone crisis along with other unearmarked contributions toward the region. Last year, the USG contributed nearly $60 million. I went to West Africa last summer with a number of my European counterparts to focus attention to the crisis in Sierra Leone and encourage the most effective humanitarian response possible on the part of international community and international relief agencies. This trip illustrated the integrated approach that I propose we take into FY 2000 – life-sustaining standards of care, donor coordination, focus on international protection, and a strengthened response capacity not only of international organizations and international NGOs, but also of the host authorities and indigenous NGOs.

Refugee Admissions

There is little doubt – the United States is, and will continue to be, the most generous place on earth for refugees. Resettlement continues to be a USG foreign policy priority. My Bureau is just one part of a major effort by governmental and non-governmental partners to "rescue" those in need of international protection or those who are of special humanitarian interest to the U.S. We work in close partnership with other government agencies (particularly INS and HHS), international organizations (UNHCR and IOM) and non-governmental partners (national voluntary agencies and grassroots organizations throughout the U.S., and a large number of individuals in host communities). In recent years, we have been emphasizing the "rescue" aspects of the U.S. resettlement program, making our resettlement program more flexible to enable us to respond to cases in immediate need of resettlement as a means of protection. In FY 2000, we are requesting $122.9 million for refugee admissions, an increase of $20.54 million from the FY 1999 estimate. The President's budget request would fund the admission of up to 80,000 refugees to the U.S. -- 5,000 above the funded level in the FY 1999 budget. I wish to note that in FY 1999, in addition to the funded level, 3,000 additional unfunded numbers are included in the admissions ceiling to total 78,000. For FY 2000, approximately $10 million is required to finance the higher admissions level. The additional $10 + million supports increases in the baseline costs for transportation requirements, additional costs associated with our efforts to process "hard to reach" refugees as processing locations multiply, and a proposed increase in the level of reception and placement grants to U.S. voluntary resettlement agencies in support of domestic resettlement. The FY 2000 refugee admissions level and specific regional ceilings will be set by the President after the FY 2000 Congressional consultations process.

The U.S. resettles more refugees each year than are permanently resettled in all other countries of the world combined. This has been the case for years, including

during the current administration. Since the Refugee Act of 1980 was passed, annual refugee admissions have ranged from as high as 207,000 in 1980, reflecting the Vietnamese boat people crisis, to a low of 61,000 in 1983.

In the last six years, the U.S. resettlement program has become more diverse. This year, 60 percent of refugees will come from Africa, the former Yugoslavia, the Near East and South Asia, and Latin America – admissions for these groups have grown from 20,000 in 1993 to a target of more than 40,000 this year. Only 40 percent of the authorized refugee admissions will come from South East Asia and countries of the former Soviet Union. In 1993, when the current administration took office, we were still resettling large numbers of religious minorities from the former Soviet Union that had long been denied the opportunity to reunite with family members in the U.S. When added to the then-large program for Indochinese resettlement, both groups accounted for 100,000 of 120,000 resettled here that year.

Our resettlement program in Africa is an example of this diversity. In FY 1999, the funded admissions ceiling for Africa jumped from 7,000 to 12,000. Last year, we provided access to the program to more than 19 nationalities. We will do at least that well this year, if not better. We are working hard to respond to the needs and bring in 12,000 refugees from Africa. One of the most significant aspects of the program's growth is that it is occurring without benefit of a single dominant group. Instead, we are reaching out across the continent to find those most in need and developing plans and resources to process them where we find them. In other words, we are responding to what I believe is the most important mandate of the resettlement program – rescue those refugees for whom resettlement is truly essential.

Turning to another region of the world, we have faced considerable questioning recently, including from Members of this Committee, regarding our plans to complete the Orderly Departure Program from Vietnam (ODP) and complete the processing of the Resettlement Opportunity for Vietnamese Returnees (ROVR). I want to address those concerns directly, and to underline my intention to conclude that program consistent with our past commitments.

Over the past 20 years, ODP has provided resettlement opportunities for more than 500,000 Vietnamese. This summer, the new United States Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City will open and the Consulate will assume responsibility for the processing of Immigrant Visa cases. This is good news. It is based on real and very positive changes that have occurred within that country since 1975 and represents a turning point in our relationship with Vietnam. We can now operate a normal immigration program there as we do throughout the world. We also expect, by the end of this fiscal year, to complete the processing of nearly all of the ODP and ROVR program cases. Residual aspects of that program – such as the U11 program for former government employees – can be accomplished out of

Ho Chi Minh City. Therefore, after nearly 20 years of providing outstanding service, we will be able to close the ODP processing center in Thailand, with substantial savings. In anticipation of this, we established a small Resettlement Assistance Unit in HCMC attached to the Consulate to handle Amerasian and Visas 93 cases. That unit will also handle any residual ODP cases and on a case-by-case basis other cases of interest to the USG in need of refugee resettlement. I believe that this transition must be accomplished in a manner which will continue to provide adequate protection and services to Vietnamese seeking refugee status. Therefore, building upon recommendations made by this Committee and others, I am looking to supplement the Resettlement Assistance Unit staff by drawing on experienced expatriate staff to help refugee applicants prepare for their interviews, by ensuring that all interviews are conducted with expatriate interpreters, and by working with INS to ensure that INS adjudicators receive special training similar to that received by the ROVR teams. The current ODP Director will soon be involved in the opening of the full service consular section at the Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, which will require him to focus primarily on immigration matters. Therefore, we are planning to send to HCMC a refugee officer to oversee for the Department of State the implementation of the U11 and other related refugee programs.

I am pleased to report that we have just about completed the processing of the ROVR cases. The majority of the approved cases are expected to arrive in the U.S. before the end of FY 1999. The final number of persons approved for resettlement in the U.S. is expected to be about 17,200. By early summer, we expect to complete interviewing the remaining re-education camp detainees and their eligible family members, and anticipate that the majority of these individuals will arrive in the U.S. by the end of this fiscal year.

With regard to the remaining ODP caseload, at the end of 1996, after the Government of Vietnam informed us that it would no longer issue exit permits to former U.S. Government employees (so-called U11s) because of the low approval rate, the U.S. suspended further processing of these cases. We recently completed a review of this decision and I have determined that we have an obligation to process those applicants who have not been interviewed. We are prepared to begin the process of identifying any remaining qualified applicants immediately.

The South East Asian admissions program has been the largest and most successful in U.S. history. On a personal note, it gives me a special sense of achievement because I was Director of the Task Force in 1975, which brought the first 130,000 Indochinese refugees to the U.S. then. The program has consistently enjoyed a close partnership among all those involved: the Executive Branch, Congress, the voluntary agencies, communities around the country, and the refugees themselves. While we are prepared to continue to examine cases of people at risk of persecution now, other Vietnamese who wish to apply for U.S. admission should become part of the vibrant Vietnam/U.S. immigration program.

Our program in the former Soviet Union is also going through changes. We have, over the course of the program, resettled more than 360,000 refugees. For the past several years, however, the number of annual applicants has declined. And, we have a large backlog of individuals – over 34,000 thousand – who were approved a year ago or longer but who have not departed. We are now in the process of contacting those people, with a view to sorting out those individuals who need help in order to leave from those who no longer intend to depart. In view of changes in the former Soviet Union since the initiation of this program, the Administration has taken a year-by-year approach to the renewal of the Lautenberg amendment which underlies the FSU program. In view of disturbing revival of anti-Semitism in Russia, the administration will again support a one-year renewal of the Lautenberg amendment. However, I do think that it is time for the Administration, Congress, and interested groups to think about what happens to this program in the future.

Conclusion

News about humanitarian disasters, and migration and refugee flows fill the U.S. press each day. Humanitarian work is connected inextricably to the "political" side of foreign policy. The programs we support address very real security concerns for beneficiaries and for humanitarian workers. Refugees in need of protection can attain a lifetime benefit by resettlement in this or another country. International standards of care must be adopted and implemented. Such goals require substantial resources, but their impact is literally life-giving.

Continued strong bipartisan Congressional support for humanitarian programs is essential for continued U.S. leadership on these issues and we will count on your continued good guidance to help refine our thinking and direct our U.S. refugee programs to the people and places that need them most. As I did last year, I encourage you and your staff to travel to see PRM-supported activities in the field, to see where the money goes and talk to the people we are assisting. Experience has shown that when disaster strikes, the American people expect this government to react quickly to aid the survivors of humanitarian crises. We will continue to do so with your support so that we will be able better to address the needs of refugees and conflict victims worldwide through humanitarian assistance.

UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES

Regional Office
for the United States of America &
the Caribbean

1775 K Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington DC 20006

NATIONS UNIES
HAUT COMMISSARIAT
POUR LES REFUGIES

Bureau Régional
pour les Etats-Unis d'Amérique et
Caraïbes

Telephone: (202) 296-5191
Fax: (202) 296-5660
E-mail: USAWA@UNHCR.CH

Testimony

by

Karen Koning AbuZayd
Regional Representative
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

9 March 1999

House Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on International Operations

Introduction

I would like to thank the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights for inviting UNHCR to testify at this hearing on "Foreign Relations Authorization for FY 2000-2001: Refugees and Migration." This is a welcome opportunity to thank the United States Government for the support it provides to refugees and to UNHCR. It also allows me to pay special tribute to this Subcommittee for its unfailing and praiseworthy efforts to solve refugee problems, most recently through its successes in passing implementing legislation for the Convention against Torture and in passing the International Religious Freedom Act which gives additional protection to refugees and calls for a study of the expedited removal process.

After a brief reference to UNHCR's mandate and an elaboration of our budget requirements and programming modalities, I shall outline the demographics of populations of concern to us, and then reflect on how two of our major operations, in Kosovo and West Africa, illustrate the changing humanitarian environment and give rise to important issues now being debated within the international community. Finally, I will turn to "inside U.S.A." issues.

Mandate

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was created in December 1950 by Resolution 428 of the General Assembly with a mandate to protect, assist and find solutions to the problems of refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, and, when requested by the Secretary-General or General Assembly, war-affected and internally displaced persons (idps). UNHCR's work is guided by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; international refugee law provides an essential framework of principles for its humanitarian activities.

Budget

Today UNHCR cares for some 22.4 million people (12m refugees, 1m asylum-seekers, 3.5m returnees and 6m idps and others of concern)* through its 290 offices in 124 countries. Budgetary requirements in 1999 are US$ 914m** (down from $995m in 1998, projected at $900m in 2000, depending on a detailed assessment of minimal needs). All but $20m of UNHCR's budget must be raised by voluntary contributions from governments.

The US Government is our largest and most reliable single donor, pledging consistently around 25% of our total request, followed by Japan and the Nordic countries. Europe, however, through the EU and bilaterally, covers approximately 50% of the budget. The starkly bad news is that in 1998 UNHCR was able to raise only $774.3m in new money, so some of what we had determined was the minimum necessary to provide a decent existence for over 20 million people and the communities hosting them, had to be reduced, meaning that anything beyond the barest essentials of food, water, shelter, primary health care and primary education was unavailable to most refugees and others of concern to us in 1998. We anticipate facing similar shortfalls in 1999 and 2000.

I would like to give some examples of the impacts of budget reductions last year. In Rwanda a budget of $58.9m was reduced to $52.1m, leaving only life-sustaining activities. Programmes in shelter, sanitation and reforestation were stopped along with 7 out of 11 water projects. The Rwanda Women's Initiative (to which I shall refer later) was reduced in half and returnee support was also cut severely. In Guinea and Liberia, only $2.7 of a $7.9 budget was raised by the end of July, delaying the start-up of health, nutrition, water and sanitation activities. Eighteen thousand refugees had to be relocated from an insecure border. The Liberian repatriation operation also suffered from late contributions and received only $29m of the $32.7 requested. Therefore, UNHCR encouraged refugees to find their own transportation home, reduced the repatriation package, was unable to help vulnerable returnees to build shelters and cancelled completely reintegration activities (roads, schools, water supply and sanitation) in two of five counties. UNHCR monitoring, in a tense and not entirely welcoming return environment, was at a minimum, dependent on too few staff and too little communications equipment. In former Yugoslavia (excluding Kosovo) an initial budget of $200m was reduced to $175.9m, causing the

cancellation of shelter and income-generating programmes. In the CIS, only $30.1m of a $37.4m budget was raised, leaving 400 families in Azerbaijan without shelter assistance, three collective centers unrehabilitated and 40 families without sheep herds they had been promised. In Afghanistan, with only $13.1m of a $20.9m budget received, returns from Iran had to be slowed down. A slightly different problem is that we continue to rely solely on U.S. funding for monitoring of returnees in Vietnam and Laos.

These frightening budget shortfalls affect not only refugees and UNHCR, but also the 400 ngos who are our implementing partners and through whom between one-third and two-fifths of UNHCR's budget is channelled. Of the 26 partners who receive more than $2m, ten are American, the International Rescue Committee alone getting $23m. Almost 30% of ngo funding goes to American ngos.

Programming

All of these elements--refugee populations, funding requirements, ngos--come together through annual programming exercises conducted initially at field level with the active participation of host governments (who must request our intervention in the first place) and with increasingly frequent involvement of interested donors. As I speak, a PRM delegation is in Tanzania closely following our programming and budgeting planning exercise for the year 2000. Through constant reform measures, including downsizing, greater decentralization, including collaboration with partners coupled with more rigorous headquarters oversight and full transparency with its Executive Committee, UNHCR each year improves its ability to plan more appropriately over longer periods, to attend to special refugee needs (inter alia, for women, children and the environment), basic reintegration needs and to move generally toward the durable solutions, whether repatriation, local integration or resettlement, that all refugees and those who work with them so ardently desire.

More needs to be done

Much more should be on the agenda: we should be pushing for higher and more consistent standards of assistance across continents and even within single country programmes; we should be able once again to offer tertiary education and adult literacy programmes; both preventive and curative health, nutrition and sanitation activities should go beyond the little we can fund under present budget constraints; and we should not have to beg and plead to be able to respond to the needs of victims of violence, amputations and mutilations.

Refugees are predominantly women and children in countries unable to provide for the needs of their own citizens. UNHCR is struggling to justify basic needs when it should be working with its partners to help refugees deal with the trauma of war and separation, sexual violence and uncertain futures. At least simple recreational activities could be added to the basic literacy and numeracy programs which themselves reach only 30% of refugee children at this time. Widows and child-headed households need skills training to meet the needs of the families they are desperately trying to keep together.

With special funding from the U.S. and other donors, UNHCR has recruited Regional Officers for Women and Children. It has designed a peace education curriculum to help refugee children and their families understand the need for tolerance and begin reconciliation efforts in their communities. In Liberia, working closely with UNICEF and UNESCO, UNHCR has helped develop a curriculum and training programme for teachers, covering special education, life skills training and counselling programs for adolescents and their families, including former child soldiers, seeking to return to productive lives. These are programs which, if there were funds to replicate them, could play a vital role in other refugee and returnee communities, e.g. in Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda and Afghanistan.

We know that we could reduce the incidence of infectious, respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases if we had sufficient resources, better and more adequate water supplies, additional sanitation facilities and even simple items such as soap. And we have not even begun to address the environmental damage caused by large population movements or to take the first steps of providing alternative cooking fuels in

areas where gathering firewood puts refugees at risk of attacks and landmine injuries. (The list of "slightly-beyond-essential-maybe-reaching-decency-but-not-yet-dignity" needs could go on.)

Populations

I would like now to describe the major populations UNHCR was responsible for protecting, and with its partners, trying to assist (figures are from the beginning of 1998). The largest refugee groups were the following:

2.6m Afghans mainly in Iran and Pakistan;
630,700 Iraqis in Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia;
620,000 Bosnians in FRY, Germany, Croatia, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland;
524,400 Somalis in Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen and Djibouti;
515,800 Barundi in Tanzania, DRC, Rwanda and Zambia;
486,700 Liberians in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Sierra Leone;
351,300 Sudanese in Uganda, DRC Ethiopia, Kenya, CAR;
342,000 Croatians in FRY and Bosnia;
328,300 Sierra Leoneans in Guinea, Liberia and Gambia; and
316,600 Vietnamese in China, France, Sweden and Switzerland.

Returnee populations (see footnoted repatriation statistics) which are of particular concern are the Rwandans, Bosnians, Barundi, Afghans, Angolans, Somalis and Congolese, i.e. those who have repatriated to less than stable circumstances. Idps also demanding special attention are:

816,000 in Bosnia,
670,000 in Sierra Leone,
586,100 in Burundi,
551,000 in Azerbaijan,
337,000 in the Russian Federation,
296,800 in Afghanistan,
273,400 in Georgia,
265,000 in Cyprus,
200,000 in Northwest Somalia,
200,000 in Sri Lanka,
166,000 in Liberia.

Simply citing these figures already evokes the complexity of working with displacement issues, since there is a demonstrable overlap (and obvious recurrence) of refugees, returnees and idps in the same or neighboring locations--each group requiring separate but equal attention and assistance, but each one viewed and dealt with by countries of origin and asylum in different and often inconsistent, if not contradictory, ways. At the same time, the examples point to other problems, viz. populations who are "repeaters" (Angolans) or who have been receiving assistance over long periods (Afghans, Somalis, Sudanese) and for whom there is no obvious durable solution, and, therefore, for whom it is increasingly difficult to solicit contributions.

Examples and Issues: Kosovo and Sierra Leone

Let me go into brief illustrative detail about only two of our currently most demanding operations, Kosovo (not even visible in the data so far presented) and West Africa, specifically Sierra Leone.

Kosovo

In Kosovo we are responsible for the humanitarian needs of what is largely an idp population. This responsibility devolves from UNHCR's having been assigned the lead humanitarian role in former Yugoslavia since 1991. UNHCR has a Special Envoy who covers the whole of former Yugoslavia, now devoting an inordinate amount of his time to Kosovo, a Representative in Belgrade who is also attending to the needs of the largest refugee population in the region, viz. the half million Bosnians and Croatians

in Serbia, and, in Pristina itself, a Head of Office complemented by three field offices, serving around 200,000 current or former displaced persons inside Kosovo alone. Kosovo, like Bosnia before it, has the attention of the international community and, given a daunting logistic, security and political situation, is served by a sufficient number of fairly well funded international institutions, from ngos to the Kosovo Verification Mission (to NATO). Because of the high profile of Kosovo on the international scene and the eagerness of the international community to rely on humanitarian assistance until a political solution is found, UNHCR finds itself devoting human and financial resources out of proportion to what it is able to do elsewhere in the world.

Several of UNHCR's challenges or dilemmas are illustrated by Kosovo One of these is dealing with the changing nature of wars, now that many are internal with civilians as targets. This means that, instead of being on the safe side of borders where people have taken refuge from conflict or persecution, we are working in the midst of conflict, having to deal with new security concerns, and, importantly, having to raise funds for the high cost of protecting both our staff and our beneficiaries. Another is acting as a humanitarian substitute for the lack of political will which, inter alia, compromises our impartiality, delays resolution of the crisis (for which we are then blamed), and often, by its narrow emphasis, obstructs possible bridging of the relief to development gap. A third is handling the visibility (CNN) factor, i.e. balancing the needs of, and our attention to, populations who are not of interest to the world media with those who are.

On the other hand, a Kosovo, like a Bosnia, is able to elicit support for some of the more creative and innovative ideas in refugee protection and assistance which then have a chance for replication elsewhere. One of the best examples of this is the U.S. inspired (and initially funded) Bosnian Women's Initiative which relied on the skills of Bosnian women themselves to organize and work for political and legal change, to design successful profit-making activities, monitor and report on them, i.e. prove their achievements, and plough funds back into the project. The Initiative was later duplicated with similar success (albeit with only half the budget requested) in Rwanda, where it benefited genocide survivors through legal protection, income-generation and shelter for the elderly and child-headed households.

Sierra Leone

In West Africa, Sierra Leone presents a stunning contrast to Kosovo and Bosnia, being largely absent from the world's attention, despite the number of those affected, the degree of suffering endured and the consequent special needs (most especially for unaccompanied minors and mutilated people of all ages) one would expect more privileged nations to want to meet, not only through funding, but other avenues such as resettlement. And here, as in the Kosovo example, we are confronting the changing nature of war as well as the changing nature of occasional, periodic peace, i.e. a peace that is persistently unstable and fragile. Even more than in Kosovo, there is little interest or willingness on the part of the international community to engage in a country which needs help in everything from peacekeeping, to rebuilding basic infrastructure which has been destroyed, to recreating governance and other institutions of civil society. The humanitarian agencies find themselves stuck and alone in a situation where they have gone as far as they can go and as far as donors want them to go, with no one to whom they can handover their relief and pre-development activities. And because of the region's being generally neglected and ignored, little joint planning or collaboration has taken place on the part of the larger development community and international financial institutions. High Commissioner Ogata has taken the lead, along with World Bank Director Wolfensohn, in convoking a group of UN and ngo operational and development agencies, donors and the international financial institutions to come up with a plan to overcome the organizational and financial gaps which leave so many countries assistance-less just at the moment they most need backing for the leap from crisis to stability.

There are similarities, however, in the areas of staff security concerns requiring training, equipment and additional human resources, and the need to engage in long term reconciliation efforts to end, and prevent resumption of, conflict and to avoid recurring population displacements. But the programmes for Sierra Leoneans refugees in Guinea, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire have been chronically under-funded and remain so today despite the efforts of donor refugee officials, ngos and UNHCR to

spotlight the region (the Liberian emergency in the early nineties having had the same problem). What more can be done to rouse the world than showing the pictures and citing the testimony of those who have been wantonly, cruelly and senselessly mutilated by terrorists in their own country?

The United States

Leadership

As always, UNHCR looks to the United States for leadership. It is the U S we count on being able to cite as a model, not just for funding, but for thinking of new ways to respond or expanding old methods. As I have already noted, the U.S. has been leading the way in new project ideas, in activities which benefit the most needy refugees, often women and children, and (along with the Japanese) in promoting attention to environmental and health concerns in responding to large population movements.

Resettlement

The U.S. resettlement programme, e.g., takes as many refugees as all other countries combined and focuses on those in need of protection or special care rather than (as is the case for some other countries) looking only for those with scarce skills. The programme is also an extraordinary example of smooth collaboration among international agencies, ngos and several different parts of a government which works to the advantage of now about 80,000 refugees every year At this moment we are in negotiation with PRM about additional groups from Bosnia (5,000 in Germany) and Somalia (10,000) as well as smaller groups with special needs, such as the Sierra Leonean victims of mutilation

Detention

As the U.S. encourages governments abroad to improve their treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, we would ask that at least in one respect the Government review its own standards I am speaking of the treatment of asylum-seekers, viz. the secondary inspection, expedited removal and credible fear procedures contained in the 1996 Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act which may lead to sending asylum-seekers back to conditions of persecution and which have led to unreasonable periods of detention for many (detention for asylum-seekers in any case contravening the UNHCR Guidelines on Detention). While we recognize the right of Governments to control their borders and detain persons who may be of risk to the community, we at the same time hope the U.S. Government will meet their treaty obligations in the implementation of asylum procedures I am aware that this is an area not of precise concern to this subcommittee, but it is one where we need a standard to be set (and all the help we can get in re-setting it). Refugees fleeing persecution cannot afford a "fortress America" alongside "fortress Europe."

Conclusion

In conclusion, UNHCR is very grateful for both the political and financial support it receives from the U.S. Government, and would ask that whenever possible contributions be made early enough in the programme year for our activities to make a difference. UNHCR also appreciates the constructive relationships it has with its many American ngo operational and advocacy partners The Office intends to strengthen and expand these relationships to promote an awareness of, and positive attitudes toward, refugees and others of our concern throughout the country, beyond the east and west coasts. And, in line with the UN Secretary-General's initiatives and those of our High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, we are at the initial stages of attempting to broaden our contacts with other parts of civil society, academia, foundations and the private sector. These, too, we hope will advance the notion of refugees, not as victims or burdens,
but as potentially valuable contributors to, and builders of, their host communities, whether those are in western Tanzania or downtown Washington, D.C.

*See attached charts of Persons of Concern to UNHCR on 1 January 1998, IDPs and Repatriants. Note that the 1998 number is almost 400,000 fewer than the 1997, thanks mainly to repatriation (to Rwanda, 220,300; Bosnia, 108,500; Burundi, 89,300; Afghanistan, 887,000; Sudan, 63,300; Angola, 54,000; Somalia, 51,800; DRC, 45,100; Mali, 33,500; and Bangladesh, 16,500).

**See attached funding charts.

Annex 1

UNHCR Persons of Concern 1999*					
Region	Refugees	Asylum-seekers	Returnees	Others of concern and internally displaced persons	Total
Africa	3,481,700	37,700	2,171,700	1,694,000	7,385,100
Asia	4,730,300	15,000	824,100	1,889,100	7,458,500
Europe	2,940,700	267,400	459,400	2,389,000	6,056,500
Latin America	83,200	600	17,800	1,700	103,300
North America	668,500	626,400			1,294,900
Oceania	71,100	6,900			78,000
Total	11,975,500	954,000	3,473,000	5,973,800	22,376,300

Figures as of 1 January 1998.
*From UNHCR 1999 Global Appeal

Annex 2

Major voluntary repatriation movements in 1997, by destination (10 largest movements) *		
To (country of origin)	From (country of asylum)	Total
Rwanda	D.R. Congo, Tanzania, Uganda	220,300
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Germany, Austria, Switzerland	108,500
Burundi	Tanzania, D.R. Congo, Rwanda	89,300
Afghanistan	Pakistan, Iran	87,000
Sudan	Uganda	63,300
Angola	D.R. Congo, Zambia	54,000
Somalia	Ethiopia, Libya	51,800
D.R.Congo	Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia	45,100
Mali	Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Algeria	33,500
Bangladesh	India	16,500

*From UNHCR By Numbers

Annex 3

Estimates of major populations of IDPs of concern to UNHCR during 1997 (groups over 100,000)	
Country	IDPs
Bosnia-Herzegovina	816,000
Sierra Leone	670,000
Burundi	586,100
Azerbaijan	551,100
Russian Federation	337,000
Afghanistan	296,800
Georgia	273,400
Cyprus	265,000
Somalia, North-Western	200,000
Sri Lanka	200,000
Liberia	166,000

*From UNHCR By Numbers
Note: The figures included here do not necessarily represent the total number of IDPs in the countries concerned.

Annex 4

UNHCR's Budget for 1999

UNHCR's total requirements for 1999 is US$ 914.8 million (US$ 413.0 million under General Programmes and US$ 482.0 under Special Programmes). US$ 19.8 is contributed from the United Nations Regular Budget. Detailed budgets are presented in the following sections of the Global Appeal.
Budgets per region are presented by country and divided between General and Special Programmes.

Budgets per country/situation are presented by sector and may cover activities in one single country or in several countries.

Budget - totals by region in US$

	General Programmes	Special Programmes	Regular Budget	Total
Great Lakes	4,426,100	93,510,612		97,936,712
West Africa	46,193,900	34,310,845		80,504,745
East and Horn of Africa	68,267,000	27,820,227		96,087,227
Southern Africa	13,521,200	5,727,932		19,249,132
North Africa	4,612,500	3,274,763		7,887,263
Middle East	19,062,600	1,063,500		20,126,100
South Asia	8,511,800	25,286,508		33,798,308
East Asia and the Pacific	10,566,200	13,837,658		24,403,858
South-West Asia	27,606,300	15,190,384		42,796,684
Central Asia	4,587,200	3,429,265		8,016,465
Eastern Europe	11,676,900	36,605,182		48,282,082
Former Yugoslavia and Albania	1,813,700	154,437,447		156,251,147
Central Europe	10,205,600			10,205,600
Western Europe	14,826,500	1,916,942		16,743,442
Turkey	4,026,300	27,719		4,054,019
South America	7,093,700	240,000		7,333,700
Central America	11,272,500	2,578,180		13,850,680
North America	4,889,200			4,889,200
Other Programmes	25,370,900	21,926,978		47,297,878
Headquarters	36,069,900	31,185,250	19,760,499	87,015,649
Junior Professional Officers		9,667,870		9,667,870
SUB-TOTAL	334,600,000	482,037,262	19,760,499	836,397,761
Emergency fund	25,000,000			25,000,000
Voluntary Repatriation Fund	20,000,000			20,000,000
Programme Reserve	33,400,000			33,400,000
GRAND TOTAL	413,000,000	482,037,262	19,760,499	914,797,761

* From UNHCR 1999 Global Appeal

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am honored by the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Reynold Levy. It is my privilege to serve as the president of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Founded at the suggestion of Albert Einstein, for sixty-five years the IRC has provided assistance to refugees and the internally displaced around the world. We are the only U.S. based organization that implements overseas assistance programs and provides domestic refugee resettlement services. With a budget exceeding 80 million dollars, the IRC implements relief and assistance programs in 25 countries around the world and offers resettlement services in 19 cities throughout the U.S..

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, Americans should be proud of the work that their civil servants and voluntary agencies perform on behalf of the world's most vulnerable populations. Every year thousands of lives are saved and millions are improved because of the generosity of the American public. These well-designed assistance and resettlement programs should not be judged solely by their favorable humanitarian impact. Such programs also help foster political stability and economic development, and– by extension–they advance our national interest in many ways.

Today we are confronted by wars in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo that threaten to destabilize entire regions if left unchecked. The role of humanitarian assistance and refugee resettlement in alleviating suffering and protecting at-risk individuals can substantially diminish the pressures that cause such conflicts to expand. But current policy is constrained by misperceptions about the needs of refugees and the American capacity to respond generously, creatively and energetically to these needs.

The IRC's mission is to save lives and to alleviate the suffering of refugees and the displaced. Americans are acutely conscious of the singularity of their country's origins and the blessings of our affluence. Our founding, rooted in escape from oppression, predisposes Americans to care about the plight of others. And our wealth permits us to express this concern by staying deeply engaged in the world's affairs.

This morning I would like to focus on U.S. refugee resettlement policy. I will explore five common myths about refugee protection and admissions and contrast them with their corresponding realities. If realities are to govern our approach to refugee resettlement policy, then I submit that the U.S. admission's program should grow and that all of the necessary resources to make it more flexible, robust and responsive should be forthcoming.

Myth One: There are not many more refugees who actually need resettlement in the United States than we already admit.

Reality:

The Administration has proposed a FY 2000 ceiling of 80,000 refugee admissions--an increase in 5,000 refugees from the FY 1999 ceiling. This increase represents a reversal in the seven year trend of declining or stable refugee admissions under the current Administration. We at the IRC applaud this proposed increase. But even at 80,000, the numbers of refugees we propose to admit to the U.S. next year is 40% less than the total number of refugees admitted in FY 1993 when 131,293 came to our shores. This decline in refugee admissions also represents a departure from historic levels that in the seventies and eighties consistently ran over 100,000 annually.

Our staff around the world do not believe that this decline is related to or justified by a lack of eligible candidates meeting the criteria of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. To the contrary, refugee numbers are on the rise, and those subject to persecution if they return home are rising as well.

Consider for a moment the Bosnians who are unable to safely return to their homes and remain stranded in Germany and Croatia. The Russian Jews who face a rising tide of anti-Semitism. The Burmese who for years languished in camps along the Thai border. The Afghan women along the border of Pakistan who fear repression under the Taliban. The Iraqis scattered throughout the Middle-East following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Somali Bantus who have been confined for as many as ten years in camps in Kenya. And the Vietnamese who worked with the American government during the Vietnam war.

Indeed, I have just returned from a trip to West Africa. I have seen with my own eyes the terrified Sierra Leoneans in Guinea who have fled from atrocities of the most depraved kind. Their relatives in the U.S. are besieging our offices in Atlanta, Washington and elsewhere hoping to find and reunite with those they left behind. And I have seen in Cote d'Ivoire Krahn refugees, former members of the Liberian military and refugees who politically oppose Charles Taylor unable to go home without risking their lives.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of significant numbers of refugees that have fled their countries of birth in fear of religious, ethnic, and political persecution. According to analysis by the U.S. Committee on Refugees, the number of refugees worldwide now exceeds 13 million and the number of internally displaced exceeds 17 million. Hundreds of thousands of individuals within these populations require the protection that only the durable solution of resettlement can provide.

Within countries of first asylum, many of these refugees find themselves warehoused in sprawling camps with the barest necessities for survival. Unless the conditions in their country of nationality allow for return, or unless they are forcibly repatriated, they may remain in these squalid conditions for years, marginalized and largely forgotten.

Refugees in need of resettlement are present in abundance. What is at issue is whether we have the will, the resources, and the mechanisms to identify within these populations individuals meeting the eligibility criteria of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. The current identification techniques and staffing are simply inadequate, slow-moving, and relatively inflexible.

For example the current system has us relying--in large part--on referrals to our program from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). By UNHCR's own admission, it lacks the resources necessary to discharge fully this obligation. Moreover, the culture of UNHCR quite naturally inclines its staff to encourage repatriation and third country care and maintenance rather than resettlement.

Another challenge is the very limited capacity of U.S. embassies abroad to identify and process refugees. While this does occur occasionally, in many cases Ambassadors are unaware of this authority, or their staffs are already so overburdened and under trained that they cannot possibly fulfill this function.

Flexibility and adaptability are needed. In areas where the UNHCR cannot satisfy its identification obligations we should rely on other resources. For example, we at the IRC are exploring right now the possibility of our staff in specific regions participating in the refugee identification function. In regard to embassies there should be consideration of seconding staff from NGOs to work full time on identification and processing issues. And voluntary agencies like IRC are prepared to assist in the training of UNHCR, embassy and INS staff whenever doing so would be helpful.

All of these innovations and others are possible. What is needed is a commitment from the Administration and the Congress to raise the admissions ceiling to help meet the rise in the numbers of refugees who qualify.

Myth Two: The United States cannot afford to spend anymore money on refugees.

Reality

As the most powerful and influential nation on earth, the U.S. cannot afford to be anything but fully engaged in the affairs of the world. The emergence of global markets has made us ever more conscious of the need for political stability and economic growth. But the

U.S. is driven by more than its economic might and its political interests. America's actions abroad are an expression of its values. The expenditure of billions of dollars to provide relief and promote stability in the Balkans can be justified from both a humanitarian and a national interest perspective. Comparably, the failure to dramatically increase American assistance to Sierra Leone, the world's poorest country now suffering in perhaps the world's most brutal war, would be indefensible. Our actions are watched as closely in Africa for their constancy and their credibility as are the actions of NATO in Belgrade.

Our response to these challenges must transcend the myth that refugee resettlement and assistance programs come from one relatively fixed and inflexible budget. After all, we are in the midst of the longest period of economic expansion in post-World War II history. Whatever should be up is up. Employment. Consumer confidence. Economic growth. Labor productivity. The federal budget surplus. The Dow Jones. The NASDAQ. And the S & P. And whatever is down should be down . Inflation. Unemployment. Interest rates.

If this is not a period when America can afford to be more generous to the victims of persecution and violence, when will such a day dawn? It is a myth to view the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account as a zero sum game where an increase in one program must be offset at the expense of another.

It costs approximately 1,400 dollars to process and resettle a refugee. To increase our admissions ceiling by twenty thousand refugees and return it to historic levels would cost 28 million dollars in addition to the 122.9 million currently allocated for resettlement. This additional amount would bring the MRA appropriation to 688 million, still well below its 704.5 million authorization.

The impediment here is not just money. Refugees are too often characterized as a burden to be shouldered rather than an investment to be treasured. Last November the IRC was privileged to honor Andrew Grove, the chairman of Intel. Forty-three years ago, the IRC resettled Andy and his family into the U.S.. Who could have foreseen that this frightened 20 year-old fleeing from the Hungarian revolution would found a company that supplies the computer chips that drive 90% of the world's software? Intel has 38,900 employees in America. It is capitalized at 189 billion dollars. It is one of America's leading exporters.

Is there anyone who would argue that resettling Andy Grove was an expense the nation could or can ill-afford? How about former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger; or Henry Grunwald, the former editor-in-chief of *Time* magazine; or Felix Rhoatyn, our current ambassador to France; or Michael Blumenthal a former Secretary of the Treasury? All are refugees, and all are members of IRC's Board of Trustees.

They fully share my conviction that America has not yet finished welcoming to our shore the likes of Andy Grove or Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Refugees build our nation. Highly motivated, they seek employment quickly, flock to educational opportunities and zealously support their families. To see them principally as an expense, rather than as an investment, is to ignore history.

Myth Three: Local communities and the voluntary sector cannot absorb any more refugees. The current level is the "saturation" point.

Reality:

In addition to our overseas processing network, IRC has offices in 19 cities where we resettled 9,519 refugees in the last fiscal year. This represents a fraction of the private voluntary organization (PVO), church group, and community resources that are devoted to this function. I can assure this Committee that we collectively would welcome, and could smoothly accommodate, a significant increase in refugee admissions.

The readiness of Americans to support our engagement in the world's affairs is abundant as evidenced by growth in overseas travel, in the numbers of American students studying abroad, in the sustained popularity of the Peace Corps, and in the rise in charitable contributions of Americans to international humanitarian organizations. According to the *Economist* there has been a 15% increase in such giving over the last two years. These are indicators of broad public awareness and sophistication about America's multifaceted role in the world.

A good example of a public/private partnership is the federally-funded Office of Refugee Resettlement Matching-Grant Program. During FY '98, this program assisted some 15,000 refugees to achieve self-sufficiency within four months of arrival. This was accomplished through early employment placement coupled with local community support, including volunteer participation and in-kind donations of household and other essential items. While it is true that voluntary resettlement agencies depend upon federal assistance programs to help refugees following arrival to the United States, most refugees find employment shortly thereafter and rapidly integrate into the local economy. At present, more than 90% of the working-age refugees IRC resettles who come to America without family find employment within six months of arrival.

Myth Four: If the United States agrees to take more refugees from one region, we must then reduce the number of refugees taken from other regions (i.e. more Africans means fewer Eastern Europeans, and vice versa.)

Reality:

Each year, the President, in consultation with Congress, determines how many refugees will be permitted to enter the country. The Refugee Act of 1980 does not provide a formulaic, preset budgetary limit for the admission's program. In practice, we need not complacently accept a program that stops short of addressing vital humanitarian needs simply because the underlying budget for that fiscal year fails to address actual needs.

But the relevancy of this issue hangs on two systemic problems, both of which I have emphasized today. The State Department needs to apply a more flexible approach in determining the number of refugees that may qualify for the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. And the Administration and Congress must make raising the refugee admissions ceiling a priority.

Let me offer two examples where a failure to make these adjustments has prevented an adequate response to a pressing humanitarian need. UNHCR's Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe recently requested that the State Department increase by 5,000 the number of places available to Bosnian refugees in Germany. According to the letter these refugees "meet the established UNHCR and United States criteria for resettlement and are unable to return in safety and dignity to their preset-war homes." The letter goes on to state that accepting these additional five thousand refugees would prevent their repatriation and perhaps contribute to a relaxation of Germany's current policy of returning refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The State Department appears disinclined to grant this request in part because it would then have to reduce refugee admissions from other regions. Essentially the same situation has occurred with regards to a group of 10,000 Somali Bantu refugees in the Dadaab Camp in Kenya. These admissions, it seems, would come at the expense of other worthy applicants. We can understand the State Department's dilemma There are so many populations in need of resettlement under the current dropped ceiling that to take numbers from one region and give to another poses a Hobson's choice

By raising the ceiling, we can reduce the harshness of these difficult decisions and accommodate more worthy and eligible refugees.

Myth Five: There is limited Congressional or public support for the refugee program.

Reality:

Polling by the National Immigration Forum reveals that when the public understands the

---

Testimony of Reynold Levy, President of the International Rescue Committee, Before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, March 9, 1999. Page 6

facts and underlying elements of refugee persecution and suffering, they support resettlement to the U.S. by a nearly 3 to 1 margin.

I would like to add to that statistic my own personal observation of the thousands of individuals who sign up to volunteer with the IRC each year. I can assure you, there is deeply-rooted support for refugees all around the country.

As for the Congress, I have in my possession a letter to the President requesting an increase in the current ceiling for the fiscal year 2000 to "be within their historic range of at least 100,000." Chairman Smith I applaud you and the other members of the International Relations Committee and the House including Chairman Gilman, Mr. Conyers, Mr. Lantos, Mr. Payne, Mr. Berman, Ms. Ros-Lethinen, and Mr. Menendez for signing this letter. On the Senate side, Senator's Kennedy, Hatch, Abraham and Leahy have also sent a letter to the President requesting a similar increase in the admissions ceiling.

Mr. Chairman, I beseech you and your like-minded colleagues to move from elocution to execution. Please broaden and deepen the bipartisan support for the refugee cause reflected in the names of the cosigners of these letters. Please give this issue the priority it deserves.

Refugee resettlement and assistance are matters of life and death, health and illness, families happily reunited or ruptured by separation. The fate of tens of thousands of refugees languishing in third countries who cannot go home again is determined each year by whether we use an infinitesimal portion of taxpayer support to open the American door slightly wider to the oppressed and to the persecuted.

Only prevailing myths would keep the admissions ceiling at a historically low level. The realities, some of which I have sketched today, invite us to end the century with outstretched hands to more of the world's vulnerable for whom resettlement is necessary and desirable.

Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today.

InterAction
American Council for Voluntary International Action

1717 Massachusetts Avenue N.W. #801 Washington, D.C. 20036 • phone (202) 667-8227 fax (202) 667-8236 • email ia@interaction.org • http://www.interaction.org

TESTIMONY

Regarding

Foreign Relations Authorization for
Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001: Refugees & Migration

by

Donald N. Hammond
Chair, Inter*Action* Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs
Senior Vice President, World Relief Corporation

before the

House Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights

March 9, 1999

Introduction

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify on the United States refugee admissions program for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. We welcome this opportunity to share our views on refugee admissions and appropriations with you.

My name is Don Hammond. I am Senior Vice President of World Relief, an international relief, development, and refugee assistance organization that works through churches and church bodies. World Relief provides life-saving assistance to suffering people around the world through disaster response, refugee resettlement, health education and micro-enterprise development.

I also serve as Chair of Inter*Action's* Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs (CMRA), which includes all of the U.S. voluntary agencies involved in refugee resettlement. The CMRA meets regularly with the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) to discuss refugee admissions and identify new refugee groups in need of resettlement. Every year, the CMRA presents a substantive document to the State Department, outlining our proposed recommendations for refugee admissions and identifying broad categories of refugees in need of resettlement.

Today, my summary will highlight some of those refugees who are not able to access the U.S. Refugee Program for resettlement.

U.S. Leadership is Imperative

The United States has historically been the world leader in refugee protection and resettlement. The U.S. refugee resettlement program is a powerful sign to the rest of the world that our government is willing not only to provide assistance to refugees, but also to welcome them for permanent resettlement in our country. While we continue this tradition, we are deeply concerned by the Administration's efforts to close the door rather than rescue more refugees.

Our nation's leadership on refugee protection is imperative. Under the current Administration, the United States government has drastically decreased the number of refugees

admitted to the United States - from 142,000 admissions in 1992 to a mere 78,000 admissions in 1999.

Resettlement as an Instrument of Protection

We believe that resettlement is a vital instrument of international protection, particularly for refugees who have no other options and have urgent protection needs. According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees, there are more than 13 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. For most, returning home when conditions permit is the preferred solution, and in recent years large numbers have indeed returned home. Resettlement in the United States and other developed countries is not the preferred option for most of the world's refugees, nor should the United States fling its doors wide open to anyone claiming to be a refugee. However, for a small number of refugees—less than 1% -- resettlement is the only viable option. These refugees include torture survivors, women and children at risk, ethnically mixed families, and persons under immediate threat to their lives or safety.

Increasingly, we see that third country resettlement is a critical means of relieving pressure on countries of first asylum, and often spells the difference between forced repatriation into the hands of persecutors and temporary protection for refugees. Our failure to rescue refugees for whom resettlement is the best option threatens to undermine the international community's tenuous commitment to protecting refugees throughout the world. At minimum, the United States must continue to offer the protection of resettlement to some of these vulnerable people in the hope that other nations will follow our example and share responsibility for the world's refugees.

The headlines of the past few months confirm massacres in Kosovo; ethnic strife in Sierra Leone with torture not seen since the "killing fields" of Cambodia, Rwanda and Sarajevo; a rising ultra-nationalism and anti-Semitism in Russia; the persecution of Christians in Sudan; the jailing of dissidents in Cuba; and continued political unrest in many nations. There are millions of internally displaced people who are not able to cross international borders but remain in refugee type situations in many countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Caucuses. There are millions of people around the world who are persecuted because of their ethnic background, religious beliefs, or political associations. Many who are able to flee their countries end up languishing indefinitely in grim refugee camps.

The refugee situation today is more complex and demanding than during the Cold War. Our research indicates that resettlement needs will continue to surpass by far the capacity of an enhanced U.S. admissions program. Our task, then, has been to identify broad categories of refugees in urgent need of resettlement and to build or improve processing mechanisms for interviewing and transporting them as quickly and efficiently as possible. We believe the generosity of the American people will sustain a level of at least 119,000 admissions in Fiscal Year 2000. In Fiscal Year 2001 and beyond, we believe the United States should allow for the admissions of an absolute minimum of 100,000 refugees annually.

One troubling aspect about the U.S. Refugee Program has been the apparent barricades erected to keep refugees from accessing resettlement. Third country resettlement is a small but viable option for the world's refugees, which must be kept intact in order to truly protect people in grave danger. Yet it is often the most vulnerable refugees who are unable to access our program.

The Human Face of U.S. Refugee Policy

Here are a few stories among many -- of individuals and groups with special resettlement needs. The names have been altered or are not included to protect the refugees and their families from future retributions.

Sierra Leone

Mrs. K is a widow with two young children from Sierra Leone. In the immediate aftermath of the May 25 military coup, soldiers looted and vandalized her home. She was brutally raped, and her husband killed as he tried to protect his family. She fled to Guinea, but was harassed there by Guinean security personnel. Eventually she made her way to Ghana, where she and her children were granted temporary refugee status, but given no financial support. They survive with the meager assistance of friends. In order for Mrs. K to access the U.S. resettlement program, she must get a referral from the UNHCR.

UNHCR, overwhelmed by meeting the assistance needs of refugee camp populations, historically refers a very small number of people for third country resettlement. With UNHCR as a

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

gate-keeper, people with compelling refugee claims such as Mrs. K don't even show up on our radar screen for potential resettlement.

The UNHCR has just released the "Report on Atrocities Committed Against the Sierra Leone Population," completed by the UNHCR Guinea office, which documents a campaign of mutilation and other serious atrocities against the local population. The victims of this violence and armed conflict remain not only mentally affected, but physically handicapped for the rest of their lives.

Azerbaijan

A mixed Armenian-Azeri family residing in Azerbaijan lost their home and were forced to flee into the mountains for a time. As Christian Armenians, they are a minority population that have been persecuted historically. This family has been denied employment and their children have been beaten. They live in constant fear of violence as mixed families are targets for rape, torture, and murder. This family has been denied access to the U.S. program because they don't fit into the current categories of people being resettled from the former Soviet Union.

Bosnians in Germany

The United States has allocated 12,000 refugee admissions for refugees from the former Yugoslavia who are now living in Germany, under threat of involuntary repatriation by local German authorities. With overall U.S. refugee admissions at a low point, on January 14, 1999, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) wrote the State Department, requesting an additional 5000 admissions for Bosnians out of Germany. In UNHCR's estimate, in the absence of new resettlement places in the U.S. program, German authorities will likely refuse to delay deportations for those applicants who are in queue for third country resettlement, since the pipeline is oversubscribed for the U.S. program for this fiscal year.

In UNHCR's estimate, the impact of these involuntary returns from Germany would have a severe impact on some parts of Bosnia, in that "such returns are not occurring in safety or dignity and often are not sustainable."

In spite of this compelling plea from UNHCR, and in spite of the statistical fact that refugee admissions to the United States are lower than they have been in years, the State Department promptly rejected the request from UNHCR.

Somali Bantu Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recently requested the United States designate the 10,000 Somali Bantu (Mushunguli) refugees registered with UNHCR at the Dadaab camps in Kenya since January 1, 1999, as a "Priority Two Group of Special Concern," and that they be resettled during calendar years 1999 and 2000.

UNHCR has determined that this group, which has languished in refugee camps for the last five years, is in need of a durable solution in the form of resettlement, as neither local integration nor voluntary repatriation will be possible. UNHCR had hoped that the population could be resettled in Mozambique or Tanzania, where the refugees have ancestral ties dating back 200 years. However, after extensive talks with the government of Mozambique, and after massive influxes of Rwandan, Burundian and Congolese refugees into Tanzania, UNHCR has determined that neither government will be able to accept this population for resettlement in the foreseeable future.

Although the Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration has not yet responded to this request, we hope that the response will be positive. We remain concerned, however, that their recent rejection of UNHCR's request to expand Bosnian resettlement out of Germany will be repeated.

It appears that UNHCR in Bosnia and Africa may actually have surpassed the Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration in terms of supporting resettlement as a durable solution. This long sought after support for resettlement within UNHCR cannot be sustained if the United States continues to dismiss UNHCR's requests for resettlement, particularly at a time when refugee admissions have declined by 40 per cent.

The Former Soviet Union

Mr. Chairman, as you are aware from your chairmanship of the January 11 Helsinki Commission hearing on human rights in Russia, there is increasing concern over the recent

expression of hatred toward religious and ethnic minorities in Russia by government officials and others, particularly when placed in the context of the historical realities of Russia and the deterioration of social, political and economic conditions in many of the former Soviet republics. While President Yeltsin has made some attempt to address neo-fascism and intolerance in Russia, leading local and national officials continue to make public statements blaming the current crises on vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities. Indeed, the hearing record contains numerous reports of increasing incidents of crimes - which go uninvestigated, unsolved and unpunished - targeting vulnerable minorities.

We are disturbed that, as anti-Semitism and intolerance towards religious minorities and others has dramatically increased in Russia in the last few months, so have the denial rates of Lautenberg category applicants applying to INS for refugee status in Moscow. In fact, the denial rate of Lautenberg applicants applying for refugee status, which was under 6% in Fiscal Year 1993, climbed to 11% for Jews and 30% for Evangelicals in Fiscal Year 1997, and by Fiscal Year 1998 the overall denial rate soared to nearly 50%.

The INS has been unable to explain why, as religious intolerance has intensified in the former Soviet Union (FSU), the denial rate for religious minorities and others applying to the United States for refugee status has soared in recent months from under 10% to nearly 50%. Nor have INS and the State Department been able to explain why, after the Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 independent states in 1991, the United States refugee program continues to require all refugee applicants in the FSU to travel to Moscow to be interviewed, in spite of pleas from the American Jewish and Evangelical communities that INS perform circuit rides, as they do in most other refugee programs, to interview applicants at sites other than Moscow.

Here are two stories:

> Oksana is a Ukrainian Evangelical Christian who grew up in a Christian home. Her family was exiled to Siberia in 1940, and her parents and older brother were jailed for their religious beliefs in 1945. While still a teenager, she worked to support her 5 younger brothers and sisters. Even in exile, she continued to attend church services. As an adult, she was persecuted for her beliefs and for taking her children to church. She was given the worst and hardest jobs, and her wages were infringed upon. Her children were abused at school and given undeserved low marks. This family was denied refugee status because she failed to make a strong

case of their many years of persecution. She is 75 years old and illiterate. She and her husband cannot join their children in the United States.

A Jewish family unit comprised of the parents and two sons ages 20 years and 22 years has always lived together. The parents and the 20 year old son were approved for resettlement but the 22 year old son was separated out. This family has to make the decision whether to remain in Russia with their family intact or to leave their son behind.

Vietnam

It is well known that when the United States pulled out of Saigon in 1975, we left behind many Vietnamese employees who suffered persecution for their association with the United States. The Lautenberg Amendment of 1989 contained special provisions for the resettlement of these people to the United States. However, interviews for this group were conducted through interpreters who were Vietnamese government employees, the very government which the applicants were claiming had persecuted them. Not surprisingly, rejection rates were high. These conditions continued without any corrective action from the U.S. government; the rejection rates reached 98%, and the Vietnamese government, in reaction, stopped issuing exit permits.

We have the means within our current resources to take corrective action on this program, and fairly adjudicate these cases and bring those with credible claims to the United States. However, the thinking has been to put off action until the responsibility for the program reverts to the U.S. Consulate in Saigon. Meanwhile, these former U.S. government employees endure harassment and persecution at the hands of the Vietnamese government.

1998 Policy Changes to the Refugee Program

The Subcommittee should be aware of two major policy changes in 1998 which could have a major impact on U.S. refugee policy:

A. The U.S. Refugee Program Should End Its Recently Instituted Practice of Splitting Refugee Families:

Consistent with the Refugee Convention's principle of Family Unity and recognizing that splitting households would create protection problems for family members left behind, for many

years the U.S. Refugee Program permitted non-nuclear family members sharing a household with an approved refugee to "derive" refugee status. In most cases, once a household member was adjudicated as a refugee by the INS, other members of his household were able to travel to the U.S. as refugees without each relative having to prove his or her own case as a refugee.

However, on August 17, 1998, the INS announced a dramatic policy change which is forcing refugees fleeing persecution to leave vulnerable family members behind.

In a notice published in the Federal Register, the INS announced that, under its new interpretation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as well as of the Lautenberg Amendment, members of a refugee's household, other than a spouse or unmarried child under 21, may still be interviewed as part of the refugee's case, but must now "qualify as refugees in their own right."

Representatives of the protection division of UNHCR, on whom the U.S. refugee program depends for Priority One referrals, have criticized such narrow definitions of the family unit, because it will likely split families and create additional protection problems for family members left behind. At the 1998 session of the UNHCR Executive Committee on International Protection of Refugees, Protection Division Chief, Dennis McNamara went on record criticizing such policy changes in restricting the "definition of 'family' ...(as) one of many ways in which (governments) are restricting access to status determination procedures."

It is imperative that the Administration reconsider its new interpretation of the INA and of the Lautenberg Amendment, which is already resulting in refugee families having to choose between their own safety and that of their families.

B. Changes in INS Policy Concerning Refugees with "Past Persecution" or an "Internal Flight Alternative"

On June 11, 1998, the INS published its "Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) Regarding Procedures for Asylum and Withholding of Removal" 63 Fed. Reg. 31945 (June 11, 1998). The rule would restrict INS policy toward asylum seekers whose claims are based on past persecution, as well as toward applicants whom INS determines should have fled *within* their country rather than *from* their country ("internal flight alternative").

This proposed rule would, if adopted, undermine the United States' leadership in refugee and asylee protection. Many non-governmental organizations, including members of the Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs, plus the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, have filed comments which are highly critical of the proposed rule.

Even though this proposed rule purports to affect the asylum program and not the refugee program, we fear the rule would undermine U.S. refugee policy as well. For example, while the United States is pleading with Germany to slow the involuntary return of Bosnian asylum claimants due to the potentially destabilizing effects and humanitarian consequences of such deportations, adoption of the proposed rule would send the conflicting signal that the United States has chosen to emulate the restrictive German asylum criteria.

For example, under current U.S. asylum and refugee policy (in accord with the UNHCR Asylum Handbook), numerous Bosnian refugees and asylum seekers are offered protection by the United States on the basis of past persecution and/or because, since being forced to flee their homes, internal relocation has not been a "reasonable alternative." Under the proposed rule, however, previously eligible asylum seekers from Bosnia would suddenly be denied asylum by the United States because they would not be able to meet the NPRM's heightened requirement that asylum seekers exhibit a likelihood of "serious physical harm" upon relocation to other parts of Bosnia. This restrictive "internal relocation" criteria mirrors the German asylum policy which is partly responsible for the wave of involuntary returns of Bosnian asylum seekers.

We are equally troubled by the INS' proposed policy changes concerning claims based on "past persecution." Under current policy, an asylum seeker who can establish past persecution is afforded a presumption that she/he also has a well-founded fear of future persecution, so long as country conditions remain unchanged. Under the proposed rule, however, the Service can deny an asylum claim based on past persecution unless the applicant established that it is likely that the past persecution will repeat itself, even if country conditions remain unchanged. In part, this change was likely made to undermine the recent Amendment to the statutory definition of "refugee" in section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which holds that a "person who has been forced to abort a pregnancy or to undergo involuntary sterilization....shall be deemed to have been persecuted on account of political opinion."

The dilution of the United States' own policies of protection toward those fleeing persecution, as represented by this proposed rule, can only undermine the leadership position of the United States as an international advocate for refugees and asylum seekers.

Appropriations for Assistance and Admissions

Resettlement is a small but vital solution. Of the estimated 13 million refugees worldwide, resettlement is an option for less than 1%. The United States has the capacity to resettle more refugees.

Developed countries contribute most of the funding for programs that assist refugees, and the United States ranks first in total contributions to assist refugees around the world; however, the U.S. ranks only tenth in per capita contributions behind the Nordic and some European countries.

Although recent efforts to cap refugee admissions were overwhelmingly defeated in Congress, the current Administration has nevertheless reduced the refugee admissions ceiling by 41% in recent years. Republicans and Democrats from key committees in both houses of Congress have written to the Administration urging a return to previous levels of refugee admissions. House members recommended a ceiling of at least 100,000 while Senators recommended a range of between 90,000 and 110,000. The Senate letter noted that "this level would be in keeping with our traditions and we are confident that it would receive bipartisan support in Congress." The private religious and service organizations that resettle refugees in the United States believe that our nation should accept at least 119,000 refugees. These levels are not unrealistic; in 1980, the admission ceiling was 207,000.

Our current authorized funding levels would support an increase in refugee admissions. The Migration and Refugee Assistance account which funds refugee admissions was authorized at $704 million for Fiscal Year 1999; this would have easily supported the admission of over 100,000 refugees. However, the Administration only requested $650 million (Congress appropriated $640 million) and proposed that the U.S. provide funding for only 78,000 refugees. For Fiscal Year 2000, the Administration has finally reversed the downward trend by proposing a refugee admissions level of 80,000 - but this number is still far below the commitment of previous Administrations.

Conclusion

I urge you to consider the men, women, and children whom I've spoken of today. It is critical that we remember the impact of changed U.S. refugee policy on the human faces of those less fortunate. We believe that resettlement is not only an expression of humanitarian values but also an important component of U.S. foreign policy.

We have the means to truly be the world leader in refugee assistance. We only need is the political will to do so.

We thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present our views on refugee admissions and appropriations to this Committee. Decisions which you make will have a major impact on the lives of many who have been forced to flee their homelands and who seek a chance to begin new lives.

Council of Jewish Federations
WASHINGTON ACTION OFFICE
1700 K St., N.W. • Suite 1150 • Washington, DC 20006
Diana Aviv, Senior Associate Executive Vice President, Public Policy
Director, Washington Action Office

Testimony of Diana Aviv
Senior Associate Executive Vice President for Public Policy
and Director of the Washington Action Office
of the
The Council of Jewish Federations

at a hearing on
"Foreign Relations Authorization for FY 2000-2001:
Refugees and Migration"

Committee on International Relations'
Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights
March 9, 1999

(202) 785-5900 • Fax: (202) 785-4937 • www.cjfny.org/dc

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, my name is Diana Aviv and I am Senior Associate Executive Vice President for Public Policy and Director of the Washington Action Office of the Council of Jewish Federations. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss issues related to the U.S. refugee program and the situation confronting the Jewish community in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Before I begin, however, I would like to take a moment to thank you Chairman Smith, and your staff, for the steadfast leadership you consistently provide on refugee issues. Your commitment to the protection and resettlement of persecuted and endangered populations around the world is invaluable.

The Council of Jewish Federations, soon to be merged with the United Jewish Appeal and United Israel Appeal, is the national organization representing over 200 local Jewish Federations in North America as well as more than 1000 Federation affiliated agencies that provide services to families, children, the elderly and others in need. The rescue and resettlement of Jewish refugees has been, and continues to be, one of the basic missions of the Federation system. Many of today's Jewish community centers were established about 100 years ago as "settlement houses" the primary purpose of which was to assist newly arrived refugees who came to the United States seeking freedom from religious persecution. After World War II, our community welcomed tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors and helped them find a way to rebuild their lives. We are always painfully aware that the six million Jews and five million others who perished in the horror of the Holocaust might have survived had there been a country anywhere in the world willing to provide them with a safe haven.

Mr. Chairman, as you know from our numerous contacts with you and your staff, our commitment to the protection, rescue and resettlement of refugees remains as strong today as ever before. Working in partnership with the Jewish community's migration agency, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Federation network has resettled more than 250,000 Jews from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) since 1988 in addition to Iranians, Eastern Europeans, Bosnians and others. So many of these refugees have adapted very well to their new lives and are helping others to adjust to their new lives.

My remarks today will focus primarily on conditions in the FSU and the U.S. refugee program for that region, but first I would briefly like to comment on the overall refugee admissions numbers.

REFUGEE ADMISSIONS:

The Council of Jewish Federations recognizes and appreciates the leadership the United States provides in many aspects of humanitarian relief, protection and resettlement of refugees around the world. It is the commitment of the U.S. to rescue and resettlement efforts that keeps some other countries engaged in refugee protection and prevents them from restricting further, or even closing, their first asylum and/or resettlement programs.

We believe, however, that our government must constantly renew its commitment to protecting and resettling persecuted people and that it must demonstrate that commitment by maintaining a generous admissions policy. Over the past several years CJF has been dismayed at the rapid and persistent decline in the number of refugees permitted to resettle in this country, from 142,000 in fiscal year 1992 to 121,000 in FY 94; 90,000 in FY 96; and 78,000 in FY 99. We agree strongly with the position expressed by you, Mr. Chairman, and your colleagues in a letter sent to President Clinton last year, which stated:

> The cuts [in refugee numbers] during the last several years are justified neither by a reduction in the number of refugees in need of assistance nor by an absence of Congressional support for traditional levels of refugee admissions....Congressional debate on the issue reflected a broad bipartisan sentiment ....

The Administration has proposed funding 80,000 admissions in FY 2000. This is certainly a very small step in the right direction, but it is still too low, in our opinion, especially given the dramatic events of the past year that have displaced millions of additional people in Africa and in Kosovo. CJF believes that admitting 100,000 refugee for FY 2000 is both necessary and manageable. It is a number far lower than we have admitted in the past. The need is there, the commitment on the part of the Congress is there and the modest increase would surely not deplete the resources of our federal treasury. We know that our colleagues in InterAction agree with the admission request level of 100,000. As we sit here today, the lives of millions of men, women and children are at risk because they cannot find a country willing to offer them refuge. We urge the members of this Subcommittee to continue pressing the Administration for higher admission numbers in FY 2000 and beyond in order to more accurately reflect the growing need.

THE PROGRAM IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION (FSU):

Last year we noted in our testimony that there had been some positive signs in the FSU. For one, synagogues that had been confiscated but not destroyed had been returned to the Jewish community and some new religious freedoms had been granted in Russia. Most importantly, the Jewish community in Russia, Ukraine and a few other countries has been able to function openly, build schools, community centers and synagogues and study Hebrew. Some of the leaders in the successor nations have even condemned acts and expressions of anti-Semitism even if they have not been able to stop them or punish the perpetrators.

Mr. Chairman, last year we were hopeful enough to state to this Subcommittee, before you and your colleagues, that *if* democracy took hold and *if* conditions stabilized and *if* religious, political and other freedoms were protected, we might be in the fortunate position of being able to reevaluate our judgements and conclusions about the successor countries in the FSU and their ability to protect political and religious freedom of expression. Our caution about withholding judgement was related to our observations and knowledge that this is not a part of the world that has historically enjoyed a tradition of democracy. Democratic institutions, practices and traditions are new and therefore require assessment over time. Compared with the oppression and virulent anti-Semitism of the previous centuries a few years is too short a time against which to measure the success of the fledgling democracy in place in the FSU successor countries. Even during this time, governments were unable to control the rabid expressions of hatred exhibited by various ultra-nationalistic groups and Jews were the targets of hate speech, mail and assaults. Many continued to flee because they believed that their governments could not protect them from these hate-mongering groups.

Regrettably, as we look back over the events of the past year I must tell you that today fear has replaced optimism in the Jewish community remaining in the FSU.

Current Conditions:

Anti-Semitism in the successor countries of the Former Soviet Union today is virulent, pervasive and increasingly violent. In March 1999, the situation for Jews in the FSU is as dangerous, if not more so, than it was under Communism. It is certainly more unpredictable and uncontrollable. The rule of law has not taken hold in many republics; some governments, including Russia's, are unable to

enforce effectively their own laws or protect their own citizens; local authorities responsible for law enforcement are too often arbitrary and capricious in their actions. The election to leadership positions of extremists - nationalists, fascists, Islamic fundamentalists, and Communists - has resulted in a resurgence of deeply ingrained anti-Semitism and scapegoating of Jews, as well as the persecution of other religious minorities including Evangelical Christians and Jehova's Witnesses.

While there are differences among the 15 new countries, the rise of anti-Semitism seems to be a constant. Politicians from Russia to Belarus, from Kazakhstan to Latvia invoke old anti-Semitic stereotypes and hurl new accusations at the Jews. Even in the Baltics, where the economy is doing relatively well, anti-Semitism thrives. This past year has seen an increase in the number of anti-Semitic attacks as well as an escalation of nationalistic and fascistic rhetoric that is spewed with frightening openness and impunity. There are few, if any, negative consequences for anti-Semitic activity or diatribe even in those countries that have enacted laws prohibiting such hate crimes or "guaranteeing" religious freedom.

Examples of recent anti-Semitic acts and publications are so numerous that I am sure you have seen reports in newspapers, State Department briefings and other testimonies. I will not go through the whole litany of incidents here (please see the attachments for additional details), rather I want to highlight those actions significant enough to have changed the reality on the ground for the Jewish community and turned hope into fear once again.

In Russia:

The most dramatic shift is taking place in Russia where the majority of Jews reside. When Boris Yeltsin first assumed the presidency, he denounced anti-Semitic activities and returned freedom of worship and study to the community their relief and rejoicing. Jewish organizations were founded or became public for the first time and American and Israeli organizations provided assistance along with local Russian Jewish donors to refurbish synagogues, acquire prayer books and Judaic articles of observance. Jewish education was promoted and schools of Jewish learning opened. In short, there was hope for the future of the Jews of Russia.

Today fear hangs over the community: a deep anxiety that Yeltsin is no longer in control of the government; trepidation that the anti-Semites have free reign to say or do as they please and a deep foreboding that Mr. Yeltsin's successor will be a member of, or a pawn of, the Communist party, the Russian National Unity organization (RNE), the alliance of fascists and Communists referred to as the "red-brown" coalition or any number of other fanatical political factions. These fears have been fueled by horrific acts of violence and terror including these recent events:

- The bombing of the Marina Roscha Synagogue for the second time in two years; arson attacks and vandalism at the Choral Synagogue in Moscow along with neo-Nazi marches in front of the synagogue and in downtown Moscow; and the desecration of hundreds of graves in two Jewish cemeteries.

- Physical assaults against two Rabbis, one of whom, Chief Rabbi Zalman Yoffe was severely beaten by still unidentified attackers.

- The November 1998 assassination of Duma Member Galina Starovoitova, an outspoken opponent of anti-Semitism and other human rights violations. This St. Petersburg representative was a strong advocate of democratic government and religious freedoms. Although not Jewish herself, she was seen by the Jewish community as a friend and defender. Her murder was a purely political act and remains unsolved.

- Viktor Ilyukhin, head of the Duma's security committee, tried to initiate proceedings to oust President Yeltsin by accusing him of following a policy of "large scale genocide against the Russians [which] would not have been possible if Yeltsin's team and the government were composed of the native people, not of a single nationality - the Jews."

- In recent months, well-known anti-Semite General Albert Makashov, a communist party official and Duma member, has waged a very public hate campaign against the Jews accusing them of causing every economic and social ill in Russia. He openly courts votes and political support using slogans like "Death to the Yids!" at his rallies and in his campaign materials. Makashov has held these views for a long time, but his recent tirades have included death threats and statements such as "I will round up all the Jews and send them to the next world." More frightening than his

words, however, is the support he is finding in the communist party, which refused to condemn his words, and the Duma, which last November defeated a resolution to censure him.

- In the Kuban region in the South of Russia, many residents of the capital of Krasnodar received a leaflet in December that called for violence against the Jews. The leaflet shows a woman crucified on a Star of David and states "Help your beloved flowering Kuban to get rid of cursed Jewish Kikes - ransack their apartments and burn their houses." Since Kuban's governor, Nikholai Kondratenko, is an avowed anti-Semite and author of a book entitled *Secrets of the 20th Century*, which blames a Jewish conspiracy for all of Russia's problems past and current, there is little likelihood that any action will be taken to protect the Jews of Kuban.

- The resurgence of the Cossack movement, especially in southern Russia, with all of the historic attitudes and violent intent of the Czarist days when pogroms terrified and decimated the Jewish community. A recent Newsday article about this movement included this sentence: "Once the most trusted military force of the czar, Cossacks want to regain their standing as a privileged elite and see their virulent hatred of Jews as their route back to glory."

The list goes on and on.

A recent memo from HIAS' Moscow director, Leonard Terlitsky ended this way:

> "Several analysts view the latest series of anti-Semitic incidents in Russia as a deliberate attempt on the part of ultra-nationalists and extremists to test the threshold of tolerance of the country's government and the society in general.
>
> The fact that such incidents continue virtually unchecked underscores the fact that today's Russia neither has the political will nor a serious legal basis to combat ultra-nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Two laws, one to ban fascist organizations and the other to ban fascist symbols, have been awaiting passage in the Duma for years. The Presidential Administration is currently preparing a new, more comprehensive law that would make political extremism illegal in Russia, but there is little chance that the law will be passed by the RF Duma."

Outside of Russia:

- In Minsk, Belarus, President Lukashenko is an avowed admirer of Adolf Hitler. This totalitarian dictator is highly nationalistic and makes no secret of his hatred of the Jews. His government controlled radio station airs readings of Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the Jewish conspiracy fiction first published about a hundred years ago.

- The Jewish community in Latvia must deal with the legacy of Latvians who collaborated in Nazi atrocities. On March 16, 1999 — just one week from today — Latvian SS veterans will march in Riga following up on last year's march in which the Commander in Chief of the Latvian armed forces and the Speaker of the Parliament participated. Additionally, an anti-Semitic book, "The Horrible Year," originally published by the Nazi regime, which blames Jews for Soviet persecution of Latvians, has been republished in Latvia and has been distributed out of the office of the Homeland and Freedom Party, one of the parties in Latvia's ruling coalition.

- In Ukraine, anti-Semitic publications proliferate, particularly in the Western portion of the country. These newspapers continue to use the derogatory term "Zhid" when referring to Jews, and accuse Jews of seeking world domination through a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, responsibility for the crimes of communism, and attempting to steal the wealth of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, I am not an alarmist. Nor am I here to tell you that things are as bad as they have ever been, that Jews in Russia or elsewhere in the FSU are being rounded up and murdered in the streets by government sanctioned anti-Semites. Rather I am here to sound the warning bell that all the components for such a scenario are in place; they need only to be connected and detonated by the right demagogue and set of circumstances.

The Lautenberg Amendment:

The circumstances I have just described to you lead us to conclude that it is increasingly unsafe and potentially disastrous for Jews and other religious

minorities residing the FSU. We consider the Lautenberg amendment a vital tool in rescuing people at risk because since its enactment in 1989, it has proved to be an effective and efficient means of requiring the INS to consider the historic

persecution of certain groups when determining their refugee status. This context is important not only to understand and lend credibility to the fears in the Jewish community, it is also essential in gauging the receptivity of the population at large to anti-Semitic rabble-rousing and calls to violence.

There is no doubt in our minds that the Lautenberg Amendment should be extended beyond September 30, 1999. Our hope was that it would not be necessary to renew this Amendment, that the situation would change for the better. Sadly, this is clearly not the case. Nor does it appear that improvement is on the horizon. Analysts tell us that it will get worse before it gets better as the economy continues to unravel and frustration and desperation grow. We believe it would be prudent, therefore, to enact a two-year extension of the law and we hope to have your support and those of the Subcommittee members in this regard, Mr. Chairman.

We also hope that you will play a role in monitoring its implementation. For reasons that have not been adequately explained to us by the INS, the denial rates of Lautenberg category applicants for refugee status have risen dramatically even in the face of the conditions that I have described today. Denial rates ranged from 3% to 6% from FY 1990 to FY 1996, then jumped to 11% in FY 1997, followed by a huge increase to 30% in early FY 1998. At this time HIAS reports that close to 50% of those now being adjudicated by the INS are being denied status. Those who appeal the decision generally wait more than a year for reconsideration. This record is disturbing and unacceptable given the generally acknowledged deterioration of the environment for Jewish and Christian minorities.

The Jewish Federation system remains committed to assisting those who can leave the and reunite with family members in the United States. HIAS is working with relatives in the U.S. and through their office in Moscow to encourage those who are able to travel to do so. However, serious barriers to departure still exist for many people. CJF and HIAS, along with World Relief and the Union of Council for Soviet Jews, have been working with the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and with the INS for months to try to ameliorate the departure problems. While some progress has been made, there are a number of issues still awaiting resolution. Additional loans from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are being arranged to provide assistance to families that must travel a distance from Moscow for that purpose. We had hoped that these improvements to the program would be in place by now, but are still awaiting their finalization.

Finally it is important for the Congress and others to understand that there are some barriers to departure that neither our community nor the U.S. government can eliminate. The break up of the Soviet Union has created some serious difficulties for people applying for U.S. refugee status. There are now 15 bureaucracies, borders, transportation systems (or lack thereof) and rules for leaving or entering each country. Documents are not easy to obtain; getting to Moscow on trains and planes can take days; travel for the disabled and elderly is frequently impossible; and the cost of travel is now so high that families in the Caucuses and Central Asian states may have to spend a year's salary to get to Moscow for their interview and then have to save the same sum to return to Moscow for their flight to the U.S. Just getting permission to exit and enter the states a family must travel through on their way to Moscow can take many months and the trip frequently depends on paying bribes to bureaucrats, border guards and customs agents in more than one jurisdiction. Obtaining a birth certificate, for example, if you now live in Ukraine but were born in Uzbekistan is a daunting feat. Traveling without having all of the necessary documents in order subjects the applicants to the risk of apprehension, arrest or return to their home country. These complicated interstate negotiations and the heavy financial burden are the cause of many of the delayed departures you may have all heard about, much more so than any change of heart on the part of those already granted refugee status.

Mr. Chairman, as you well know, these bureaucratic impediments can have the effect of undermining the laws passed by Congress and signed by the President. We do not believe it was the intent of Congress to allow obstacles to slow down and even prevent otherwise eligible refugees from coming to the U.S.

In summary, Mr. Chairman and Members of this Subcommittee, we have grave concerns about the safety of Jews and other minorities in the FSU. We are not optimistic that the situation will improve in the next year or two or more. It is our hope the U.S. government will continue to show its displeasure with these developments through the enactment of an extension of the Lautenberg amendment, implementation of additions departure assistance, and the normal diplomatic communications.

I want to thank you again for your support and for the opportunity to present our views to you today.

REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL

Foreign Relations Authorization for FY 2000-2001:

Refugees and Migration

Testimony of

LIONEL ROSENBLATT, President

Refugees International

before the

Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights

March 9, 1999

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify today.

The sustained interest of this subcommittee in humanitarian issues is one of the strongest focal points in the U.S. government for addressing the crises of the post-Cold War era. We salute you for your dynamic leadership of this subcommittee at this pivotal time.

Refugees International spotlights vulnerable populations caught up in conflict and crisis. We put special emphasis on groups that are being neglected by the international community and media. We try to be a voice for the voiceless by going to the site of humanitarian crises and learning from the victims themselves of their most urgent needs. We then present our findings and recommendations to policy-makers with the objective of catalyzing rapid, life-saving action. To preserve our independence to represent refugees and other dispossessed people, *RI* accepts no contributions from governments or the UN.

2639 CONN. AVE., NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20008 • TEL (202) 828-0110 • FAX (202) 828-0819 • EMAIL RI@REFINTL.ORG • WEB HTTP://WWW.REFINTL.ORG

Today, I would like to provide you with capsule summaries of our most recent findings and recommendations from a number of our recent missions in Africa, Kosovo, Latin America and Asia. This committee can make an important contribution toward resolving the problems we have identified in our findings and recommendations. We look forward to working with you.

SIERRA LEONE. Sierra Leone illustrates the need for the international community to step into a conflict with preventive action before the situation gets out of hand. More than eight months ago, we and other knowledgeable observers warned that ECOMOG, the West African peacekeeping force, was losing ground in the struggle against rebel forces. Today, rebel forces control much of the country and at least 750,000 Sierra Leoneans are refugees or displaced. We haven't given enough international support or attention to this important African peacekeeping effort to preserve a democratically-elected government in Sierra Leone.

Recommendation: High-level attention is needed to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Sierra Leone, including more extensive efforts to prevent horrendous human rights abuses by all factions, continuing programs to save hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leoneans from the threat of starvation, and adequate funding for post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration.

ANGOLA. Angola's civil war goes back more than 20 years and is fueled by petroleum and diamonds. In the recent renewal of the civil war, the international community has blamed and attempted to isolate the rebel forces of UNITA. A military victory by either side is unlikely. More than 1 million people are displaced in Angola. The fighting has cut many of these people off from international aid and the loss of life if they are not reached soon could be large.

Recommendation: We urge communication with both the government and UNITA to facilitate humanitarian access to the displaced.

CONGO. Congo is the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River and shares borders with nine often chaotic states. One hundred million people could be threatened by continued deterioration in the stability of Congo and its neighbors. But the silence is deafening as hundreds of thousands of people are displaced and the slaughter of thousands is barely noticed.

Recommendation: *RI* has long been pressing for a UN "super envoy" to mobilize effective international focus and pressure on Congo; such an individual could be a former head of state and should be appointed immediately. To reassure Rwanda and Uganda about their security concerns, a demilitarized zone along the eastern border of Congo with these countries should be established and patrolled by a multi-national force (perhaps modeled on the Sinai truce enforcement force which has been so effective in the Middle East).

SOMALILAND. Somaliland is a small bright spot in Africa, a self-declared country carved out of chaotic Somalia. But one of the threats to Somaliland's stability is the repatriation of more than 100,000 refugees from Ethiopia -- ten percent of the population of Somaliland -- which could destabilize the defacto regime. The returning refugees place an added economic and political strain on an already fragile government. Somaliland authorities suspended the repatriation program in December 1998.

Recommendation: The international community should put in place programs to assure that returning refugees have a fair chance to become economically self-supporting before the repatriation program is restarted.

SEEDS FOR SOMALIA. The international community has been aware since November 1998 that farmers in eastern and southern Somalia will need seed before March 31 if they are to plant crops this spring. $700,000 for seed now will eliminate the need for $12 million in food aid later this year. Yet, at the eleventh hour, donors have not come forward with money to buy seed.

Recommendation: Donors, including USAID, should immediately allocate money to buy seed and get it distributed before March 31.

THE LOST BOYS. The story of the "Lost Boys" is an epic of survival. Thousands of Sudanese boys trekked back and forth across huge expanses of hostile terrain. Finally, after years of wandering they found safety in a refugee camp in Kenya in 1992. But the Lost Boys have been isolated from the customs of their people so long that they are outcasts in their own society.

Recommendation: The United States and other countries should consider accepting some of the Lost Boys for resettlement.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. In Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, women searching for firewood are frequently raped by gangs of bandits roaming the area. We have proposed that the growing problem of violence against refugee women in Dadaab -- and around the world -- be given priority attention. Fostering closer, mutually beneficial relations between refugees and the local community would be a start at Dadaab.

Recommendation: Firewood should be procured from local sources and with local cooperation and provided to refugee women

FORGOTTEN JEWS OF ETHIOPIA. Most Ethiopian Jews have emigrated to Israel, but more than 15,000 people in Ethiopia still claim to be Jewish. We visited them last October and found that their humanitarian situation was precarious and that some of them had been forced to abandon their homes because of persecution by their neighbors. Many of the Ethiopian Jews have relatives in Israel and thus appear to be eligible for immigration.

Recommendation: Israel should speed up its lethargic bureaucratic procedures to accept as immigrants those among the Ethiopians who qualify.

KOSOVO. The tragic situation in Kosovo in which hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes because the Serbs have deliberately destroyed their villages, houses, and livelihoods is well known to you. We have campaigned many months now for an effective international response to Serb depredations and for international assistance for displaced persons in Kosovo and Montenegro and refugees in Albania and Macedonia. In addition to being a humanitarian outrage, the situation in Kosovo threatens to ignite a larger regional conflict.

Recommendation: Our previous experience in Bosnia and the present situation in Kosovo should prove to us that only a credible threat of force is effective in forcing the Serbs to cease displacing and killing its citizens in Kosovo.

CHIAPAS, MEXICO. *RI* recently went to Chiapas, Mexico to look at the situation of people displaced by the dispute between pro and anti-government elements. Approximately 10,000 people in the highlands are displaced and afraid to go home because of fears that they might be persecuted by one political faction or another.

Recommendation: The government of Mexico should cease support and encouragement of armed civilian groups in Chiapas and remove immigration restrictions on foreigners wishing to engage in humanitarian work. The number of human rights observers in Chiapas should be increased to discourage violence.

MALI AND NIGER. More than 150,000 Tuareg refugees returned to their former homes at the edge of the Sahara Desert in Mali and Niger in 1996 and 1997. In this harsh environment, the Tuaregs have found that their old occupation of nomadic herding will no longer be feasible for many of them. Many must adjust to a semi-sedentary culture which will require, first of all, water for irrigation

Recommendation: The international community should support projects to help the Tuaregs survive and to earn a living in their harsh environment.

SRI LANKA. More than 500,000 Tamils have been displaced by hostilities between a separatist Tamil group and the Sri Lankan government. Only limited access is given by the government to displaced persons and emergency aid and protection is difficult to ensure.

Recommendation: The international community should redouble efforts to resolve this lengthy conflict and should press the government to allow free and unhindered access to the displaced by aid agencies, NGOs, and the press.

BURMESE REFUGEES. The situation inside Burma has worsened. Political repression and practices such as forced relocations, forced labor, and arbitrary arrests have intensified. About one million people are internally displaced. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled to neighboring countries and continue to leave.

Recommendation: While we applaud the Thai government's decision to allow UNHCR to establish a presence along the Burma border, we should monitor the situation to ensure that UNHCR can effectively carry out its protection mandate.

ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM BURMA IN BANGLADESH. 250,000 Rohingyans have been repatriated to Burma, but 21,000 remain in refugee camps Bangladesh wishes to close the camps, but these refugees fear persecution if they return to Burma.

Recommendation: The refugee camps in Bangladesh should remain open and UNHCR be allowed to provide protection until a durable solution can be found.

LAOS. More than 25,000 Hmong refugees returned to Laos in the early 1990s The UNHCR has shown little leadership in bringing these people to self-sufficiency. We are very pleased the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has recently contributed to the returnees.

Recommendation: More aid is needed from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and other donors if the Hmong returnees are to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

CAMBODIA. Cambodia presents multi-faceted problems, including land mines and refugees who, despite having returned in 1992-1993, have never received the aid promised them by the international community.

Let me focus, however, in detail on one recent issue, which illustrates a number of the problems the international community has in dealing with the problems of refugees who return to their homeland.

I was recently in Cambodia and visited the eastern province of Mondulkiri, where over 2,000 Montagnard (also called Dega) people have recently been repatriated from refugee camps on the Thai/Cambodian border.

Of all the refugee returnees I have ever dealt with, the Montagnards returning to eastern Cambodia rank as some of the most vulnerable. They arrive in the back of large open trucks with almost no possessions; many are emaciated with malnutrition; a high proportion are missing limbs owing to mine injuries. Yet, even after four bone-jarring days in the back of these trucks they are very, very happy to finally be getting home.

Ironically, these most needy of returnees to Cambodia are getting less from the UNHCR than earlier Cambodian returnees. They receive 40-50 days of rice each, a few household items and a sickle/knife ostensibly for household use and farming, though as one Montagnard said it would be too weak to cut a piece of meat, if they ever see any meat again. There is also an ax with some nails and with this the returnees are to build their houses; there are no housing materials of the kind provided to earlier returnees in Cambodia.

WFP has, to its credit, liberalized food-for-work requirements, and is now committed in principle to supplying food to the returnees until the next harvest, at the end of the year. The UNHCR and WFP must commit now to opening a warehouse(s) and reliable distribution channels in Mondulkiri before the rainy season arrives in the next few weeks and blocks road access.

One despairs that the international community will be able to solve the problems I have listed in my testimony when the return of this small number of refugees is without adequate leadership and coordination. There should be one person/agency responsible and accountable for all such exercises instead of the pervasive attitude of "that's beyond our mandate," which is almost a mantra among UN agencies. In our view, accountability is one of the conditions that the U.S. should insist on as we pay our arrears to the UN

This treatment of the Montagnard returnees is unfortunately indicative of the way they have been treated for fifty years, having served first the French and then the Americans as loyal allies. No group suffered more, with perhaps a third dying during the American war effort in Vietnam and since. (The returnees are the remnants of a group which suffered especially terribly; perhaps 2/3 of them have perished since 1975.)

Unfortunately, as South Vietnam collapsed in 1975 the Central Highlands fell unexpectedly early and most Montagnards were cut off from Saigon; of the 125,000 citizens of Vietnam evacuated in April 1975, less than 250 were Montagnards who had served with the U.S. side so valorously and at such cost. To me and many other Americans who served in Vietnam, this has been a badge of great dishonor.

What is hardest to accept, however, is the way the U.S. has treated the Montagnards seeking to reach the U.S. under the Orderly Departure Program (ODP). Only a handful have been admitted and many have been rejected arbitrarily and unfairly.

Let me give another example of problems with the ODP. In 1989, a special resettlement program was established for Vietnamese who had been employed by the U.S. government. Eleven thousand people, including family members, fall into this category. Of these, about 6,000 were rejected by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in adjudications which had incredibly high rejection rates of up to 95 percent. The remaining 5,000, who have waited for many years, have never even been interviewed by INS. Now the program is being shut down by the Department of State. The result will be to harm -- whether by first raising then dashing expectations or by making applicants visible potential targets of repression -- the very people it was meant to help.

This is sadly reflective of the way the U.S. is closing the Indochina refugee program after a proud and distinguished history. The program began as a generous and inclusive program to take in to the U.S. refugees from our Indochina war. Julia Taft, in 1975 the head of the Indochinese refugee task force, courageously led the transition from the evacuation of Vietnam to the ongoing refugee program and thus made a pivotal difference.

Now Julia Taft is back in the State Department as Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration. She brings to the job a combination of commitment and experience the Bureau has never had and she is again making a dynamic difference. However, even Julia Taft has not been able to reverse the mentality within the Admissions Office Bureau which is leading to a dishonorable close of America's most successful refugee programs.

Throughout its history, under five Presidents, the U.S. program for Indochinese refugees has enjoyed sustained, bipartisan support. We ask the Congress and the Executive Branch to work together to insure that the U.S. ends its obligations as honorably as they began.

A lot of the refugee abuses and sufferings I have covered today are beyond the direct control of the U.S.; the problems with ODP are not. Under the leadership of Madeleine Albright, a former refugee herself, how can such a mean-spirited attitude toward refugees prevail in the U.S. Department of State?

I repeat. These remaining 11, 000 Indochinese refugees have suffered immense hardship over the last quarter century for one reason and one reason only: they were employed by the U.S. Government. We have an obligation to help them.

Mr. Chairman, I want to again thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to be here to testify.

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

FACT SHEET

U.S. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM
ELIGIBILITY for REFUGEE PROCESSING PRIORITIES FY-1999

* P-1 PROCESSING: ALL NATIONALITIES are ELIGIBLE.			
[redacted]	P - 2[1]	P - 3	P - 4
Angolans		X	
Bosnians[2]	X	X	X
Burmese	X		
Burundians		X	
Cameroonians		X	
Chadians		X	
Congolese (Brazzaville)		X	
Congolese (DROC)		X	
Cubans	X		
Djiboutians		X	
Eritreans		X	
Ethiopians		X	
Former Soviet Union	X		
Guinea Bissauans		X	
Iranians	X	X	
Iraqis		X	
Liberians[4]		X	
Nigerians[5]	X	X	
Rwandans		X	
Sierra Leoneans		X	
Somalis		X	
Sudanese		X	
Togolese		X	
Ugandans		X	
Vietnamese[6]	X		

PRIORITY ONE:
UNHCR or U.S. embassy identified cases: persons facing compelling security concerns in countries of first asylum; persons in need of legal protection because of the danger of refoulement; those in danger due to threats of armed attack in an area where they are located; persons who have experienced recent persecution because of their political, religious, or human rights activities (prisoners of conscience); women-at-risk; victims of torture or violence; physically or mentally disabled persons; persons in urgent need of medical treatment not available in the first asylum country; and persons for whom other durable solutions are not feasible and whose status in the place of asylum does not present a satisfactory long-term solution. As with all other priorities, Priority One referrals must still establish a creditable fear of persecution or history of persecution in the country from which they fled.

Revised 1/99

Office of Admissions
Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
Department of State

PRIORITY TWO (Groups of Special Concern):

Africa: Specific groups (within certain nationalities) as identified by the Department of State in consultation with NGOs, UNHCR, INS, and other area experts. Only those members of the specifically identified groups are eligible for processing. Each group will be selected based on its individual circumstances.

Bosnia: Former detainees who were held on account of ethnicity or political/religious opinion; persons of any ethnic background in mixed marriages; victims of torture or systematic and significant acts of violence against members of targeted ethnic groups by governmental authorities or quasi-governmental authorities in areas under their control; surviving spouses of civilians who would have been eligible under these criteria if they had not died in detention or been killed as a result of torture or violence. (Effective Jan. 1, 1997.)

Burma: Certain members of ethnic minorities who have actively and persistently worked for political autonomy; certain political activists engaged in the pro-democracy movement.

Cuba: In-country, emphasis given to former political prisoners, members of persecuted religious minorities, human rights activists, forced-labor conscripts, persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs or activities, dissidents, and other refugees of compelling concern to the United States

Iran: Members of Iranian religious minorities.

Former-Soviet Union: In-country, Jews, Evangelical Christians, and certain members of the Ukrainian Catholic or Orthodox churches. Preference among these groups is accorded to those with close family in the United States.

Vietnam: In-country, former reeducation camp detainees who spent more than three years in detention camps subsequent to April 1975 because of pre-1975 association with the U.S. government of the former SouthVietnamese government; certain former U.S. Government employees and other specified individuals or groups of concern; persons who returned from first-asylum camps in Southeast Asia on or after October 1, 1995 who qualify for consideration under the Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees (ROVR) criteria; and, on a case-by-case basis, other individuals who have experienced recent persecution because of post-1975 political, religious, or human rights activities.

PRIORITY THREE:
Spouses, unmarried sons and daughters, and parents of persons lawfully admitted to the United States as permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, conditional residents, and certain parolees; the over-21-year-old unmarried sons and daughters of U.S. citizens; and parents of U.S. citizens under 21 years of age. (Spouses and unmarried sons and daughters under 21 of U.S. citizens and the parents of U.S. citizens who have attained the age of 21 are required by regulation to be admitted as immigrants rather than as refugees.)

PRIORITY FOUR:
Grandparents, grandchildren, married sons and daughters, and siblings of U.S. citizens and persons lawfully admitted to the United States as permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, conditional residents, and certain parolees. (Currently open only to Bosnians and without regard to ethnicity.)

PRIORITY FIVE:
Not available in FY 1999.

NOTES:

- The UNHCR or U.S. Embassies may refer members of any nationality group—not only those listed in the table above—for consideration of admission to the United States under Priority 1 (P-1). (EXCEPTION: Processing of North Koreans, Libyans, and Palestinians requires prior consultation with the Department of State and INS headquarters.)

(1) See explanation of groups of special concern under Priority (P-2).

(2) On January 1, 1997, new processing guidelines for Bosnians took effect. Those guidelines include a new P-2 category and the phase-out of P-5 processing.

(3) While all persons who were nationals of the former Soviet Union prior to September 2, 1991 are eligible to be considered for refugee processing by establishing a well-founded fear of persecution, Jews, Evangelical Christians, and Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox religious activists may establish refugee status for U.S. admission by asserting a fear of persecution and asserting a credible basis of concern about the possibility of such persecution. (Lautenberg Amendment.)

(4) The December 31, 1997 registration deadline for Liberians has been rescinded. For FY-1999, Liberians who meet Priority 3 criteria are eligible to register for refugee consideration

(5) In January 1998, the U.S. implemented a P-2 processing program for Africa. In this program, specific and identifiable groups in designated locations will become eligible for resettlement processing. Currently, Nigerians of Ogoni ethnicity in Come Camp in Benin who arrived there prior to September 1, 1997 are designated as a P-2 group for U.S. resettlement processing. Other designated groups for P-2 processing will follow.

(6) Certain ROVR applicants and Vietnamese who were members of certain category groups identified by the INS in 1983 may establish refugee status for U.S. admission by asserting a fear of persecution and asserting a credible basis of concern about the possibility of such persecution. (Lautenberg Amendment.) Registration for consideration under the regular programs of the Orderly Departure Program ended on September 30, 1994.

REFUGEES BY NATIONALITY TO U.S.
(FY 1980 - 1999)

	FY '80-'89*	FY '90	FY '91	FY92	FY '93	FY '94	FY '95	FY '96	FY97	FY98	As of 12/31/98 FY99	Cumulative through FY '98 Id
Khmer	86,346	2,166	38	141	22	6	1	0	0	0	0	90,720
Lao: High.	38,874	5,207	6,369	6,833	6,741	6,253	3,658	1,737	770	0	0	76,442
Lao: Low.	41,525	3,564	2,881	482	226	19	17	484	169	0	0	49,347
Vtnm.--1st As	162,036	13,893	4,049	3,510	4,162	2,341	568	78	291	47	31	191,008
Vtnm.--ODP	52,361	28,732	40,131	40,826	38,613	34,887	32,646	18,943	7,178	10,614	3,562	304,493
Other*	294,943	55	18	56	94	75	36	12	182	187	47	295,705
EAST ASIA	678,087	51,617	53,486	51,848	49,858	43,581	36,926	19,234	8,590	10,848	3,640	1,007,715
Afghans	21,270	1,594	1,480	1,452	1,233	21	4	0	0	88	1	27,143
Iranians	28,537	3,329	2,692	1,949	1,161	851	973	1,256	1,305	1,699	204	43,961
Iraqis	4,734	67	842	3,442	4,605	4,984	3,482	2,528	2,679	1,407	337	29,107
Syrians	62	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	64
Other*	6,069	1	344	1	0	5	0	4	6	3	0	6,433
N E ASIA	60,672	4,991	5,359	6,844	7,000	5,861	4,464	3,788	3,990	3,197	542	106,708
Former Soviet	111,663	50,716	38,661	61,298	48,627	43,470	35,716	29,536	27,072	23,349	5,209	475,517
Albanians	426	98	1,363	1,108	458	171	51	23	9	3	1	3,711
Bulgarians	1,057	332	585	126	34	5	3	0	0	0	0	2,142
Czechs	8,163	345	158	18	3	5	0	1	0	0	0	8,693
Hungarians	5,409	274	7	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5,692
Poles	34,304	1,491	290	134	54	31	39	11	6	2	2	36,364
Romanians	29,070	3,650	4,452	1,499	215	67	24	16	3	0	0	38,996
Yugoslavs	34	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	43
Bosnians	0	0	0	0	1,887	7,197	9,870	12,030	21,357	30,906	4,478	87,725
Other*	9,849	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9,849
E. EUROPE	200,175	56,912	45,516	64,184	51,278	50,947	45,703	41,617	48,450	54,260	9,690	668,732
Angolans	360	59	21	4	0	6	1	2	0	0	0	453
Ethiopians	16,433	3,229	3,948	2,972	2,765	328	239	194	197	152	39	30,496
Liberians	0		1	637	961	610	52	48	231	1,494	177	4,209
Mozambicans	72	3	12	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	96
Namibians	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48
Rwandans	0		2	3	7	31	88	118	100	86	87	522
Somalis	0		192	1,570	2,753	3,555	2,506	6,436	4,974	2,951	369	25,306
So. Africans	202	34	19	15	8	0	0	1	1	0	0	280
Sudanese	0		24	113	244	1,220	1,705	575	277	1,252	32	5,442
Ugandans	0		125	93	24	2	10	10	9	2	0	275
Zairians	106	79	73	76	199	92	85	38	45	52	7	854
Other*	3,344	90	7	0	8	11	93	82	235	673	371	4,914
AFRICA	20,567	3,494	4,424	5,491	6,969	5,858	4,779	7,502	6,069	6,662	1,082	72,895
Argentines	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Cubans #	8,703	4,753	3,933	3,749	3,065	2,670	6,133	3,498	2,911	1,587	336	41,338
Nicaraguans	571	532	87	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1,193
Salvadorans	125	22	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	156
Haitians	0				1,307	3,766	1,485	39	75	0	0	6,672
Other*	8,679	3	0	54	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	8,743
LAT. AMER.	18,082	5,312	4,026	3,806	4,377	6,437	7,618	3,541	2,986	1,587	336	58,106
TOTAL	977,583	122,326	112,811	132,173	112,521	112,682	99,490	75,682	70,085	76,554	15,290	1,907,197

* Includes FY 1980 & 1981 statistics which were not maintained separately by ethnic/national group.
# PSI Admissions includ FY 88: Cubans 733
FY 89: Cubans 1512, Iranians 38
FY 90: Cubans 3003, Vietnamese 6
FY 91: Cubans 1789
FY 92: Cubans 682
FY 93: Cubans 251

REFUGEES BY NATIONALITY TO U.S.

	FY '80	FY '81	FY '82	FY '83	FY '84	FY '85	FY '86	FY '87	FY'88	FY'89	Cumulative FY80-'89
Khmer	N/A	N/A	20,234	13,115	19,851	19,097	9,789	1,539	2,805	1,916	88,346
Lao: Highlanders	N/A	N/A	2,600	738	2,753	1,944	3,668	8,307	10,388	8,476	38,874
Lao: Lowlanders	N/A	N/A	6,837	2,096	4,538	3,472	9,201	7,257	4,168	3,956	41,525
Vietnamese--1st Asyl	N/A	N/A	39,927	18,739	18,121	24,232	21,916	14,509	10,952	13,642	162,038
Vietnamese- -ODP	N/A	N/A	3,924	6,748	6,697	1,225	680	8,500	6,702	17,685	52,361
Other**	163,799	131,139	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	294,943
EAST ASIA	163,799	131,139	73,522	41,436	51,960	49,970	45,454	40,112	35,015	45,680	678,087
Afghans	N/A	N/A	4,300	2,926	2,128	2,234	2,535	3,220	2,211	1,716	21,270
Iranians	N/A	N/A	0	947	2,917	3,492	3,148	6,681	6,167	5,185	28,537
Iraqis	N/A	N/A	2,032	1,583	195	264	307	202	37	114	4,734
Syrians	N/A	N/A	37	9	6	4	5	0	0	1	62
Other**	2,231	3,829	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	2	6,069
NEAR EAST ASIA	2,231	3,829	6,369	5,465	5,246	5,994	5,998	10,107	8,415	7,018	60,672
Soviets	28,444	13,444	2,756	1,409	715	640	787	3,694	20,421	39,553	111,863
Albanians	N/A	N/A	14	70	46	45	84	48	72	47	426
Bulgarians	N/A	N/A	122	140	127	130	173	114	140	111	1,057
Czechs	N/A	N/A	736	1,335	853	981	1,589	1,072	672	925	8,163
Hungarians	N/A	N/A	386	662	549	530	754	669	784	1,075	5,409
Poles	N/A	N/A	6,647	5,868	4,331	3,145	3,735	3,626	3,345	3,607	34,304
Romanians	N/A	1,881	2,871	4,003	4,371	4,513	2,373	3,075	2,801	3,182	29,070
Yugoslavs	N/A	N/A	4	5	8	6	4	2	4	1	34
Other**	5,025	4,823	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	9,849
USSR & E. EUROPE	33,469	20,148	13,536	13,492	11,000	9,990	9,500	12,300	28,239	48,501	200,175
Angolans	N/A	N/A	120	10	81	75	3	40	13	18	360
Ethiopians	N/A	N/A	3,186	2,604	2,533	1,788	1,268	1,831	1,456	1,767	16,433
·ambicans	N/A	N/A	3	11	26	7	1	7	13	4	72
bians	N/A	N/A	1	2	22	12	5	3	3	0	48
n Africans	N/A	N/A	6	9	14	29	12	70	42	20	202
Zairians	N/A	N/A	10	11	36	12	4	7	10	18	108
Other**	955	2,119	0	1	35	30	22	36	51	95	3,344
AFRICA	955	2,119	3,326	2,648	2,747	1,953	1,315	1,994	1,588	1,922	20,567
Argentines	N/A	N/A	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Cubans	N/A	N/A	600	666	67	135	173	273	3,006	3,783	8,703
Nicaraguans	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	3	0	36	209	323	571
Salvadorans	N/A	N/A	0	0	93	0	0	6	15	11	125
Other**	6,662	2,017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,679
LATIN AMERICA	6,662	2,017	602	668	160	138	173	315	3,230	4,117	18,082
TOTAL	207,116 *	159,252	97,355	63,709	71,113	68,045	62,440	64,828	76,487	107,238	977,583

** Breakdown by ethnic/national group is not available

ANSWER FROM MS. ABUZAYD TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. REES

DESCRIBE THE IMPACT OF LATE FUNDING OR SHORTFALLS IN CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNHCR'S ON REFUGEE PROGRAM APPEALS

UNHCR works on a calendar fiscal year- 1 January to 31 December. Our global program requirements are discussed and debated during our Executive Committee meeting in October and then compiled and published in our Global Appeal in December. That Appeal document is placed on our web site UNHCR.CH An initial pledging conference for our budget is held at the United Nations, where we seek to gauge the likely level of donor support for our regular programs in the new fiscal year.

UNHCR for the last three years has had smaller and smaller amounts of funds to carry over from the previous year's budget. This means we must begin raising voluntary contributions from governments early in the year or risk being unable to maintain existing or implement new protection and assistance programs or carry out voluntary repatriation efforts. Some 40% of UNHCR's funds are expended through implementing partners, many of whom are non governmental, private voluntary agencies(NGOs). If contributions arrive late in the fiscal year, or fail to meet UNHCR's budget target, many of our NGO partners find their projects delayed, curtailed or even canceled. The refugees and sometimes the host governments are short changed, since these programs were planned with their involvement. Sometimes funding shortfalls mean even basic needs cannot be fully met. With an annual budget of close to $1 billion, UNHCR has an emergency fund of only $25 million and a small "program reserve" which can be used to maintain essential activities - but without new funding, these reserves are quickly depleted. This means projects to improve shelter, to lessen the impact of refugee populations on the environment, to increase the amount of drinkable water available to the refugees, to improve camp security, enhance educational and recreational programs for children, conduct income generation activities for widows and the handicapped - all of these must be delayed, reduced in scope, or just abandoned in a year like 1998 where the agency incurs a shortfall of over $200 million.

Thus in Kenya, we were unable to complete the rebuilding of the live security thorn fences protecting refugee families from bandits. In Kenya and in other places in Africa, plastic sheeting can be replaced only every two or three years, despite the fact that this material is more quickly damaged under the ravages of tropical sun and rain storms. In Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, UNHCR ran out of funds to transport Liberian refugees wishing to return home voluntarily, forcing some families with elderly or handicapped members to remain in exile, even though other family members had already returned. In Liberia, a special initiative involving UNHCR, UNICEF, the Liberian ministry of education and several NGOs , which was to provide education, counseling and vocational opportunities for former child soldiers, unaccompanied minors, at risk adolescents and their families and to equip teachers to better deal with these populations, could not begin to operate until the last quarter of the fiscal year, when the US provided needed operational funding.

In Rwanda efforts to rehabilitate structures and systems needed by returned refugees had to be scaled back or abandoned, including activities in sanitation, shelter, reforestation, and other environmental protection efforts. The Rwandan Women's Initiative, which worked to improve the legal, social, and economic participation of women had to be reduced, meaning fewer women

victims of discriminatory practices, homelessness, inadequate health care and post-genocide trauma could be aided by this program. The severe housing shortage in Rwanda continues to effect returnees, yet with a serious funding shortfall 23,000 family housing units could not be built and needed sanitation measures, specifically pit latrines, could not be provided to housing completed the year before.

UNHCR consults with its major donors on refugee program needs and requirements before issuing funding appeals. In emergency response situations, UNHCR plans its operations and programs in partnership with other UN agencies and their program priorities in a Consolidated International Appeals process coordinated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(OCHA). UN consolidated appeals this year include the needs of refugees, returnees, displaced and persons in refugee like situations in the former Yugoslavia and Albania; Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, the CIS Countries, and Somalia. At times, UNHCR receives most of its funding, but other agencies may not, meaning there can be serious gaps in health, education, or shelter and infrastructure needs. We appreciate your Committees interest in following this process and trying to ensure that the basic needs of the refugees can be better met

WHAT HAS HAPPENED AT DADAAB CAMP WITH THE US CONTRIBUTION TO PROVIDE FIREWOOD AND THUS REDUCE RAPE ATTACKS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

Dadaab is in an arid area of Kenya. Among the refugee population, women and girls are the traditional fuel wood gatherers, but many have been harassed, and victimized by bandit attacks and rapes. Cutting and gathering wood caused some tensions with the local Somali population who objected to the loss of trees and bushes, and the resulting environmental degradation that has occurred within a five kilometer radius of the camps. In late 1997, the US after the visit of a Congressional staff delegation, provided a special $1.5 million contribution to UNHCR to provide fuel wood and to undertake other measures that hopefully would decrease the risk of rape and violent attacks on the female gatherers.

This area in Kenya was struck by severe flooding at the end of 1997 and in early 1998, with significant damage to roads and the live thorn fencing used to protect residential areas from bandit attacks. In January of 1998, UNHCR organized a participatory planning workshop on firewood and improved security for refugee women and girls. The session involved all of the stakeholders. refugee and local leaders, community based organizations, the Government of Kenya, the NGOs and other implementing partners in the camps, UNHCR - to decide how best to do firewood distribution and improve security for refugee women. Participants recommended that the firewood project should be implemented as an integral part of the ongoing social service support and protection initiatives, as well as with efforts to decrease environmental degradation.

Initially the project provided wood for those doing environmental community work, but it was then modified so that by July and September of 1998, the German Technical Corporation(GTZ), an NGO, under a trilateral agreement with the Govt. of Kenya and UNHCR , made the first two fuel wood distributions providing 30-35% of a refugee family's need for those living in Ifo,

Hagadera and Dagaharley camps. Additional firewood was to be made available for completing special work assignments, for certain vulnerable groups, and to community institutions like hospitals and schools. Firewood was procured locally through contracts which, to avoid conflicts, were awarded proportionally to local women's associations, NGOs and self help groups, local leaders and businesses. Kenyan Government foresters ensured that the wood supplied met the established standards, was harvested according to Kenyan regulations and from areas at least 50 kms away from the camps. These two distributions cost a total of $321,000.

Since December 1998, distribution of the firewood has been done monthly, after the food distribution, but utilizing the same registration and family size based distribution system. Over the course of the project, 7,466.1 metric tons of wood has been distributed - 60% directly to families, 30% for persons working 5 hours on environmental tasks to receive an additional 20 kg of wood. (5,400 women and 1270 men earned 133 MTs of wood through this.) The remaining 10% of the wood has been provided through CARE to vulnerable families.

Firewood distribution has reduced the incidence of attacks on female gatherers outside the camp, since it reduced the numbers of trips to the bush. Although only a portion of the firewood needs of the refugees have been met, the distribution and the availability of wood through work has increased the options available to refugee women. The camps, however, are in an insecure area with high criminal and bandit activities, which affects the refugees, the local population as well as UNHCR and NGO staff. Assaults continue to occur on roads between the camps, on inter-camp movements to visit relatives or barter goods, on trips to graze livestock, or collect construction poles. UNHCR is concerned that the incidence of rape within the camps increased in 1998 Efforts to repair the live thorn fencing around refugee housing have been hindered by a lack of funding, but UNHCR hopes to continue this effort in 1999. Assistance and counselling services continue to be made available to refugee women and their families.

To bring rapists to justice and to deter these attacks, UNHCR spurred the creation of a mobile court for the region, but regrets to report that not a single arrest or prosecution occurred in the 164 reported rape cases in 1998. UNHCR has also provided nonlethal equipment and training to the local Kenyan police to increase security patrols in the camps, decrease attacks and to investigate and arrest those accused of such crimes. The first arrest and conviction of a rapist occurred only recently in the Garissa court.

The firewood project has had a positive impact on the local environment, permitting greater regeneration of plant life in the immediate vicinity of the camps. UNHCR encountered significant difficulties in arranging for firewood deliveries given the very difficult logistics in the area, the flood damage to roads and the rules required for procurment some 50 kms from the camps. UNHCR and its implementing partners had to overcome many problems to obtain sanctioned cutting areas for the local suppliers, oversee this operation, and deal with different sub clans, local NGOs and community based organizations in the camp area and in the harvesting areas who all wanted substantial supplier contracts. A very elaborate tendering system involving all major stakeholders was developed and careful oversight of the contract performance was all necessary.

UNHCR would hope that the US and other donors would be interested in continuing to develop and refine programs that would reduce the risk of violence against female firewood gatherers, improve interest in local conservation and renewable energy supplies, increase the availability of cooking fuel and decrease enviornmental degradation.

ISBN 0-16-058578-3