

ISLAMIST MILITANT THREATS TO EURASIA

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, AND
EMERGING THREATS

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ISLAMIST MILITANT THREATS TO EURASIA

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, AND EMERGING THREATS AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 1 o'clock p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Dana Rohrabacher and Hon. Ted Poe (chairmen of the subcommittees) presiding.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. This hearing of the joint subcommittees of the Foreign Affairs Committee will be called to order. And I call to order this joint hearing. It is of both Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats, and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. Now let me see what we have got here, okay.

After Chairman Poe of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and I, and the ranking members of each subcommittee, Mr. Keating and Mr. Sherman, after we each take 5 minutes to make our opening remarks, each member will have 1 minute to make an opening statement, alternating between the majority and minority members. And without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous material for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules, and hearing no objection, so ordered.

This is essentially a hearing about terrorism and how to fight it, so it is relevant to bring up the plight of Dr. Afridi. With the understanding of my colleagues and those that have come to hear this hearing, Dr. Afridi is the man who confirmed the location of Osama bin Laden in his Pakistani safe house. Defense Secretary Panetta said Dr. Afridi played a pivotal role in making it possible for our Special Forces to administer justice to bin Laden for his role in plotting the massacre of 3,000 Americans on 9/11.

Pakistan gave this mass murderer safe haven. Dr. Afridi, a Pakistani physician, risked his life so justice could be done. Then we left him behind, and this hero is now sitting in a Pakistani prison. Dr. Afridi has been tortured, and his family threatened. Those are hostile acts by Pakistan against the United States, and belie the notion that Pakistan is an ally of ours in the war against terrorism.

So I would hope our Assistant Secretary Blake, I hope he takes back to Foggy Bottom, the message of the American people that the State Department needs to get Dr. Afridi released from prison using whatever pressure on Pakistan is needed. We cannot defeat

terrorism in Eurasia or anywhere else if we cannot recruit allies. And we are never going to be able to recruit allies if we betray those who side with us against this ferocious and horrible enemy that all of us in humankind face of radical Islamic terrorism, and yes, other forms of terrorism as well.

Since September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, American policy toward the Central Asian states has aimed basically at facilitating their cooperation with the United States and NATO stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. The level of cooperation by the Government of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, their level of cooperation with these three governments has been outstanding since 9/11. There has even been a respectable level of cooperation with Russia in Afghanistan and in other regional hotspots.

During most of this period, terrorism in Central Asia was kept to a minimum. However, since 2010 there has been an increase in violence by Islamic militants in Central Asia. A closer look at security risks in the region north of Afghanistan is long overdue, and it is imperative as we move to a U.S. pullout of troops by 2014 that we focus on what that will result in, in those countries just north of Afghanistan.

The point of today's hearing is to examine what efforts the United States is making to keep Central Asia stable and to improve relations with the states in the region. That means helping out our friends, and yes, remember those, by helping the enemy of our enemies we are conducting ourselves in the most efficient way of providing defense for our own people.

Just 2 days ago, a congressional delegation led by myself and including Mr. Poe returned from the region. The members of the delegation were impressed with the commitment of the Uzbek Government to work with the United States to thwart the catastrophic consequences of the Taliban retaking power in Afghanistan. We were also impressed that there are brave forces anxious to fight and defeat radical Islam in that area. For example, there is the MEK whose leaders we met in France that stands vulnerable, yet it is willing to do what it can to resist the Mullah dictatorship in Iran.

The Baloch National Insurgency, whose representatives we met in London, were dedicated and courageous people who are under fire in Iran and Pakistan, both terrorist supporting regimes also that repress, they not only threaten their neighbors but threaten their own people in the name of militant Islam. In short, radical Islam threatens us all. We should be supplying those courageous opponents of those who threaten us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rohrabacher follows:]

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANA ROHRABAH CER

“Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia”

I hereby call this joint hearing of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade to order.

After Chairman Poe of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade and I; and the Ranking Members of each subcommittee --- Mr. Keating and Mr. Sherman, each take 5 minutes to make opening remarks, each Member present will have one minute to make their opening remarks, alternating between Majority and Minority Members. And without objection, all Members may have five days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

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I want Assistant Secretary Blake to take back to Foggy Bottom the message from the American people that the State Department needs to get Dr. Afridi released from prison using whatever pressure on Pakistan is needed. We cannot defeat terrorism in Eurasia or anywhere else if we cannot recruit allies, and we cannot recruit allies if we betray those who side with us to the enemy.

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States American policy toward the states of Central Asia has aimed at facilitating their cooperation with U.S. and NATO stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

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During most of this period, terrorism in Central Asia was kept to a minimum. However, since 2010, there has been an increase in violence by Islamist militants in Central Asia. A closer look at security risks in the region north of Afghanistan is overdue and is imperative as we move to a U.S. pullout of troops by 2014.

The point of today's hearing is to examine what efforts the United States is making to keep Central Asia stable and to improve relations with the states of the region. That means helping our friends, and, yes, helping the enemy of our enemy.

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In short, radical Islam threatens us all. We should be supplying those courageous opponents of those who threaten us.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. With that said, I would now turn to the chairman of the Terrorism subcommittee, Judge Poe.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Islamic Jihad Union may be the most dangerous of all Islamic militant groups in Central Asia. In 2004, they coordinated three nearly simultaneous suicide bombings outside the United States in Israeli Embassies and the headquarters of the Uzbek chief prosecutor in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. They killed Uzbeks and one Israeli Embassy security guard and another personal security guard of the Israeli Ambassador.

IJU is typical of terrorist groups in the region. They want to establish Islamic rule in the region, and they want to institute Sharia law, ban music, and have second class citizenship for all non-Muslims, and women. They have close ties to al-Qaeda and northern Afghanistan and the safe havens of Pakistan. They train with al-Qaeda. They live with al-Qaeda, and they even get funding from al-Qaeda. If they had it their way, they would take over Central Asia just like the Taliban went into Afghanistan. The issue is, can they? Will they overthrow the governments of Central Asia and establish Islamic rule? That is one of our questions today.

Up until this point, the governments of the region have been successful in pushing them out of the region and into Afghanistan and even Pakistan. However, my opinion is that some of these groups left on their own because they wanted to gain more skills, learn how to fight and be better terrorists, if we can use that phrase. Has the fighting and training in Afghanistan actually made them stronger?

Afghanistan, in my opinion, is in all kinds of trouble. It seems that Pakistan can't wait to cause more instability in Afghanistan after our troops are gone. Pakistan is already a safe haven to militant groups in Pakistan. We can expect them to do the same in Afghanistan. This is another reason we ought to be cutting off funding to Pakistan. We don't need to pay them to hate us. They will do it for free. If the Taliban emerges to control substantial portions of Afghanistan, then groups could be "golden boys" of the jihad movement and get substantial funding and training. I am talking about the IMU and the IJU. These groups are growing and evolving with the times.

Reportedly, they have gotten involved in drug trafficking on the borders of Afghanistan. The porous borders and corrupt government officials mean truckloads of drugs drive across the Afghan border into Central Asia almost every day. According to the United Nations, up to 80 tons of heroin and 20 tons of opium are smuggled through Tajikistan's 835-mile border with Afghanistan on a yearly basis.

These groups are not just running drugs across the border, they are taking over towns. One of the larger terrorist groups, Hizb ut-Tahrir, is imitating Hezbollah and starting to provide social services in remote towns that feel neglected by their central government. And much like Hezbollah in Lebanon, they are winning over the people.

The IJU is using Twitter, or at least trying to. In January, the IJU established two Twitter accounts only to have them suspended by Twitter. Twitter, in my opinion, of course was following the law.

The IJU was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the State Department on June 17th, 2005. Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act states that it is unlawful to provide a designated FTO with “material support or resources, including property, tangible or intangible services, and among them communication equipment and facilities.”

After I and six other Members of Congress raised this issue with the Department of Justice in September, Twitter finally took down the Somali terrorist group Al-Shabaab’s account in January. There is no reason why Twitter should not consistently follow the law, take down two other officially recognized foreign terrorist organizations, Hamas and Hezbollah, who began tweeting in 2009 and 2011. More and more terrorist groups are recognizing the value of using Twitter as a tool to spread its recruiting and its ideological concepts.

Terrorist groups like those in Central Asia and around the world are not going away, they don’t want to go away, and they are going to continue to grow. We need to see the obvious. We cannot be taken by surprise. We must be prepared now and deal with terrorism wherever it raises its head. And I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Your Honor. Next we have the ranking member on our Eurasian subcommittee, Representative Keating from Massachusetts.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. It is timely and we look forward to it. This is our first subcommittee together, and I would like to make note that I very much look forward to working with you and all the members on a large number of interesting topics.

In regards to today’s hearing, as the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan prepares to drawdown in 2014, the question of stability and security in Central Asia is crucially important, not only for our region, but also for U.S. policy. I believe that we face an immensely complex, yet long overdue task of bringing our troops home safely, and we must further work with our allies to mitigate potential instability and spillover effects of the drawdown to the neighboring countries there.

Needless to say, even though the expected drawdown will occur, I believe that Afghanistan will remain one of our central international challenges. To that effect, Central Asia will play a crucial role in retrograde operations. It has been no simple task for these nations to support the United States through Operation Enduring Freedom and beyond. They are concerned with their domestic unrest and rising extremism within their own borders. But ultimately, they too have much to gain from a sustained partnership with the U.S.

At the forefront of these benefits rest the administration’s vision of expanding the Northern Distribution Network into a viable conduit for interregional trade between Central Asian states and a wider global community. I look forward to hearing from all of you in regards to this testimony. And additionally, I believe the U.S. engagement provides Central Asian states with an opportunity to strengthen their respective governance structures in their own rule of law, so that the full economic potential of the region and its people can be realized.

Currently, the U.S. faces a serious policy dilemma in how some of the governments have chosen to weed extremists or militants out through authoritarian rule. As we have seen in countless examples, most recently throughout the Arab world, authoritarian techniques breed resentment, resistance, and at times, violent insurgencies. This is a vicious cycle and we will have to figure a way to work with our Central Asian partners to break it.

I particularly want to point out that labeling any form of dissent or opposition to current governments as “terrorism” can be, in instances, a particularly unhelpful approach. There is a very real terrorist threat within the region and blurring the lines and definitions will only serve to aid recruitment and to increase potential violence.

I am troubled by the lack of freedom of expression and information in Central Asian republics. On a recent trip to the region, members of the congressional delegation were not able to access the Web sites of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, EurasiaNet, Freedom House, Transparency International, Amnesty International, and a host of other acclaimed informational sources that work well internationally.

In this regard, I would suggest that U.S. security assistance to the region should be reviewed under this context, and further aid should be contingent upon further democratic improvement. If political, economic and human rights reforms do not take place in Central Asian republics, I fear that the region will not be able to attract investments or create jobs needed to secure stability. This, in turn, increases the potential of the nonviable, ungovernable and, in fact, illegitimate states.

The U.S. and Central Asia share a mutual interest in the security of the region. It is important that we work together for these goals. And I look forward to hearing our witnesses. I am particularly interested, since I know that Secretary Blake, you testified yesterday and I appreciate coming forth today, your vigor in this situation to once again make yourself available. And with that I yield back my time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much for that very thoughtful opening statement. And now we have Brad Sherman who is the ranking member on the Terrorism subcommittee.

Mr. SHERMAN. America has focused its attention on Iraq and Afghanistan. That is where our troops were deployed. But the worldwide war on terrorism is both wide in scope and unfortunately long in duration. Just a few months ago Americans became aware of Mali, and I want to commend my colleagues for holding these hearings as we focus on a number of areas that may turn out to be just as important as Iraq and Afghanistan in our efforts to deal with extremist Islamic terrorism.

We are dealing with an area of the world where the borders were drawn by Joseph Stalin, first as minister for minorities in the Soviet Government and then as the ruler of the Soviet Union. In Africa, various illogical borders are now sacrosanct. They were drawn by Europeans mostly out of ignorance and happenstance and chance. And those borders split ethnic groups while linking other ethnic groups together in nation states that are still struggling and gradually developing their own national identity.

With Stalin there was nothing by happenstance or chance. He deliberately divided and grouped ethnic groups in Central Asia and also in the Caucasus so as to make it difficult for these republics to ever be independent or to ever function effectively. Just for example, the Fergana Valley is divided among three different countries, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We see in Tajikistan, Uzbeks making up about a quarter of the population, all in an effort to make it impossible to do what now has to be done and that is have effective independent republics in Central Asia.

And we have a number of terrorist organizations including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which has been active in Central Asia, operating with the Taliban even before 9/11. It is an offshoot of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The Islamic Jihad Union is a terrorist organization that has conducted attacks not only in Uzbekistan, but Afghanistan and even Europe.

We need to cooperate with our Central Asian allies in dealing with terrorism. One of the dilemmas the U.S. faces in Central Asia is that several of those states have poor human rights records. Terrorism is used to justify these human rights abuses, but all too often they are not against terrorists but rather against political opponents. Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have provided major logistical support for our coalition forces in Afghanistan and that is to be appreciated.

Then we focus on the Uighers in northwest China. These are a Turkic-Central Asian people living in an autonomous region. I, in the past, have said I believe in a One China, One Taiwan policy. One wonders whether we will support a one Tibet and then a one East Turkestan policy. We have to get along with China, and perhaps dismembering their country in such a greater respect or at least advocating such dismemberment may not put the negotiations on the right foot. Still we have to advocate that the Uighers are treated fairly. It is an autonomous region that deserves that level of autonomy, and every ethnic group deserves to be treated fairly. And America's voice on behalf of human rights needs to be loud, even if we are dealing with a country that owns almost as much U.S. debt as one can imagine. I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Sherman. The only one of our members who will be taking advantage of their 1-minute opening statement is Congressman Yoho of Florida who is a member of the Terrorist subcommittee. You are recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you to the chairs and the ranking members of the respective subcommittees for holding this hearing. Hearings like this give us the opportunity to have some accountability and transparency to how our tax dollars are being spent, and to examine if our efforts in Central Asia are worthwhile pursuits, which I believe they are. I look forward to the testimonies of the witnesses today, and hearing their thoughts and reading them in the record, because I am going to have to leave here in a little bit. Thank you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, thank you very much for that very succinct 1-minute opening statement. We will have two panels of witnesses this afternoon. On our first panel we have Robert Blake, the Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs. As was noted earlier, he testified just yesterday and we appreciate that,

your more than cooperative efforts on working with the Hill. He was appointed in May 2009 as Assistant Secretary, and he oversees U.S. foreign policy with India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and then Kuryakistan, which I am not pronouncing right, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. He previously served as Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives. And from 2006 to mid-2009 he was the Ambassador there, and then Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Mission in New Delhi, India, from 2003 to 2006. Mr. Blake earned a B.A. from Harvard College—is that Harvard University or Harvard College, one of those two—in 1980, and a Masters Degree in International Relations from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1984.

Also with us is Justin Siberell, the Deputy Coordinator for Regional Affairs and Programs at the Bureau of Counterterrorism at the Department of State. He joined the State Department Foreign Service in March 1993, and assumed this position in July 2012. Mr. Siberell was most recently Consul General for Dubai and the United Arab Emirates. Overseas assignments includes service at U.S. Embassies and consulates in Baghdad, Iraq; Amman, Jordan, for example; Alexandria, Egypt; and, Panama City, Panama. Mr. Siberell was raised in California—where, what city were you?

Mr. SIBERELL. In northern California, but my mother is from Los Angeles, Los Angeles native.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right. And attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a Bachelor of Arts and a degree in History.

So with that said, gentlemen, we welcome your opening statements. We are going to be kind of trapped for time here. If you could keep it down about 5 minutes and then submit the rest of your remarks for the record that would be deeply appreciated.

Ambassador Blake, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT O. BLAKE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. BLAKE. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and Chairman Poe, and thanks to all the other members of the committee. I am delighted to be here today to testify and I look forward to working with all of you. As you said, Mr. Chairman, I have a longer statement that with your permission I will submit for the record.

Chairman Rohrabacher, let me just start by thanking you and Chairman Poe for taking a codel to Uzbekistan. That visit was very well received and we really appreciate the time and trouble that you took to do that. I am pleased to testify today as we enter an especially critical and dynamic phase of our relations with Central Asia. Despite the real gains in stability in Afghanistan, our planned drawdown in Afghanistan and continued use of the Northern Distribution Network has raised anxiety levels among our Central Asian partners about the increased potential for instability and extremism, especially beyond 2014.

I will let my colleague from the Bureau of Counterterrorism expand more on the specifics of the Islamic militant threat, but I will

start by saying that we do not assess that there is an imminent Islamic threat to Central Asian states. Nonetheless, this is no time for complacency. Our foreign assistance programs seek to build the capacity of Central Asian countries to address transnational threats, such as those posed by Islamic militant groups that members of the committees discussed, while promoting regional economic integration and development.

We also use our engagement as a mechanism to tackle issues related to human rights, rule of law and corruption, and promote economic growth, as failure to address these could contribute to militancy. To achieve these objectives we are using a combination of diplomatic engagement and bilateral and multilateral assistance. On the diplomatic front, the United States holds annual bilateral consultations with each of the five Central Asian states. These consultations, which I chair with the Foreign Ministers or Deputy Foreign Ministers of each country, form the cornerstone of our bilateral relationships.

Through these we convey a consistent message that democratic reform, respect for freedom of expression and religion, and an active civil society all contribute to stability, while cracking down on dissent and driving it underground may create more favorable conditions for radicalism. Our public diplomacy and assistance programs also reinforce our objective of strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Mr. Chairman, our bilateral security assistance is helping build the Central Asian states' capacity to address and counter a broad range of threats including terrorism. In 2012, the United States provided approximately \$215 million of security assistance across the range of Central Asian states. The bulk of this assistance focused on building capacity of law enforcement agencies to address transnational threats including terrorism and narcotics trafficking.

We recognize that our interest in combating terrorism and other cross-border threats are shared by others, so we are engaging with others who are active in Central Asia in a cooperative approach to regional security and stability. I have made it a personal priority to expand significantly our consultations with Russia, China, the EU and others on Central Asia. And we have seen successful cooperation on a number of key initiatives that are outlined in my written testimony.

Let me conclude by reiterating that we do not assess there is an imminent Islamist militant threat to Central Asian states. The limited threat currently posed by Islamist militants to Central Asia, however, is no room for complacency or retreat. The Central Asians face a broad range of challenges that, as in many other societies, could fuel radicalism in the long run and threaten the security interests of the United States and our allies. Addressing these challenges demands our continued vigilance and engagement in the region.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Blake follows:]

Testimony of Robert O. Blake
Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Before the
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats
and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
February 27, 2013

Islamist Militant Threats in Eurasia

Good afternoon everyone and thank you very much, Chairman Rohrabacher and Chairman Poe, and thanks as well to the ranking members and other members of the subcommittees for inviting me here today.

I'm pleased to testify today as we enter an especially critical and dynamic phase of our relationship with Central Asia. Despite the real gains in stability in Afghanistan, our drawdown has raised anxiety levels among our Central Asian partners about the increased potential for instability and extremism, especially beyond 2014.

Specifically, many of the Central Asian states share a common concern that the drawdown of ISAF combat troops in Afghanistan will give extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan more freedom to operate and focus their attention once again on the Central Asian states.

There is also some fear across the region that cooperation with the Northern Distribution Network – increasingly important for our retrograde shipments out of Afghanistan – could invite terrorist backlash and trans-regional extremism. I am confident, however, that the approach we have taken with Central Asia helps proactively strengthen the region's capacity to combat terrorism and counter extremism, while encouraging democratic reform and respect for human rights. There is much work to do, but our continued commitment to Central Asia is crucial to stability in Central Asia as well as Afghanistan.

Let me now briefly summarize the Islamist militant threats in Central Asia, the steps the Central Asian countries are taking to counter these threats, and the

assistance and diplomatic efforts the United States has underway in each country and with organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE, to help these countries address those threats.

Islamist Militant Threats in Central Asia

Before I discuss our engagement with Central Asian states on these issues, let me outline our assessment of the threat from Islamist militants in the region. Groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or IMU, have spent much of the last decade operating inside northern Afghanistan, just beyond the reach of the Central Asian states and where Afghan and Coalition forces offer an enticing target. The IMU is likely to continue to devote major resources to northern Afghanistan, while looking for opportunities to expand their currently limited presence in Central Asia and prepare for eventual attacks in the region as part of a long-term strategy to broaden their influence.

Counterterrorism, or CT, capabilities are uneven across the region. However, these capabilities have generally been sufficient to prevent groups from establishing secure operational bases. Although the threat has been kept at bay, as our forces withdraw from the region we must continue our efforts to help prevent terrorist recruitment and strengthen the Central Asian countries' CT capacities, so they can defend themselves in a responsible and measured fashion.

Country Terrorism Overviews

I would like to briefly touch on recent counterterrorism efforts and trends within the five Central Asian countries.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstani officials continue to express considerable concern about the threat of violent extremism. Starting in summer 2011 and continuing throughout 2012, there were numerous security incidents, which the government attributed to terrorists or violent extremists, generally involving small explosive devices or small arms ambushes, primarily targeting government infrastructure or armed policemen. In two separate trials in April 2012, 47 defendants were found guilty of organizing bombing attacks on government buildings in the city of Atyrau in western Kazakhstan on October 31, 2011. The violent extremist group Jund al-Khalifah (Soldiers of the Caliphate) claimed responsibility for that attack.

In several cases, explosions with no reported civilian casualties were attributed to accidental detonations of explosive devices by extremist groups. Security forces periodically reported shootouts with people they described as terrorists; in such cases, security forces often killed all of the members of the alleged terrorist cells. These incidents have kept the host government on high alert, but terrorist groups have yet to manage a successful, large-scale attack in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan has welcomed intensified dialogue on CT issues, which we intend to pursue.

Kyrgyzstan

2012 was a year of relative stability in Kyrgyzstan following the inauguration of President Almazbek Atambayev in December 2011, which marked the first democratic turnover of presidential power in the nation's history. The government was politically stable, notwithstanding periodic protests organized by opposition politicians. There were no reported terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan and no large-scale inter-ethnic clashes. Kyrgyzstani security forces, however, conducted continual special operations against individuals allegedly affiliated with terrorist organizations throughout the year. The government remained attuned to the potential for terrorism and participated in numerous international cooperative counterterrorism efforts. Kyrgyzstan's porous borders, particularly in the south, make it a potential safe haven for terrorists. The potential for inter-ethnic violence in the south remains a matter of concern.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan has a 1,300-kilometer border with Afghanistan and remains vulnerable to attacks from terrorists based in Afghanistan or Pakistan. It continues to address weaknesses in its counterterrorism strategy and has demonstrated an improved capacity to conduct counterterrorism operations. Tajikistan increasingly circumscribes the role of Islamist groups in Tajik society and in some cases has also imposed restrictions on religious freedom.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan continues efforts to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies to counter terrorism, ensure border security, and detect terrorist financing. In 2012, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) released Turkmenistan from its global Anti-Money Laundering/Counterterrorist Finance

(AML/CTF) compliance monitoring process in recognition of significant progress in improving its AML/CTF regime. In 2012, Turkmenistan significantly improved the professionalism of its border security service and built several new frontier garrisons on its borders with Iran and Afghanistan. It also brought online four radiation portal monitors along those borders, donated by the Department of Energy through its Second Line of Defense program.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan continues to rank countering terrorism within its borders as one of its top three security priorities, together with counternarcotics and countering what it perceives as political and religious extremism. Uzbekistan shares many U.S. counterterrorism goals and objectives in the region, but it has in some cases employed methods inconsistent with respect for the fundamental rights of citizens and the rule of law. The government continues to express concern about the potential for a “spillover effect” of terror attacks across its shared border with Afghanistan, especially post-2014. The government remains confident it can control its border with Afghanistan but is less sure about its neighbors’ ability to do so. Uzbekistan is particularly concerned about infiltration of extremists through its long, rugged border with Tajikistan.

U.S. Efforts

The United States has an enduring interest in promoting a secure and prosperous Central Asia. Given the importance of the Northern Distribution Network and our interest in maximizing the region’s economic potential, our foreign assistance programs build the capacity of Central Asian countries to address transnational threats, such as those posed by Islamist militant groups, while promoting regional economic integration and development.

Our approach for all five Central Asian countries is to build their capacity to address cross-border challenges in counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, law enforcement, and non-proliferation, while at the same time tackling issues related to human rights, rule of law, and corruption. To achieve these objectives, we use a combination of diplomatic engagement and bilateral and multilateral assistance.

On the diplomatic front, the United States holds annual bilateral consultations with each of the five Central Asian countries. These consultations, which I chair with the Foreign Ministers or Deputy Foreign Ministers of each country, form the cornerstone of our bilateral relationships and provide us a venue to openly discuss

every aspect of the relationship, including human rights; security cooperation; economic cooperation; humanitarian and development assistance; and cultural and scientific cooperation. We convey a consistent message that democratic reform, greater media freedom, and an active civil society all contribute to stability. We use our diplomatic efforts, public diplomacy resources, and assistance programs to make a strong case for respect for human rights, religious freedom, and the rule of law.

Our bilateral security assistance is helping build the Central Asian states' capacity to counter a broad range of threats, including terrorism. In 2012, the United States provided approximately \$215 million of security assistance to the countries of Central Asia through a combination of Department of State, Department of Defense, and Department of Energy programs. This funding level represents a \$60 million increase over 2011 levels. The bulk of this assistance is focused on building capacity of the law enforcement agencies to address transnational threats, including terrorism and narcotics trafficking.

Through the Central Asia Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), our assistance is enabling the FBI to provide tools such as the Automated Fingerprint Information System to Uzbekistan. RSI is also supporting a community policing project in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to encourage greater counterterrorism cooperation in the border areas of those two countries. By building trust between law enforcement and local communities, the project aims to prevent terrorist movement while encouraging policing methods consistent with respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The Antiterrorism Assistance program (ATA) is active in four of the five Central Asian countries and emphasize border controls, investigation capabilities, and strengthening the security of the region as a whole. We are engaged in talks with the fifth country, Uzbekistan, aimed at re-launching that program, which was suspended because of human rights issues.

While these efforts help address transnational challenges, we know that in many cases the drivers of violent extremism are often political and social rather than religious in nature. These include the denial of political rights and civil liberties, human rights violations, and widespread corruption, and to varying degrees they are all problems in the Central Asian states. That is why our diplomatic engagement and bilateral assistance also aim to improve compliance with international human rights standards and principles of government accountability and transparency.

For example, in Kyrgyzstan, we are supporting comprehensive security sector reform, which, along with assistance efforts in the judicial sector, is helping bring about a fairer and more transparent system of justice. In Tajikistan, we have a very successful community policing program that is working at the grassroots level – building trust between police, local government, civil society, and the community – to address local problems related to crime safety, security, and quality of life. At the same time, we are working with the central government to encourage institutionalization of the community policing methods into the foundation of national police reform. Such programs also help stabilize communities and vulnerable areas that have experienced conflict with the government forces, like Rasht Valley and Khorugh.

We are also exploring with our embassies how to tailor Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) projects in the region to meet the needs of local communities that are most at risk. These programs have proven effective in other parts of the world and are designed to reduce the vulnerability of targeted or at-risk segments of the population to the appeal of violent extremism. We see this as a promising avenue for helping our Central Asian partners strengthen their defenses against the threat of terrorism and violent extremism, while at the same time encouraging a respect for fundamental rights of citizens that is essential to the long-term stability of the region.

We also recognize that our interest in combating terrorism and other cross-border threats are shared by others, so we are engaging with other countries that are active in Central Asia in a cooperative approach to regional security and stability. I have made it a personal priority to expand significantly our consultations with Russia and China on Central Asia. Since 2006, over 2000 counternarcotics officers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and all five Central Asian states have received training through a NATO-Russia joint project called the NATO-Russia Council Counternarcotics Training Project. In Dushanbe, the United States and Russia both play leading roles in managing the OSCE Border Management Staff College, which provides specialized training for senior management of border security agencies from across Central Asia, the wider OSCE region, and Afghanistan. I just visited the College last week and came away impressed with its contributions to strengthening border security across the region.

The OSCE, funded in part by the United States, is a good example of the important work of multilateral and regional organizations in addressing regional challenges. Through the OSCE, we have funded the NGO, Sisters Against Violent Extremism

(SAVE), to host workshops and build community-based support networks for vulnerable youth and families at risk of radicalization in Tajikistan. We have supported OSCE Travel Document Security (TDS) projects underway in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to promote increased participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Public Key Directory (PKD) system, a multilateral mechanism to assure the authenticity of biographic and biometric data stored on electronic documents.

We also support the OSCE in developing a multi-step awareness-raising and capacity-building program focusing on preventing terrorism in OSCE participating States. A particular focus will be placed on capacity building assistance for national criminal justice officials related to investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating terrorism-related crimes. The OSCE also has an ongoing prison reform and rehabilitation project in Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE conducted several training sessions in 2012, where Kyrgyzstan's corrections and other security officials studied Turkish and Kazakhstani experiences in working with extremists in prisons.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by noting that we do not assess that there is an imminent Islamist militant threat to Central Asian states. Our efforts and assistance commitments are part of a comprehensive and proactive approach to strengthening the capacity of Central Asian states to address a range of transnational threats. The limited threat currently posed by Islamist militants to Central Asia, however, is no reason for complacency or retreat. The Central Asian states face a broad range of challenges that, as in many other societies, could fuel radicalism in the long run and threaten the security and interests of the United States and our allies. Addressing those challenges demands our continued vigilance and engagement in this region.

STATEMENT OF MR. JUSTIN SIBERELL, DEPUTY COORDINATOR FOR REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND PROGRAMS, BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. SIBERELL. Chairman Rohrabacher and Poe, Ranking Members Keating and Sherman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

As you have heard from Assistant Secretary Blake, we are in a critical and dynamic phase in our relations with Central Asia. Though the five Central Asian states have by and large been spared large-scale terrorist attacks in recent years, the governments in these states are concerned about how the region's security will fare after the drawdown of ISAF troops in 2014.

The most capable terrorist groups with links to Central Asia, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union, remain focused on operations in western Pakistan and Afghanistan where they fight U.S., coalition, and local security forces in alliance with the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and the Haqqani Network. Neither the IMU nor IJU are considered exceedingly powerful individually, and we assess they will likely remain focused on operations in the Afghan-Pakistan border region even after 2014. However, as Assistant Secretary Blake noted, while these groups do not pose an immediate threat to Central Asia, we are well aware of their ambition to destabilize their home countries.

To address this threat, and as part of our broader relationship with Central Asia, the United States carries out a number of counterterrorism-focused capacity building programs that seek to develop law enforcement capabilities within a rule of law framework. Ultimately, counterterrorism and rule of law goals are closely aligned and mutually reinforcing. The better our partners become at using law enforcement tools to identify, disrupt, and then prosecute, adjudicate, and incarcerate suspected terrorists, the less they may feel, or claim, the need to resort to extra-legal methods to crack down on domestic threat.

As an example, through the State Department's Central Asia Regional Strategic Initiative, we are enabling the FBI to provide its Automated Fingerprint Information System to the Government of Uzbekistan. This system will make it possible for authorities to more effectively identify fugitives and terror suspects, and complements ongoing FBI agreements with Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. RSI funding is also being applied to a community policing project in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to encourage counterterrorism cooperation along the two countries' shared border. By building trust between law enforcement and key figures in local communities, this project aims to encourage law enforcement authorities to work more closely together.

The State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance program is active in four of the five Central Asian countries, with an emphasis on border security and increasing counterterrorism investigation capabilities. ATA programming in the Kyrgyz Republic is aimed at assisting local authorities to detect and deter terrorist threats against the Transit Center at Manas International Airport and the Northern Distribution Network. In Tajikistan, ATA programs focus on strengthening border controls, particularly along the Afghan

border. We are engaged in talks to resume ATA programming with Uzbekistan which was suspended in 2005 as a result of human rights concerns.

State Department counterterrorism assistance also focuses on disrupting terrorist finance flows. Under this program we are providing cross-border financial investigation techniques training for Kazakhstani officials designed to improve their capability to detect, interdict, and seize illicit cross-border cash used to finance terrorism.

Finally, and also as noted by Assistant Secretary Blake, the State Department works through multilateral bodies to advance counterterrorism objectives, including the OCSE and U.N.-specialized agencies. For example, U.S. funds are supporting implementation of the Global Shield program in Central Asia by UNODC, INTERPOL, and the World Customs Organization. Global Shield is a worldwide program that increases the capacity of law enforcement officials to detect and seize precursor materials in the manufacture of IEDs, and to improve the prosecution of IED-related interdiction cases. Our counterterrorism programs align with and complement assistance administered by partner U.S. Government agencies, such as USAID, the Departments of Defense and Energy, to address counternarcotics, counterproliferation and border security objectives.

That includes my introductory remarks. Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss these issues with you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Siberell follows:]

ORAL TESTIMONY

JUSTIN H. SIBERELL
Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism

HFAC Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats Subcommittee
(Chair Dana Rohrabacher, Ranking William Keating)
and
HFAC Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Trade Subcommittee
(Chair Ted Poe, Ranking Brad Sherman)

“Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia”

Wednesday, February 27, 2013
1:00 pm
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2172

Chairmen Poe and Rohrabacher, Ranking Members Keating and Sherman,
Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As you have heard from Assistant Secretary Blake, we are in a critical and dynamic phase in our relations with Central Asia. Though the five Central Asian states have been spared large-scale terrorist attacks, the governments in these states are concerned about how the region's security will fare after the drawdown of ISAF troops in 2014.

The most capable terrorist groups with links to Central Asia, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union, remain focused on operations in western Pakistan and Afghanistan, where they fight U.S., coalition, and local security forces. They fight in alliance with the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and the Haqqani Network. Neither the IMU nor IJU are considered exceedingly powerful individually, and will likely remain focused on operations in this same region, even after 2014. However, as Assistant Secretary Blake noted, while these groups do not pose an immediate threat to Central Asia, we are well aware of their ambition to destabilize their home countries.

To address this threat and as part of our broader relationship with Central Asia, the United States carries out a number of counterterrorism-focused capacity building programs that seek to develop law enforcement capabilities within a rule of law

framework. Ultimately, counterterrorism and rule of law goals are closely aligned and mutually reinforcing. The better our partners become at using law enforcement tools to identify, disrupt, and then prosecute, adjudicate, and incarcerate suspected terrorists, the less they may feel – or claim – the need to resort to extra-legal methods to crack down on a domestic threat.

Naturally we work with our interagency partners to ensure that State Department funding for counterterrorism capacity building in Central Asia aligns with and complements programs administered by other U.S. government agencies, such as Department of Defense programs that focus on counter-narcotics, nonproliferation, and border security.

Through the Central Asia Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), our assistance focuses on regional counterterrorism cooperation. RSI support allows the FBI to provide its Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS) to the Government of Uzbekistan. AFIS will make it possible for authorities to identify fugitives while still in custody and complements the FBI's international Exchange and Mutual Search of Fingerprint Records agreements with Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

RSI funding also supports a community policing project in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to encourage counterterrorism cooperation in their border areas. By building trust between law enforcement and key figures in local communities, this project aims to encourage law enforcement authorities to work more closely together.

The State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance program (ATA) is being implemented in three of five Central Asian countries, with an emphasis on border controls and increasing counterterrorism investigation capabilities.

ATA programming in the Kyrgyz Republic endeavors to assist local authorities to detect and deter terrorist threats against both the Transit Center at Manas International Airport and the Northern Distribution Network. In Tajikistan, ATA focuses on strengthening border controls, particularly along the Afghan border. We are engaged in talks to resume ATA programming with Uzbekistan, which was suspended in 2005 as a result of human rights concerns.

State Department counterterrorism assistance also focuses on disrupting terrorist finance flows. Under this program, we are providing cross-border financial investigation techniques training for Kazakhstani officials, designed to improve

their capabilities to detect, interdict, analyze, investigate, and seize illicit cross border cash used to finance terrorism.

Finally, and also as noted by Assistant Secretary Blake, the State Department works through multilateral bodies to advance counterterrorism objectives, including the OSCE and UN-specialized agencies. U.S. funding is supporting the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's program to assist the Central Asian countries' efforts to develop legislation to implement UN conventions related to terrorism. These efforts aim to establish a foundation of strong counterterrorism laws across the region with fundamental human rights safeguards.

Through the OSCE, we have funded the NGO, Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), to host workshops and build community-based support networks for vulnerable youth and families at risk of radicalization in Tajikistan.

U.S. funds have also been provided to support implementation of the Global Shield program by UNODC, INTERPOL, and the World Customs Organization. Global Shield aims to increase the capacity of law enforcement officials in the five Central Asian states as well as Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to detect and seize precursor materials in the manufacture of IEDs and to improve the prosecution of IED-related interdiction cases.

Through these and other multilateral initiatives, we seek to expand cooperation between and among the five states of this important region so that responses match the transnational nature of the terrorism threat.

That concludes my introductory remarks. Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss these issues with you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Siberell. And I will at this point recognize Judge Poe, the chairman of the Terrorism subcommittee, to have him have his opening line of questioning.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. The one thing of many that I learned in Uzbekistan, Mr. Ambassador, was that their forecast for the future is bleak. They think when we leave Afghanistan the Pakistanis will support the Taliban. That they will move into southern Afghanistan, that Iran will influence Iraq more and move in that region, and I am sure you have heard all of those things. They are very concerned about their country and terrorist networks moving into their country.

I have a lot of questions. I will ask them and we will get to as many answers from both of you as we can. These groups that we have mentioned that are in the region, Central Asia specifically, where do they get their money? Where do they get their money?

Somebody say something, the clock is running.

Mr. SIBERELL. Well, when it comes to the IMU, as an example, it was mentioned this is a group that has its origins of course in Uzbekistan, has been adaptable over the years. Moved to Tajikistan at one period, was in Kabul as noted in the late 1990s, and where it began its affiliation with al-Qaeda. It works out of the Pakistani tribal areas in cooperation with the Pakistani Taliban with the Haqqani Network in some cases. These groups are therefore tied into the tribal networks that finance the broader terrorist work in the tribal regions of Pakistan, and then into western Afghanistan where they—

Mr. POE. But where do they get their money? Where does that money come from that ends up in Uzbekistan?

Mr. SIBERELL. Yes, there are a variety of financing sources for the groups in Afghanistan. Some of it continues to come in from outside sources as it had traditionally with al-Qaeda into, the Haqqani Network, for instance, we know raises money, continues to raise money in the Persian Gulf states. They raise money through illicit activities through narcotics trafficking. They do it through criminal activity, through extortion. There are a variety of criminal and illicit activities that they undertake to raise money in that area.

Mr. POE. Has the FTO designation had an effect on IJU and IMU?

Mr. SIBERELL. The FTO designations do give us the opportunity to work with partners around the world, including through multilateral organizations such as FATF and the U.N. bodies, to seize funds, to investigate financing flows. So the FTO designation is a highly useful tool by the State Department, by the FBI, by DOJ, and other law enforcement agencies.

Mr. POE. When the United States leaves Afghanistan, the Department of Defense has made a determination that it is cheaper to leave that equipment, some of the equipment there, not bring it home. That is a Department of Defense decision. Two questions about that. How do we know some of that is not going to end up in the hands of the bad guys? And second, is any of that going to

be available for our partners in the region like the Uzbekistan Government?

Mr. Ambassador?

Mr. BLAKE. Sir, they are still reviewing exactly what equipment is going to be left in Afghanistan, and then what equipment might be available to our friends in Central Asia. My supposition is that the equipment that might be made available would be nonlethal assistance, and we have already had some discussions with the Central Asian states about what they might be interested in. But again, this is still in a very preliminary stage.

Mr. POE. And how do we make sure that any equipment, especially the lethal equipment, ends up in the hands of the bad guys?

Mr. BLAKE. Well, again, I think most of the lethal equipment is probably going to be taken out of Afghanistan, and that points to some of the points that were made earlier about the importance of these retrograde operations. Many of the Central Asian states do not want to see lethal equipment transiting through their territory, so a lot of that will have to be probably flown out or perhaps transited out through Pakistan.

Mr. POE. And there are other players in the region. There are the Chinese, there are the Iranians, and there are the Russians, all just looking to move in, in my opinion. What do you see as their role in Central Asia as the United States leaves Afghanistan?

Mr. BLAKE. I think I perhaps differ slightly with your characterization. I think both the Chinese and the Russians share our objectives of seeing a peaceful transition. The Chinese have been putting a lot of money into Central Asia into the infrastructure networks, and I think, overall, support this idea of regional integration as do the Russians. But we still need to work with them a little bit on getting them to do more in Afghanistan itself. The Chinese have invested in the Aynak copper mine, for example, but they have not invested to the extent that say the Indians have.

Likewise, we have tried very hard to work cooperatively with the Russians on Central Asia and to be very transparent with them and figure out ways that we can work together. I think we have shared objectives in Central Asia and in Afghanistan, so we will continue to pursue those common objectives.

The Iranians have not, interestingly, played that large a role in the region. Most of the countries of Central Asia have stiff-armed them and kept them away, fully aware of our concerns and others' concerns about their support for their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. They all share our misgivings and our opposition to Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. So again, to the extent that they have relations, they have them to allow transit through Iranian territory so that they can get their goods to a port in the Indian Ocean. And again, I think all of them have been supportive of international sanctions efforts.

Mr. POE. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Your Honor, and next we have Congressman Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am intrigued by the idea of a New Silk Road in Central Asia, Mr. Blake, and it is an initiative that can serve to further democracy, as I mentioned, economic development, communication throughout the region, and I

know what a difficult task this is. First of all, how do you plan to overcome issues like corruption and some of the basic issues that you have to do to have this be successful? Secondly, do you envision participation from people from the outside, outside donor nations or international organizations like the Asian Development Bank or World Bank? What is your view of this?

Mr. BLAKE. Thanks for that very important question, Congressman. The New Silk Road idea was conceived by Secretary Clinton. And it was a response to the fact that as our military pulls out, a great deal of spending is also going to go with it and therefore have some impact on the Afghan economy. So we need to turn the Afghan economy from a aid-based economy to a trade-based economy. And to do that we need to build up the regional infrastructure to enable that to happen.

So we have been very supportive of regional efforts to develop the roads, the rails, the energy pipelines, and the electricity distribution network to integrate this region more fully. Both Central Asia and South Asia remain among the least regionally integrated regions of the world, so this is a very large task that we are undertaking. But I think that we used last year productively to help gain a regional consensus in favor of this idea, so really everybody now agrees to that.

And the challenge now is really to put this into motion and to get some of these projects off the ground. So for example, we are working extremely hard to encourage the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India pipeline, which would be an enormous step forward, to link the huge gas reserves of Turkmenistan with the energy-hungry economy of India, and also provide hundreds of millions of dollars in transit revenues for Afghanistan and Pakistan. So all four countries very much support this and I think the program is making good progress. We are strongly supporting efforts by these countries to accede to the World Trade Organization precisely to open up their economies and reduce corruption. And we are very much working with the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, and many others to gain their support for all of these efforts, because they are really going to take the lead on most of the mobilizing and the financing for this.

Mr. KEATING. And I think that both of you might have mentioned one, specifically, about the need in a democracy to have freedom of expression. And I am concerned about what I mentioned in my opening remarks about the inability to have that kind of communication available to people, particularly when we have looked at what happened with the Arab Spring, with the social communication and other means. I am concerned about that being suppressed, and I want your observations, if you could share them, in terms of where that stands now in that region and what potential that might have for the kind of freedom of expression that a democracy requires.

Mr. BLAKE. Again, a very, very important question. We have consistently stressed to our friends in Central Asia that counterterrorism requires a multi-faceted approach. Certainly there has to be a counterterrorism and a security element. There needs to also be strong economies to provide jobs, particularly for young people. But

also there needs to be good governance, and we often talk about the experience of the Arab Spring.

And two of the very important lessons for the countries of Central Asia is, number one, that they need to address corruption, and number two, they need to provide more space for civil society. And that means journalists, freedom of expression, civil societies that hold NGOs, and unfortunately the trends are moving in the wrong direction in Central Asia for the most part. Most of the countries looking ahead to the transition in Afghanistan are whittling away at the space for civil societies.

I have just returned from Tajikistan, and I made public remarks about our concern for that and I spoke to the President about that, because in the long run this is very risky policy for them to take because they are going to drive moderate people underground if they don't have access to an ability to express themselves.

Mr. KEATING. Well, quickly, if I could interrupt. Mr. Siberell, you mentioned about the need, and you just mentioned, Ambassador, about corruption, about the need for rule of law. I am concerned, quickly, if you can look at the overall region there and see where the state of the rule of law is. A lot of the justice is administrative rather than what we are familiar with, I believe, at least from my own meetings with people, but where does that stand in terms of police and the justice system to really keep a rule of law so we can deal with corruption?

Mr. SIBERELL. Thank you, Congressman. As articulated in the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, we will pursue our counterterrorism policies within a strong rule of law framework and consistent with American values, in particular, human rights safeguards. And all of our counterterrorism assistance has built into it an observation and a respect for a need to protect human rights safeguards by governments who receive our assistance. As an example, our ATA program, one of our principal counterterrorism programs, has as one of its three congressionally mandated requirements, the protection of human rights safeguards, in addition to building capacity to fight terrorism and to building a strong bilateral relationships in the area of counterterrorism. So rule of law framework is not inconsistent with effective counterterrorism. In fact, they are mutually beneficial and required to be sustainable over the longer term.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. I am a little over my time. I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. The chair will now proceed with his 5 minutes. With Uzbekistan, I have been working with Uzbekistan for about 25 years now, maybe actually more than that, and they were instrumental in helping us defeat the Taliban after 9/11. Just to note, our own Government, along with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, bear a huge responsibility for the fact that the Taliban existed in the first place, and some of us were opposed to that and fought against that, but it did come back and bite us on 9/11. But without the Uzbeks' support and full, just total cooperation utilizing their territory in Termez and other places along that southern border, their southern border, the northern border in Afghanistan, we could never have defeated the Taliban as we did. Yet, we all know that Uzbekistan has never been, at least in my

lifetime, a country that could have been on the acceptable list of human rights, levels of protection of human rights.

Where do we draw the line here? I mean we know, for example, one of the things that the Uzbeks are declared against—so they help us defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda, people who had massacred 3,000 of our own people, radical Muslims, and in fact, some of the things they are criticized for in Uzbekistan for denying religious rights and freedom of speech are basically trying to prevent radical sects of Islam from taking hold. They are not permitting the Wahhabis to come in, and with hate-filled agendas establish little working groups there in their various communities. How do we draw the line there about what is in the long run interest of a free society and a stay of stability in that region and protection of our own rights, our own say national interests?

Mr. BLAKE. That is a very important question, Mr. Chairman. Let me answer that by saying first that when we started out 4 years ago we decided we wanted to use these annual consultations to really establish a greater level of engagement and thereby establish greater trust between the United States and Uzbekistan, and kind of build up from the ruins of what happened in Andijon where essentially we rapidly cut back on virtually all of our programs in Uzbekistan.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right.

Mr. BLAKE. And looking forward now, we need Uzbekistan to have good relations with Afghanistan. We need Uzbekistan to be supporting this regional integration vision that I outlined earlier. They have the largest population in the region. They are centrally located. They have played an enormously important role in building the main rail line to Mazar-i-Sharif. Uzbek electricity lights Kabul these days.

So there is a lot of important work that is already going on. They have, as you said, quite a lot of anxiety and suspicion about the future. We have sought to reassure them about our enduring commitment to Afghanistan and to the region. And again, I think looking forward it is very much in our interests to continue to work very closely with the Uzbeks.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Do we sell weapons to Saudi Arabia?

Mr. BLAKE. I can't really tell you, sir. It is not my area of—yes, we do, of course.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay, so we sell weapons to Saudi Arabia. Are the Saudis more protective of human rights than the Uzbeks?

Mr. BLAKE. I don't want to try to get into comparisons, Mr. Chairman. But let me just say with respect to Uzbekistan and weapons, as you know we have begun a very careful and calibrated approach to supporting now their defensive needs because they have real threats that they face, not just because of their support for the Northern Distribution Network, but because groups like the IMU and the IJU are actively targeting them. So it is in our interest to help defend themselves against those threats.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, it also is they see part of that effort as preventing radical Islamic groups, who hate us as well, I might add, who would turn their country into a radical Islamic Caliphate, or whatever they want to call it. They see that stopping that from happening is important to their interests, but also it is important

to our interests. And ironically we are selling weapons to the Saudis and, quite frankly, I think there are elements within Saudi Arabia that are financing the very groups that are going in trying to make them radical Islamic, anti-Western, an anti-Western country.

So it is a rather confusing situation if you do as I do, and I believe in human rights and should be part of our agenda, but at the same time we don't want radical Islam to be taking over countries, because they don't believe in any human rights.

Mr. BLAKE. Yes, but again, Mr. Chairman, as you I am sure found out during your visit to Uzbekistan, they are not asking for major weapons systems, at least offensive weapons systems. Their major ask of us these days is to actually help them defend themselves, and then also to have more business. They want to get more jobs for their people.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Ambassador, they made it clear to us that they would prefer replacing all of their former Soviet and Russian military equipment, much of it left over from the Cold War, they would like to replace it with American equipment. And it is going to be very interesting. We find is that in our interest? How do we make that determination, if their human rights are not at an acceptable level, but they are not at an acceptable level because they are repressing radical Islamic forces that would make their country even worse? This is a jigsaw puzzle and I hope we will be working on it together.

Mr. BLAKE. Let me just add 30 seconds of commentary on that—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Go right ahead.

Mr. BLAKE [continuing]. Which is to say that as you know we sought and received an exception from Congress to the ban that previously existed on providing any kind of military assistance to Uzbekistan. So we have used that to provide defensive equipment, as you are well aware, but we have also made clear to the Uzbeks that it is important for them to make progress on human rights, and as they make that progress that will enable us to do more on the weapons side.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, I am hoping that the progress that we are talking about in human rights isn't, well, we are going to convince them now to permit some radical Islamic sect from setting up a well-financed by the Saudis, setting up operations all over their country, which will eventually turn it into a country that hates us and doesn't want to cooperate with us. So these are—

Mr. BLAKE. It is the kind of human rights that Mr. Keating was talking about. It is the kind of thing that they need to do because it is in their own interest to do.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes.

Mr. BLAKE. When an American businessman comes to Uzbekistan and cannot turn on the internet and check how his stock is doing, that is not going to help them very much. So these are things that are going to be good for them to do. It is not just something that is good for—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, we certainly agree on that, and we will sort of work on trying to find out where the rational place to put

the line is on these decisions. I will now turn to Mr. Sherman who has been involved in these issues for a long time.

Mr. SHERMAN. A long time. As I understand our official human rights formula, it is the number of human rights violations divided by the number of million barrels of oil exported by the relevant country. And I think if you used that formula you would have better things to say about Saudi Arabia's human rights policies.

Focusing on Saudi and the Gulf states, maybe 10, 12 years ago, Saudi Arabia's policy on Islamic extremism was if you don't do it here you can finance it there. Now that deal was kind of ripped aside by Khobar Towers, but seems to be back to some degree. Is there a lot of private Saudi money going to these organizations that we list as foreign terrorist organizations, and if so, is this in violation of Saudi law or consistent with Saudi law? And I realize while this affects the areas that you are responsible for, Ambassador Blake, you are not charged with being the expert on Saudi Arabia.

Mr. BLAKE. Well, I will just say that the former Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Holbrooke, and then his successor, Ambassador Grossman, have spent a great deal of time in the Gulf talking to our friends in the Gulf about cracking down on a lot of these sources of funding that occur. This is not official funding. This is from private sources. But nonetheless, we need their help to get at that and to stop that from recurring, because obviously it is quite an important thing. Many of these groups are attacking our troops in the region so we have a very substantial and direct interest in this.

Mr. SHERMAN. Then of course the Saudis or private Saudi forces, I think actually governmental Saudi money, is going to the worst elements of the Syrian opposition. Whether the worst elements of the Syrian opposition are worse than the worst elements of the Assad regime I leave to another hearing.

I want to focus a little bit on public diplomacy and reaching out to people. In which languages and with what capacity does the Voice of America reach Central Asia, and what can we do to reach out to more people with a message that is believable?

Ambassador?

Mr. BLAKE. I don't know all the different languages. I know they broadcast in several languages and certainly in Russian, and that is important but that is not sufficient. And so we have very active programs, for example, exchange programs, but a huge range of public diplomacy programs through things like our American Corners that you will find all over Central Asia that are immensely popular.

Mr. SHERMAN. I do want to focus on Voice of America and other broadcastings. So if you could provide for the record, where are we able to erect radio towers? Are we restricted just to short wave, or are we reaching people on the radio frequencies that are going to be in the car? Which languages? How many hours a day? All the things that your fine staff will put together and I look forward to reading.

Next, what is Russia's attitude toward our involvement in this, what they call the near abroad? Sometimes they seem to want us to go, sometimes they seem to want us to stay. Do they perceive

themselves to have the capacity to assume in Central Asia the role that we have played over the last decade?

Ambassador?

Mr. BLAKE. As I said, Mr. Sherman, we have worked quite a lot, I personally have worked quite a lot with the Russians over the last 4 years on Central Asia. They have a shared interest in seeing a successful transition in Afghanistan. Thirty percent of the drugs that come out of Afghanistan go through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and most of it ends up in Russia. Likewise, they don't want to see extremist groups being able to organize in Afghanistan or Pakistan that could pose a threat either to Russia or radicalize groups that are in Russia. So again, I think we have a shared interest and for the most part we have been able to work very cooperatively with the Russians on things like counternarcotics, on health issues. There is no denying that there are elements sometimes within the Russian Government who sometimes oppose what we do, but overall I would assess that we have had a reasonably cooperative relationship.

And again, we have worked very hard with the Russians to also encourage them to support this regional integration effort. Many of the Central Asians are concerned by Russian alleged plans to start a Eurasian economic union that they worry might try to close off some of these trade patterns that are now emerging. So that is why, again, making sure that all these countries accede to the World Trade Organization is so important, because World Trade Organization obligations would trump any Customs union or other obligations.

Mr. SHERMAN. I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We have Mr. Marino.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, Chairman. Well, gentlemen, Ambassador, I would like to direct this to you, and if you then want to follow-up, please do it. I want to expand a little bit on the Saudi Arabia, the money that we are spending there, the oil that we are buying there, the terrorist organizations that are being funded. I didn't quite hear what State is doing about it, or is it just that we have a situation where, what a tangled web we weave and we have to turn a blind eye because of the oil situation?

And I agree with Congressman Sherman. I am sure there is some, if we dig deep enough there is some crazy mathematical scheme or formula that somebody at State has sat down and drawn up and made the determination on which way we go. But seriously now, specifically what are we doing and what else can we do to get the point across to the Saudis?

Mr. BLAKE. Well, I don't really have much more to say beyond what I have already said, but let me ask Mr. Siberell who can tackle the counterterrorism side of it.

Mr. MARINO. Okay.

Mr. SIBERELL Thank you, Congressman. I think the first thing that is worth noting is that Saudi Arabia itself has been a victim of al-Qaeda terrorism. It has fought its own war with al-Qaeda, quite a vicious war which includes assassinations and attempted assassinations of senior leadership. So they are working, they share our objectives in fighting al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

and in Afghanistan, and we have worked cooperatively in that as do most of the other Gulf states.

What they have done is try to work against funding. They have cracked down quite effectively on official funding, as it were, from official government agencies. What we have now is a problem of private donations to extremist groups. Some of those are legacy relationships that of course go back to the 1980s when these groups were raising money out of Afghanistan and the Gulf states quite openly. So we have worked with those governments, and as Ambassador Blake noted, our Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan has spent quite a lot of time in the Gulf states to try to dry up and work against that funding that continues to flow in some cases, privately, for instance, through the Haqqani Network, which is one example of Saudi funding that continues.

Mr. MARINO. How about the state of Qatar? Do you see any funds from there going to the terrorists as well?

Mr. SIBERELL. Well, I would say broadly that there is evidence of private donations that emanate from a number of the Gulf states. We do work closely with each of the individual governments through diplomatic, through intelligence channels to try to identify and then work against those funding streams.

Mr. MARINO. Let us switch countries for a moment. I am quite a bit concerned about China. I recently got back from a trip to China and they were very polite and very kind to us, but they say one thing and do something else. From my studies, I have been researching that there is a tremendous investment in Afghanistan by China, and it zeroes in primarily on minerals and precious ores. What influence is China going to have on Afghanistan, the rule of law, the government? And I think Afghanistan is looking at China as simply a cash cow. Can you elaborate on that, please?

Mr. BLAKE. Well, as you say, sir, the Chinese have undertaken some investment. I wouldn't want to exaggerate it. I mean they have not undertaken as much as the Indians have, for example, and in fact we would like to see them do more in terms of investing certainly in a lot of the regional infrastructure that will be needed, because that would certainly be very welcome and they have done a lot of that in Central Asia. But as you point out very correctly, they do not take a position on things like rule of law and things like that. That is not part of their foreign policy.

Mr. MARINO. Hasn't China also given, donated money to Afghanistan for so-called humanitarian purposes? So that is going to have a definite, I would think positive influence on the Afghans.

Mr. BLAKE. They have an assistance program, but again it is relatively modest compared to say the Indians. I would say it is about one-tenth of what the Indians provide. So again, a lot of humanitarian assistance and infrastructure assistance like that would be very welcome from the Chinese, and we would like to see them do more.

Mr. MARINO. Okay, you have 29 seconds, and either can answer this. What is the motive between India and Afghanistan and China and Afghanistan?

Mr. SIBERELL. Well, I think they take a very different position. India has taken a very, kind of wholistic view of what needs to be done there. And they have a \$2 billion assistance program, they

have invested heavily, they have hosted an investment conference. They have been a champion of this regional integration vision. And I think China has taken a far less wholistic view and a much more self-serving view, frankly.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I would now like to welcome a new member to Congress, and from our area there in southern California. Congressman Lowenthal has a distinguished record in the California legislature, and we now welcome him to the foreign policy arena.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you, Congressman Rohrabacher. I look forward to working with you, and I appreciate those kind words.

My question, Ambassador, I would like to kind of dig down a little bit more and understand, it is almost to follow-up. These are, I think, the complexity that I think that Congressman Rohrabacher has said, and also I want to follow-up on the question or the issues that were raised by Congressman Sherman about the role, our relationship with Russia in this. You have indicated that we and the Russians really share common goals for independence and stability of Central Asian nations. And yet in the report that we have back, and I am not saying that these are in opposition, but I would like to understand more. The chair indicated in the report that we may be providing, and you pointed out it is nonlethal, military assistance to Uzbekistan at the same time that the Russians may be providing up to \$1 billion in arms to Kyrgyzstan, and that that country may not extend our lease for the military base after 2014.

So I am wondering, while we may have common goals, are there some competing roles between Russia and the United States, and have we entered into any kinds of discussions with the Russians about who we are supporting and who is not, and is there any competition going on?

Mr. BLAKE. As I said, Mr. Lowenthal, welcome to the committee.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you.

Mr. BLAKE. We have, and I personally have very, very detailed conversations with the Russians several times a year where I go at least a day, or if not more, to talk to them about all these issues. Again, our interests are not always completely synchronized. I will give you one example on human rights. I have just come back from Tajikistan and we talked about there with the civil society about how there is kind of shrinking space for them. And they said that one of the influences is that because the Russians have cracked down on Civil Society that has given the rulers in many Central Asians, kind of emboldened them to do more to crack down in Central Asia. So that is an example where Russia has not played a very salutary role.

But again, I think on a lot of the very important issues we have been able to cooperate with them, certainly on the NDN, the Northern Distribution Network and things like that. That said, Russia has an overwhelming influence in Central Asia and many of the Central Asian states chafe at that influence. They do not want to be as reliant as they are on the Russians. And that is just a normal human reaction. A country like Tajikistan has 1 million Tajiks working overseas in Russia. They derive 40 percent of their GDP from the Russians, from those remittances. They import 90 percent of their fuel from Russia. So the Russians have enormous leverage

over them, and of course no country likes to be subject to that kind of leverage.

So for that reason, all of these countries have welcomed greater engagement by the United States. They have welcomed our efforts to promote American trade and investment. They have welcomed our increased assistance programs, and we have welcomed the opportunity to do that.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Maybe the follow-up is, do the Russians welcome it?

Mr. BLAKE. Well, again, I don't see the Russians working to try to counter that. I mean I think that we try to characterize this as a great gain rather than a great game. That is, that we can all benefit from an expanding pie, and that the overall objective is to stabilize this region and to provide more open markets that everyone is going to benefit from and to provide more responsive governments, that again is going to benefit everyone because there will be a greater stability.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you, and I yield my time.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. We now have with us another man with a distinguished career in the state legislature, and as well as a distinguished career in the United States Marine Corps prior to that, who accompanied us on our codel to Central Asia.

Colonel Cook?

Mr. COOK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I guess the title of today's briefing is "Who's On First?" And thank you for your information. We have been getting a lot of briefings on the military situation in Afghanistan, and yet I just wanted to go over a little bit of the diplomacy that relates to the military. And we talked about what happens when we downsize in Afghanistan and all this gear, all this military gear which probably runs into the billions, whether it is going to go to Uzbekistan or whether it is going to come back to this country. And yet it is very, very dicey whether we are going to be able to move that through Pakistan. Certainly tanks and things like that are the heaviest parts of the equipment and very, very expensive to fly in and out of Theater. You can only get so much on a plane. Very, very small.

So my question basically is from a diplomacy standpoint, if things continue to deteriorate with Pakistan and they decide to shut down not only the ground corridors but the air corridors, what kind of impact would that have? Then suddenly Uzbekistan, who else have we got left? We can't go over Iran, and it is a landlocked country there. If you could answer that, and I yield back.

Mr. BLAKE. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Cook.

I have worked for 27 years for the United States military and I have tremendous respect with their capabilities. And one of the great things that our military does is plan, and they have plans for everything. And they also believe a great deal in redundancy. So they can put in front of you, a map of all kinds of different ways to get things in and out of Afghanistan. My piece of it has been the Central Asian piece of it, and it has been quite an important one, as you say, when the ground lines of communication with Pakistan were closed. I am happy to say that those are reopening now and

that seems to be going in a better direction. So that is certainly welcome news.

But we will always have options. We will always be able to fly things through Central Asia. We will be able to fly things out through the Gulf. We will be able to fly to Russia. We have multimodal transport options there, and of course through Europe. So there are still many different options available to our military, but of course the more the better, and the Pakistan one remains the one of choice because it is the cheapest and shortest to the sea where we can get things out via ship at the lowest cost to the U.S. taxpayer.

Mr. COOK. Yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. Colonel, we will just send a company of Marines down that road and they will just clear away all those problems there.

Mr. COOK. I am brand new. I don't want to get into any more trouble right away.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And Congressman Duncan, go right ahead.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was reading an article in the Washington Post, February 26, by Joby Warrick, about the elaborate surveillance operations of Hezbollah. And it raised a question, because in that article they are talking about a gentleman that was captured, and I will probably pronounce this wrong being from South Carolina, but Hossam Yaacoub was a Lebanese Swiss that was caught in Cyprus surveilling Israeli tourists coming over to Cyprus, and sort of a part of a larger surveillance operation and terrorist operation by Hezbollah as, I think, about 11 days later, Bulgaria, a group of Israelis, Jewish tourists were bombed there.

So in thinking about this hearing, I guess the question I have to ask is what is Iran's role in the region? Have you seen any evidence of the Revolutionary Guard, the Quds Force or Hezbollah activity?

Ambassador?

Mr. BLAKE. Congressman, as I said earlier, the countries of the region take a fairly clear-eyed view of some of the risks posed by Iran. They are collectively very concerned about the risk of a further destabilization to the region were Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. Likewise, they are very attuned to the risks posed by the IRGC and other groups. So they mostly maintain relations so that they can get access out through Iran to the Persian Gulf for their goods, because all these countries are landlocked countries and they need access to be able to export. But beyond that, again I think they have been very careful about their relations with Iran and they have all respected the sanctions regime against Iran.

Mr. DUNCAN. Are you aware of any sanction violations in the region that this committee might need to be aware of?

Mr. BLAKE. No, sir. On occasion there are private individuals that run afoul of our sanctions. We always bring those immediately to the attention of those governments, and those have always been addressed immediately.

Mr. DUNCAN. Okay. Just shifting gears in the remaining time, going back to, I think, a question from earlier, what is Russia's role in the region? I know there is a lot of rivalries in the region, and

how do you perceive Moscow playing one country against another in deference to our interests there?

Mr. BLAKE. Well, again, I think the Russians seek to have good relations with all these countries. Of course they have longstanding historical ties that date back to the Soviet Union. So they are trying to do what they can to expand their trade ties, to expand organizations like the CSTO that will kind of bring these countries more into their orbit as much as possible. But at the same time as I said earlier, all of these countries do not want to be overreliant on Russia, and so they very much welcome a greater role by the United States and a greater role by China. So again, I think they are all pursuing a multi-vectored foreign policy and see that they can benefit from that.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Chairman, I don't have anything further and so I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. And as before, as we move onto the next panel, just a couple notes from the chairman, taking the chairman's prerogative. I am much more concerned than you are, Mr. Ambassador, about Chinese motives. I would never suggest they are in favor of a peaceful transition. They are basically in a relationship with Pakistan, which I think is highly provocative. I understand that they have just been given control over a major seaport in the area there down in Balochistan, and that is a, if there was ever a reason for the emergency flags or the danger flags to go up it would be that particular transaction between the Chinese and the Pakistanis, not to mention the cornering of wealth that the Chinese seem to be capable of, seeing that they can bribe anybody and don't hesitate to do so.

And one last note as well, I think that we need to recognize real cooperation when we see it, and the Northern Distribution Network, which is basically being done with the full cooperation of Russia, should be recognized as an outreach on the part of the Russians to the United States as a means to try to foster cooperation. They have us right now at a great disadvantage. If they had animosity toward us and wanted to recognize it they could, pardon the expression, the Russians could screw us over anytime they wanted now, but instead they have decided to cooperate with us and to facilitate the supply of our troops in that region. I see that as an act of good faith on the part of the Russians that we should be recognizing.

And with that said, I want to thank both witnesses. And does my ranking member have last—no, okay. Thank you very much, and we appreciate you coming with us today.

Mr. BLAKE Thank you. We look forward to working with the committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Our second panel can now be—and as you are being seated let me remind those in attendance and the press as well that today I am dropping a House Resolution calling for the immediate release of Dr. Afridi from a Pakistani prison in which he is in right now, and also recognizing Dr. Afridi's courageous help in helping us bring to justice Osama bin Laden, and anointing him hopefully with a congressional resolution recognizing him as a hero to the people of the United States of America.

And this man, if we expect to have people in Central Asia or anywhere else to step up when it counts, we better not betray those people who are our friends as we have betrayed Dr. Afridi. He is very symbolic. And if we have an American hero like that languishing away in prison because he has helped us, who else is ever going to help us? Who will help us if we abandon those who risk their lives for us? We need to free Dr. Afridi. And there will be a bill on the floor actually being introduced today to that end. Thank you very much.

And we have the rest of our panel and—all right. We have for our second panel, Dr. Ariel Cohen who is a senior research fellow for Russian and Eurasian Studies, and International Energy Policy for the Heritage Foundation. And he earned his doctorate at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Massachusetts, and he has served as a consultant to both the executive branch and private sector on policy toward Russia, and I am sure he will have a comment on my last comment, which is fine.

And he is also, of course, a specialist in Eastern Europe and Central European affairs as well as the Caucasus and Central Asia. He has participated in a long-term study known as “Russia 2025” conducted by the World Economic Forum. He is a former member of the board of directors of the California Russian Trade Association, and has published widely on the threat of Islamic terrorism and insurgency in Central Asia.

We also have with us Jacob Zenn who is a research analyst for Eurasian and African Affairs for the Jamestown Foundation. A charter member of the National Language Service Corps for his fluency in Chinese, Arabic and Indonesian—I take it you speak English as well, so that is—whoa. He has worked and carried out field research throughout the region, and Mr. Zenn has received a J.D. from Georgetown Law in 2011 where he was a Global Law Scholar, and a graduate degree in International Affairs from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. And then he has a B.A. from the International Affairs at Emory University which he received in 2005.

Then we have Nathan Barrick, a former Army infantry officer who now works as a national security and international affairs strategic consultant. He has served as a Central Asian plans and policy officer, a strategic consultant for the U.S. Central Command, a commander on Central Asia and South Asia, and as a branch chief and senior analyst for Central Asia in the Joint Intelligence Center at U.S. Central Command. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, with a degree in military history. He received a Masters Degree from Stanford University in Russian, East European, and Euroasian Studies.

And finally we have Dr. Stephen Blank, a research professor of the National Security Affairs of the U.S. Army War College where he also works with the Strategic Studies Institute. His more recent monograph for the SSI is, Russia’s Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus. Mr. Blank holds a B.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Masters Degree and Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago.

Gentlemen, you may proceed, and hopefully you can keep it to your 5 minutes, and then we will put everything else in the record and that way we will have some time for questions.

Dr. Cohen, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF ARIEL COHEN, PH.D., SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW FOR RUSSIAN AND EURASIAN STUDIES, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Chairman Rohrabacher, esteemed chairmen, ranking members, and members of the committee. My name is Ariel Cohen. I am a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, and I testify in my private capacity.

In the global struggle against violent Islamism, Russia and Eurasia represent an important front. No less a figure than Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's successor, proclaimed this, and he actually visited the Caucasus back in the '90s and spent some time in a Russian jail, according to publications.

The jihadis see a strategic opportunity to reach out and radicalize Muslims, who in many cases have no access to a moderate and credible version of Islam. They view the area from the Black Sea to Fergana Valley and the Pamir Mountains as an area that is potentially ungovernable, where they can train and use as the base of operations, and they also target the governments and regimes within Russia itself, like North Caucasus. And now it is spreading out of North Caucasus' traditional insurgency area to the heart of Russia, like Kazan in Tartarstan, the capital of Tartarstan, where the Mufti and the deputy Mufti were murdered by terrorists just last year. They have been attacking governments in Central Asia, especially that of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for the last two decades. And in my personal experience, when the governments reached out to our Government before 9/11, they told me they were not listened to and not cooperated with and not helped. This should not happen again as we are withdrawing from Afghanistan.

Briefly on Russia, the insurgency in North Caucasus is going on for over 200 years. It has, on and off, strong religious overtones, and in the last 20 years the Russian Government spent a lot in treasure and blood to defeat that insurgency, whereas they had relative success in Chechnya and pacified it at the price of killing a lot of people and turning people into refugees, the insurgency spread outside of Chechnya to other republics of North Caucasus. And now as I mentioned, the communities, the so-called Jamaat, the organized Salafi/Wahhabi communities can be found in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Siberia, et cetera. Far from being violent in every case, they have a great potential for being violent.

And from our point of view, ungoverned spaces that provide safe havens for terrorist organizations where they can train and communicate with other groups, the Chechen and other North Caucasus fighters that have traveled to Iraq, Afghanistan, now in Syria, to take place in global "jihad," and instability in the North Caucasus that is affecting our allies in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and eventually Armenia, all these make the emergence of radicals in North Caucasus as a threat to our interests and the interests of

our European allies, as North Caucasus is at the doorstep of Europe.

In Central Asia there are two countries that we have to work with because these are the most viable and bigger countries in terms of population, territory, in terms of having the military capacity and counterintelligence, counterinsurgency, I am talking about Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. And while Kazakhstan expressed its wish and is a part of, a founding member of the Eurasian Union that is engineered by Vladimir Putin to be the new federation that is covering some or most of the post Soviet space, Uzbekistan chose a different path. They have a good relationship with China, but they also are reaching out to the United States and the West to ask for support, as you, Mr. Chairman, mentioned. And I do believe that they are threatened by the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic jihad of Uzbekistan by Hizb ut-Tahrir, Muslim Brotherhood, et al. As we are leaving Afghanistan, the Central Asia will be becoming an area of rivalry between Russia and China, between India and Pakistan, and as well as Turkey and Iran who are going to be jockeying for influence there. And as we saw in Afghanistan, the ISI—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Could you summarize, because we are going to run out of time and the other witnesses may be cut off.

Mr. COHEN. Yes, sir. Okay. The Pakistani intelligence is going to be a player with the bad guys, supporting the bad guys such as the Taliban. So in my testimony, which I am requesting to be part of the record, I have a list of recommendations that I think we can do to improve our relationship in Central Asia to work with our allies to control the insurgency in North Caucasus and to contain it. And we did not start this war, sir, but it is our business to finish this war. We cannot just walk off the battlefield and leave the battlefield to the enemies of freedom. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cohen follows:]



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CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

**The Threat of Islamism in Central Asia and the
North Caucasus**

Testimony before the
Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats; and the Terrorism, Nonproliferation,
and Trade Subcommittees

House Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Congress

February 27, 2013

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D, Senior Research Fellow, Russian and Eurasian Studies,
and International Energy Policy
The Heritage Foundation

The Threat of Islamism in Central Asia and the North Caucasus

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Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade Subcommittees,
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*Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow, Russian and Eurasian Studies and
International Energy Policy, The Heritage Foundation*

Esteemed Chairmen, Ranking Members, and Members of the Committees. My name is Ariel Cohen. I am a Senior Research Fellow in Russian and Eurasian Studies and International Energy Policy at The Heritage Foundation. I testify here in my private capacity, and it is an honor to appear before your subcommittees.

In the global struggle against violent Islamism, Russia and Eurasia represent an important front. No less a figure than Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's successor, proclaimed this, and over the last two decades Al Qaeda and its funders and affiliates have committed considerable resources to foster terrorism and instability from the Black Sea to the Fergana Valley and the Pamir Mountains. They do so as they sense a strategic opportunity to reach out and radicalize Muslims who in many cases have little to no access to moderate but credible Islam. Terrorists and extremists, mostly of the Salafi/Wahhabi creed, and their organizations with global reach, are making inroads into these areas, where the societies suffer from government corruption, brutality and abuse by law enforcement, a lack of trust for abusive local and central governments, interethnic hatreds and racism, and poor economic opportunities.

It is in the interests of the United States to localize, minimize, manage and eradicate the threat of Islamist terrorism in the North Caucasus and Central Asia, primarily in the Fergana Valley. In doing so, the Administration needs to reach out to the governments and societies which oppose this existential threat, while recognizing the limits of our power and resources.

Let me address the challenges geographically.

North Caucasus

The Russian Northern Caucasus, an area north of the Caucasus Ridge between the Black and the Caspian Seas, is turning into one of the most volatile, lawless regions in the world, as well as a hotbed of international terrorist activity. This despite decades of Russian military operations and repeated assurances from the Russian government that peace has been achieved. As Russian control of the region becomes increasingly weak, it is turning into a significant base

for Islamist terrorist organizations and organized crime that can and may ignite an even greater terrorist campaign inside Russia and beyond.

Islamist terrorists from the self-proclaimed Caucasus Emirate have already attacked the energy infrastructure, trains, planes, theaters, and hospitals. They are increasingly spreading beyond the region and are involved in terrorist activities in Western Europe and Central Asia, including Afghanistan. The North Caucasus Islamist insurgency is part of the global radical Islamist movement, which is deeply and implacably inimical to the West and the United States.

Russian Response Lacking

Russia deals with these issues every day, but after 20 years of warfare, the problem has not disappeared, nor is it likely to vanish any time soon. Suffice it to say, that Russia fought an insurgency in the North Caucasus in the 19th century for close to 60 years, and often with extreme brutality, which include massive civilian casualties and ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands. Later on, numerous rounds of warfare played out between the central government and the local, often Islamic-inspired rebels. Today, insurgents in the North Caucasus attack police, security forces and civilians openly.

While Russia has a strong interest in combating Islamists and cooperating with the U.S., the current Russian government is not being cooperative. Moreover, Moscow has often accused “U.S. allies”, such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, of financing the rebels, assuming Washington’s (and London’s) control of and blessings upon such activities.

Furthermore, significant U.S. counter-terrorism involvement in Eurasia beyond Afghanistan, which would be beneficial to the interests of all parties, is viewed by many in Moscow as Western meddling aimed at weakening Russia. At the same time, Russia did cooperate with the U.S. in building and operating the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which has been crucial for the supply and now, the evacuation, of the International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan (ISAF). Overall, however, intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation with Moscow so far has been limited.

As relations between Moscow and Washington are deteriorating, including on such issues as Syria, Iran, missile defense, and human rights, this may negatively affect whatever is left of counter-terrorism cooperation in the region. Thus, it would serve U.S. interests to boost anti-terrorism cooperation with our NATO allies, including Turkey and the former Soviet states, and to let Russia come to us for anti-terrorism, intelligence and security cooperation in this area, if it so desires.

To alleviate the hostilities, in the past decade, the Russian government has crushed the Chechen insurgency, and implemented many economic and developmental programs, in the North Caucasus. The central government in Moscow and the local governments in the autonomous republics have invested billions of dollars in aid to curb the appeal of radical Islam,

especially among the youth, but the area's overall economic and social prospects remain grim. The lack of economic prospects, combined with well-funded religious indoctrination and radicalization campaigns in the region are leading to armed struggle against local and federal governments and religious establishments. The crisis is exacerbated by heavy-handed security policy and the pervasive corruption and mismanagement by the central Russian and local autonomous republic governments, and continues to plague the area. The new generations, which grew up during the warfare, are utterly alienated from the Russian state.

Islamists in Caucasus present dangers to U.S. interests because:

- Ungoverned spaces that provide safe havens for terrorist organizations, in which they can train and communicate with other groups to plan attacks.
- Chechen and other North Caucasus fighters that have travelled to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria to take part in the global "jihad"; and
- Instability in the North Caucasus which affects U.S. allies in the region and international commerce.

Thus, as the North Caucasus devolves into an ungovernable haven for Islamist terrorism and criminality, prevention of an international terrorist safe haven in the North Caucasus, and ensuring the free flow of energy resources are high priorities for the U.S. in this volatile region, such a threat should not be allowed to develop.

The interests of the United States and its allies could suffer from Russia's policy failure to respond appropriately to Islamist extremism, which will increasingly affect energy-rich Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Terrorists may threaten main energy export pipelines and railroads. The Administration needs to develop a strategy to respond to potential "spillover" from the Islamist insurgency in the North Caucasus. The U.S. and its allies also need to monitor the region for early signs of danger. A modest investment in intelligence, diplomacy, and capacity-building with U.S. friends and allies could help to mitigate the rising Islamist threat.

Despite Russia's having reestablished control of Chechnya, terrorist activity in the Russian hinterland has increased significantly. According to the Global Terrorism database, Russia ranked seventh in the world in the number of suicide attacks between 1991 and 2008. More than 1,100 terrorist attacks resulted in more than 3,100 deaths and 5,100 injuries.

Chechen Islamist militant Doku Umarov now leads the "Caucasus Emirate", ratcheting up attacks against Russia. These attacks have included bombings of the Nevsky Express (Moscow–St. Petersburg) trains in 2007 and 2009, the Moscow Metro double suicide bombing in 2010, and the suicide bombing at Domodedovo Airport in January 2011.

In 2012, extremists attacked the mufti and the deputy mufti of Tatarstan, deep in the Russian heartland. The mufti was severely wounded, and his deputy died. Both were known as promoters of the traditional moderate Tatar Islam. This terror attack is a watershed, as it signifies

a spillover of violent radicalism beyond the initial North Caucasus heartland of insurgency. Well-funded Salafis are now operating throughout Russia, with traditional Muslim clergy having little to offer in opposition, whether spiritually, or in terms of scholarship. The ongoing radicalization of the 20 million-strong Russian Muslim community is a real threat.

One ominous development has been that al-Qaeda and other foreign extremist organizations in the Middle East and Central and South Asia have increased their financial and moral support of the radical Islamist movement in the Caucasus and in Eurasia. The North Caucasus has been on al-Qaeda's radar screen for a decade and a half. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaeda, visited the area in the mid-1990s and was even temporarily in Russian custody. Al-Zawahiri has referred to the Caucasus as one of three primary fronts in the war against the West.

Recently, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous al-Qaeda affiliate, has been expanding its global reach. For example, AQAP has been translating al-Qaeda's online journal, *Inspire*, into Russian to attract extremists in Russia and Eurasia.

Furthermore, Doku Umarov made clear that the Caucasus is an integral part of the global jihad: "after expelling the *kuffar* [non-believers], we must reconquer all historical lands of Muslims, and these borders are beyond the boundaries of the Caucasus," and "Everyone who attacked Muslims, wherever [they] are our enemies, common enemies."

Thus, the Caucasus "jihad" is a two way street. Terrorists who were trained in the North Caucasus have joined al-Qaeda and other operations in Waziristan in Pakistan. Islamists from the Caucasus are also now fighting side by side with their brethren around the world in Syria. According to the recent reports, a commander from Chechnya known as Abu Omar al Checheni is a key leader in the Muhajireen Brigade, a jihadist group that is fighting alongside the Al Nusra Front for the People of the Levant against the regime of President Bashar al Assad. The Muhajireen Brigade, whose members include experienced fighters from the "Islamic Caucasus Emirate", has played a vital role in overrunning several major Syrian military installations over the past year.

Chechen jihadists have the means and motivation to take part in a global jihad.. If the North Caucasus transforms itself into the Caucasus Emirate, as its indigenous Islamist groups hope, Caucasian terrorism will only spread further in Eurasia as NATO forces prepare to leave Afghanistan.

Central Asia: Beyond the 2014 U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan may have a severe destabilizing influence on Central Asia – the heart of Eurasia. Central Asian states, specifically Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan

and possibly Tajikistan, are facing unpredictable transitions after long-serving leaders leave the scene.

However, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are the largest and most viable states in the region, and both should be US policy priorities for cooperation against international terrorism. While often heavy handed in their dealings with the local opposition, and leaving little civic space for legitimate political activities, they remain the key to U.S. strategy in the region. It should be stressed, however, that while Kazakhstan is committed to the Moscow-directed Eurasian Union and Commonwealth Security Treaty Organization – the mini-Warsaw Pact, -- Tashkent has clearly distanced itself from Russia’s influence-grabbing projects in what it calls its “near abroad” or “zone of privileged interests”. Both states have developed militaries and security services, fear Islamists, and recognize the value of diversifying their diplomatic and political-military ties beyond Moscow and Beijing. Thus, U.S. cooperation with Astana and Tashkent, both in terms of securing bridgeheads in the region to fight terrorists and in terms of political-military cooperation, is vital.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on the other hand, are weak – and some say, failing – states, plagued by drug trafficking, corruption, and failures of law enforcement. With that, the current regimes are relatively secular compared with the radical, anti-Western Taliban-style regime of militant Islamists with links to Al-Qaeda that have challenged them in the past. These Islamists, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Jihad of Uzbekistan (IJU), as well as Hizbut-Tahrir, the Muslim Brotherhood, *et al.*, are likely to return and challenge these governments after the ISAF leaves Afghanistan. Additionally, Central Asia is becoming an area of rivalry between Russia and China, with India and Pakistan, as well as Turkey and Iran also jockeying for influence.

China plays an increasing role in Central Asia, mostly in the economic realm. It is happy to “outsource” security to its Shanghai Cooperation Organization partner Russia, while Beijing is watching the U.S. presence in the heart of Eurasia like a hawk.

For the West to augment security in Central Asia will not be easy. After September 11, 2001, Russian President Vladimir Putin sanctioned a U.S. and coalition presence there to support operations in Afghanistan, but no longer. Russia now urges that the United States’ ouster from its transit base in Kyrgyzstan and opposes a Western presence even to address narcotics and terrorism threats.

Today, as Ambassadors John Herbst and William Courtney suggest, U.S. policy is based on the assumption that the 350,000-strong Afghan security forces, with assistance from U.S. advisers, will be able to keep the Taliban in check. However, it is likely that after 2014, barring a political agreement, the Taliban will control most Pashtun areas. Importantly, as long as the Taliban remains a viable entity in Afghanistan, it poses a danger beyond its borders, and especially in Central Asia, as some of its affiliates are radicalized ethnic Uzbeks.

It is possible that the Afghan Army will not be able to keep Taliban in check, and that the Taliban may overrun Kabul, as it did in the 1990s. In such a case, if fighting spreads northward, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – which host Russian military bases – as well as Uzbekistan, might seek protection from Moscow. Tashkent may also ask Beijing for help.

The fall of the pro-Western government in Kabul would endanger the Central Asian countries. They want Western support to forestall IMU and IJU subversion, counter narcotics smuggling, and in particular maintain a balance vis-à-vis Russian and Chinese power. Central Asia's unique position makes it vital to U.S. interests beyond 2014. The Northern Distribution Network is essential to the NATO mission in Afghanistan and will only become more important as American troops begin to come home. Development of the Northern Distribution Network, or NDN, into a New Silk Road, to include railroads, highways, pipelines, fiber-optic cables, and airports, will require regional and international cooperation, including that of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). If successful, it may be a great development lever for the region. The Islamist organizations in Central Asia are regional but remain a threat. They actively try to attack NATO forces in Afghanistan and pose a danger to energy logistics in Central Asia and the Northern Distribution Network.

Policy Recommendations

To counter the North Caucasus Islamist insurgency, the Administration should:

- **Engage** European states in bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation, expand NATO-based cooperation, and continue negotiations with the EU members on counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation.
- **Cooperate** with and train local intelligence and law enforcement forces. Building on the experience of training Georgian counterterrorism forces for operations in the Pankisi Gorge, the U.S. should expand anti-terrorism programs with Azerbaijan and Georgia and forge closer ties with the local counterterrorism and intelligence forces.
- **Pressure** Middle Eastern states to stop their nationals from funding and training terrorists. The U.S. needs to put significant pressure on the states—especially Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—whose nationals are involved in funding or training insurgents in the North Caucasus to stop the flow of cash to terrorist groups, bankrupt the North Caucasian insurgency, and prevent its integration into the worldwide Islamic extremist movement.
- **Obtain** Turkey's cooperation in fighting North Caucasus terrorism. The U.S. should emphasize Turkey's obligations as a NATO member and ask Turkey to provide information on North Caucasus extremists and their supporters.

- **Help** Georgia and Azerbaijan to strengthen border controls. The porous borders between Russia and Georgia and Azerbaijan are major security concerns. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security should assist Georgia and Azerbaijan in making their border security effective and transparent; protecting energy sources and pipelines; and restricting the passage of arms, drugs, terrorists, and related goods and information.
- **Be prepared** to expand anti-terrorism cooperation with Russia when the overall state of bilateral relations improves.

To improve Central Asian security post-2014, the Administration should:

- **Integrate** Central Asia into the Afghanistan–Pakistan strategy, including the New Silk Road Strategy. The war in Afghanistan is the Administration’s top foreign policy priority. Central Asian security should be addressed not just through the lens of U.S. logistics, but also by sharing counterterrorism know-how, strengthening civil societies, improving governance, and boosting the rule of law. However, any U.S. non-military technical support should be conditioned on improvements in good governance.
- **Expand and improve U.S. intelligence in the region.** The U.S. intelligence community should improve intelligence sharing with reliable Central Asian partners to identify and counter emerging radical Islamist organizations. This should target the financial sector, as terrorists use money laundering and the black market to raise funds. The U.S. must also work more closely with local authorities to track militants’ movements and neutralize their deployments early. However, the recent upheavals in the Middle East demonstrate that one cannot rely exclusively on local intelligence services. U.S. analysts and operatives should develop greater linguistic, political, and cultural skills and spend more time in the field recruiting assets.
- **Strengthen border controls.** The porous borders throughout Central Asia pose major security challenges. The U.S. should prioritize the strengthening of border controls through the State Department’s Central Asian Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI). The RSI assists partner countries in building capacity to combat terrorism, and it should emphasize the links between drug trafficking, terrorism, and border security. However, U.S. assistance must be careful not to strengthen the repressive law enforcement and security services components that the regimes deploy against political opposition.

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Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, and your full remarks will be made part of the record, and I will make sure I get them for the airplane. Good airplane reading.

STATEMENT OF MR. JACOB ZENN, RESEARCH ANALYST, THE JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION

Mr. ZENN. Thank you, Congressman Rohrabacher. First I would like to focus on the core interest that America has in Central Asia, the stabilization of Afghanistan through which connectivity to the Central Asian countries is imperative to build up Afghanistan's economy so that they can have security in the country. The two are mutually reciprocal. Second, we need Central Asia to diversify her energy supply, especially through Kazakhstan oil and Turkmen gas. Third, for the transatlantic relationship, a strong Central Asia can mitigate drug trafficking from Afghanistan through Russia to Europe, and that is the same drug trafficking networks that enrich the IMU and the Taliban. A strong Central Asia independent from Russia can also ensure Europe's long-term energy security.

Fourth, combating international terrorism. Nine-eleven occurred from Afghanistan, and there are Central Asian groups in those same havens today. These are the same stream of militants that attacked the U.S. and Israeli Embassies in 2004 in Tashkent. We should not assume that because they are busy fighting us in Afghanistan today that they have lost sight of Central Asia, their homeland. The IMU is moving to northern Afghanistan today, and we should ask whether it is trying to reposition itself to reclaim territories in Central Asia that it had seized in the late 1990s, or whether it is trying to disrupt the Northern Distribution Network. Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva has said on the 10-year anniversary of 9/11 that it was NATO's operation against international terrorism in Afghanistan that kept Kyrgyzstan "safe from large-scale incursions by Taliban terrorists and other extremist groups." Threats by militant groups to return to Central Asia backed by empirical evidence that the IMU is shifting to northern Afghanistan should be taken seriously, and serious engagement with Central Asian countries is essential to combat these threats.

Fifth, Central Asia is important for our Iran policies. The religious moderation of Central Asian countries is a bulwark against Iran theocracy, Hezbollah proxies, as well as Salafism coming from the Arab world. Moreover, Central Asia is important for keeping all options on the table including dialogue. The P5+1 negotiations are taking place in Almaty, Kazakhstan right now, and they are the most effective method to pressure Iran on nuclear restraint. And if war does ever break out, we will need relations with these Central Asian countries to combat them. And just as a global leader, the United States cannot afford to abandon its friends in Central Asia to Russian and Chinese domination. As a global leader, we seek to create a liberal and democratic world order and the trajectory of Central Asian governments right now is caught between Salafism, the political values of Russia and China, and our values, and the younger generation prefers our values.

On the local level, these Central Asian militant groups seek to secure their bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan, because that is how they can ensure the long-term security. On the regional level,

they seek to create an Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia, which they would call Turkistan, which would range from Xinjiang in China through Central Asia to the North Caucasus and up to Tartarstan. On the international level, they seek the destruction of the American world order and the creation of a global Islamic Caliphate that would range from al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb areas in northwest Africa through al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsulas areas in Yemen, all the way to Central Asia and down to Southeast Asia.

As documented in my testimony and other Jamestown Foundation works, there are groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, newer groups like the Turkistan Islamic Party, Jund al-Khilafah, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jamaat, who all agree with these aforementioned goals. And there are scores of other groups, cells, and brigades that militants flow into and out of, but they don't necessarily have recognizable names. There are also dozens of Salafist groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir that are proven to be a vehicle not only for recruitment into more militant groups and for the spread of anti-American sentiment but for the funding of militant groups. They receive their funding from Saudi Arabia to Salafist groups in Central Asia or Russia, who then send funding to the militants in Afghanistan.

Funding also comes from drug trafficking. The IMU has shown that even without strong leaders it is able to depend on its vassal relationship with the Pakistani Taliban where it can receive funds from the Pakistani Taliban and that the Taliban can operate as its operational head telling IMU what to do and when. It is important to note that the Taliban is Pashtun based, and therefore the Taliban will always have limits in northern Afghanistan as well as in Central Asia. However, the Central Asian militant groups are comprised largely of Central Asians who can speak the local languages and who can blend into the operational environment there. Therefore, the IMU is a very valuable asset for the Taliban.

This is exactly what al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb did in northwest Africa when they are headed by Arab Algerians but they used sub-Saharan Africans from Nigeria and other countries to infiltrate Nigeria such as Boko Haram. There are significant vulnerable regions in Central Asia such as the Fergana Valley where ethnic clashes broke out just last month and there were more severe ethnic clashes in 2010. The IMU has already seized territory in the Rasht Valley in the previous decade, and Gorno-Badakhshan, which borders on Afghanistan, is also a serious threat. In just recent years, Salafists from the North Caucasus have used their influence on western Kazakhstan, where we have our oil interests, where they carried out the first terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan's history with suicide bombings in 2011, and used rocket-propelled grenades to carry out attacks in Taraz, a city in southern Kazakhstan.

Now, for the time being, it is unlikely that the militants will be able to overthrow the governments in Central Asia or destroy the secular states of Central Asia. But terrorist attacks can continue to weaken the Central Asian states which are already struggling with political and social problems due to the slow transition to market economy and democracy. These bombings, armed incursions

and outbreaks of insurgency can also cost human lives and material destruction. But if the broader mission of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia is to succeed, the militants will have to capitalize on the growing public discontent in the region, where many people consider governments to be repressive, incompetent or corrupt. As a result, it is in our interest to maintain high level contacts with Central Asian governments so we can continue to share best practices on democracy as well as use our partners, South Korea, Japan, and India, to help educate about democracy and to not give up on this region that wants a future relationship with the United States.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any further questions you may have on Islamist militant threats to Eurasia.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Zenn follows:]

**Testimony before the
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
"Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia"
February 27, 2013**

Chairman Royce, Rep. Rohrabacher, Members of Congress, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Jacob Zenn. I am a Research Analyst of Eurasian and African Affairs for The Jamestown Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing the official position of The Jamestown Foundation.

Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today on the topic of "Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia."

In this testimony, I will answer the following questions:

- 1) What are America's core interests in Central Asia?
- 2) Are Central Asian Islamist militants a threat to Central Asia?
- 3) Who are the main Central Asian Islamist militant groups?
- 4) Do these militant groups have global operations, aspirations and capabilities?
- 5) What is the role of al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Central Asian militancy?
- 6) Where are the areas most vulnerable to Islamist militant infiltration?
- 7) Have Russia and China countered Central Asian militant groups?
- 8) Can the US-Uzbek relationship be the pillar in a post-2013 security framework?
- 9) What influences undermine traditional practices of Islam in Central Asia?
- 10) What can the United States do to show leadership and foster cooperation between national governments to meet the emerging threats in Central Asia?

1) What are America's core interests in Central Asia?

America's core interests in Central Asia are:

- Ensuring stability of Afghanistan
- Promoting moderate religious influences
- Helping mitigate drug trafficking
- Balancing influences of Russia and China
- Access to energy resources especially Kazakh oil and Turkmen gas
- Protecting U.S. investment
- Ensuring European energy security
- Combating international terrorism
- Pressuring Iran on nuclear restraint
- Realizing the New Silk Road strategy

Central Asian countries are key to ensuring a stable Afghanistan. The United States is preparing to withdraw most of its forces from Afghanistan in 2013, but the future of Afghanistan is uncertain, with civil war or a return to ethnic-based warfare a possibility.

Central Asian countries can share the responsibility to ensure that Afghanistan develops economically and is connected to Central Asia via rail and road routes and mutually beneficial trade relationships. This will support Afghanistan's economic viability and allow Afghans to have more interaction with the moderate religious influences of its Central Asian neighbors as compared to its western neighbor, Iran, and eastern neighbor, Pakistan.

Central Asian countries have an interest in preventing Afghanistan from collapsing. First, an unstable Afghanistan would be unable to prevent Islamist militants from infiltrating the borders of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and further northwards to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Second, ethnic Turkmen, Kyrgyzs, Tajiks and Uzbeks all live in northern Afghanistan and ethnic warfare in Afghanistan could have an adverse effect on inter-ethnic relations in Central Asia.

The United States can work with Central Asian countries towards securing a more prosperous and stable Afghanistan. If the United States leaves Afghanistan worse off than it was in 2001, it would damage U.S. credibility. Moreover, Afghanistan could once again become a staging ground for attacks on the United States, its allies in Europe and countries in Central Asia.

It is important to recognize that Central Asia is a core interest to the United States beyond Afghanistan policy. The responses to the questions below discuss these interests and the threat that Islamist militants pose to U.S. interests in Central Asia and Central Asian countries.

2) Are Central Asian Islamist militants a threat to Central Asia?

Yes. Central Asian Islamist militant groups, in particular the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), are stronger than they ever have been before. Many groups formed in the 1990s, but their fighters have become more battle-hardened after fighting against the United States, the Afghan army and the Pakistani army for the past twelve years. One major difference between Central Asian Islamist militants of the 1990s and the Central Asian Islamist militants of today is that now they harbor a hatred of the United States after fighting against the United States since 2001.

One militant group called Jund al-Khilafa (The Army of the Caliphate), which was founded by three Kazakhs, announced its formation in summer 2011 by issuing a series of three videos of its members launching attacks against the United States in Khost, Afghanistan. In October 2011, Jund al-Khilafa then launched its first in a series of attacks in Kazakhstan. For Jund al-Khilafa, attacking American troops in

Afghanistan was very much its “right of passage” to enter the community of militant groups before Jund al-Khilafah later joined with al-Qaeda in Pakistan’s tribal areas.

Militant groups also view as their enemies the secular governments of all five Central Asian countries, China and Russia; non-Muslims, especially the Chinese and Indians, whom they consider as having no religion; and Iran because of its promotion of Shia Islam, which the militants consider as apostasy. Despite competition – and even enmity – between the United States, China, Russia and Iran, there is a mutual interest in preventing the return of Taliban rule in Afghanistan and the rise of Central Asian militant groups.

Some may argue that Central Asian militant groups like the IMU are content in Afghanistan and Pakistan and that, despite their Central Asian roots, they do not intend to return to Central Asia. It is true that some members of the IMU have been based in Afghanistan or Pakistan for two decades, learned Pashto and Urdu and have little desire to leave their refuge.

However, I would dispute that the overall orientation of Central Asian militant groups has shifted from Central Asia for the long-term. I showed in an article called “IMU Reestablishes Bases In Northern Afghanistan” in the SAIS Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst in February 2012 that the IMU is already repositioning itself in northern Afghanistan, where it will use bases to launch attacks into Central Asia.

More recently, on February 21, 2013, the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan reported that: “An Afghan and coalition security force arrested six insurgents during an operation in search of an Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan leader in Kunduz. Kunduz is located in northern Afghanistan, bordering Tajikistan. Reports like this one have becoming increasingly common in 2012 and 2013.”

The IMU may also coordinate attacks in Central Asia with its affiliates already based in Central Asia, such as Jamaat Ansarullah (Supporters of God) in Tajikistan. A Jamestown Foundation article by Igor Rotar titled “Islamic Extremist Group Jamaat Ansarullah Overcomes Tajikistan’s Inter-Tribal Conflicts” from September 2012 discusses the relationship between the IMU and Jamaat Ansarullah.

Afghan leaders in northern Afghanistan are also aware of the IMU’s presence in the region, especially since the IMU is often responsible for carrying out suicide bombings and assassination of leading politicians and tribal leaders. Many IMU leaders double-up as Taliban regional leaders and support the Taliban. The Taliban has historically been weak in northern Afghanistan, which is populated mostly by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks, but not Pashtuns, who form the core of the Taliban. Therefore, the Taliban has always found it difficult to control northern Afghanistan, but the IMU can help them achieve this goal. According to Mohammad Omar, a governor in Northern Afghanistan, “al Qaeda and terrorist groups from Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan” want to establish bases in northeastern northern

Afghanistan “for further actions against Central Asian countries” (Eurasia.net, January 24, 2010).

Al-Qaeda and its allied militant groups have proven to be patient, often waiting months or years to execute a desired attack— and this is true not only in Central Asia, but globally. For example, in January 2013, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb’s (AQIM) allies in the militia Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) advanced toward Bamako, Mali’s capital before AQIM and MUJWA had consolidated control of northern Mali. As a result, France intervened and pushed AQIM, MUJWA, and their Islamist allies out from their bases in northern Mali, destroying the Islamists’ project of establishing Islamic Law in northern Mali.

Recently, the Associated Press uncovered documents from Timbuktu, Mali showing that AQIM’s leader had encouraged patience among the other Islamist militias like MUJWA. AQIM’s leader did not want to instigate the West to intervene in the region, but the other militias failed to heed the advice.

Central Asian militant groups currently lack the capacity to infiltrate Central Asia because the strong, centralized governments in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have effectively clamped down on any sign of militant activity or expression of support for Islamists. It is strategically more sensible for the Central Asian militants to bide their time in Afghanistan and Pakistan – like the AQIM leader recommended in Mali – and wait for unstable political transitions, ethnic conflicts, or other crises in Central Asia before launching their offensive.

They will also wait for the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan before diverting resources and fighters from the fight against the Americans to the fight against the Central Asian regimes. There has been much talk in the United States about the unreliability of Pakistan for shipping out military supplies from Afghanistan as the withdrawal gets underway. Is the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) going to be secure with military supplies passing through northern Afghanistan into Central Asia? It remains to be seen whether the IMU and the Taliban will attempt to attack these convoys. However, it would fit in with their overall strategy to attack these convoys and portray the American withdrawal as the victory of the mujahideen.

If an offensive is launched in Central Asia, it will be unlikely that the militants can overthrow the governments in Central Asia or destroy the secular states of Central Asia. However, terrorist attacks will weaken the Central Asian states, which are already struggling with severe political and social problems due to the slow transition to market economy and democracy. The militants’ bombings, armed incursions and insurgency outbreaks will result in losses in human lives and material destruction. But if the broader mission of establishing Islamic States in Central Asia is to succeed, the militants will have to capitalize on growing public discontent with the current governments in the region, which many people in the region consider repressive and incompetent or corrupt.

The Islamist militants came close to succeeding in holding territory in Central Asia in the late 1990s and could succeed again. In a speech on September 11, 2011 at the Transit Center at Manas given by Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva, the first woman president in Central Asia and the least authoritarian leader in modern Central Asian history, she said: "We clearly remember the events of 1999-2000, when the guerillas of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan invaded Batken and Osh oblasts, intent on the establishment of an Islamic caliphate and the further spread of its influence within the region. At that time, in the north of Afghanistan there were a number of terrorist bases involving the citizens of numerous countries, including the CIS (Community of Independent States). And no one can say what would have happened in Central Asia, including in our country, if after the tragic events of 9/11, NATO's operation against international terrorism in Afghanistan had not been launched. Literally, this effort kept our territory safe from large-scale incursions by Taliban terrorists and other extremist groups."

President Otunbayeva went on to warn that the Islamist extremists, together with al Qaeda and the Taliban, have not given up their attempts to establish new terrorist bases in Central Asia.

3) Who are the main Central Asian militant groups?

The following are the main Central Asian militant groups:

- The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and its offshoot the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU);
- The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which was formerly known as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM);
- Jund al-Khilafaha (Army of the Caliphate); and
- Hizb ut Tahrir (Party of Liberation).

While it is analytically convenient to break Central Asian Islamist militants into distinct groups, many militants do not identify with one particular group. Rather they identify with the broader "mujahideen" network and may fight for whichever group, brigade or cell is in their operational area at the time.

The case of Mohammed Merah is illustrative of how group names can differ depending on the individual's perspective. Merah trained in Pakistan's tribal areas with Jund al-Khilafa, which was then led by a Swiss citizen of North African descent (although it was founded by Kazakhs). When Merah, a French citizen of North African descent, returned to France in early 2012, he carried out a series of murders

of Jews and paratroopers of North African descent. After a manhunt, Merah was finally cornered by French security forces in his apartment. When asked by the security forces for whom he operated, Merah simply said “al-Qaeda.”

However, Merah had in fact trained with Jund al-Khilafah, which Merah likely perceived as al-Qaeda because Jund al-Khilafa is in al-Qaeda’s broader network. Merah’s training with Jund al-Khilafa has been documented by CNN’s Paul Cruickshank in “Investigations shed new light on Toulouse terrorist shootings.”

Merah’s story shows how militants can go to Pakistan’s tribal regions and join the “mujahideen,” but not be aware of the group’s official name— if the group even has an official name. Often “al-Qaeda” comes to represent the broader mujahideen network. Finally, Merah’s story also highlights the how militants with European passports can transfer from one theater to another with more ease than Central Asian nationals.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU):

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, IMU militants were forced out of Uzbekistan by Islam Karimov’s crackdown on Islamist militants. The crackdown on the IMU and other militants strengthened after militants attempted to assassinate President Karimov in 1999 and carried out attacks on the U.S. and Israeli facilities in Uzbekistan in 2004. However, from the mid-1990s, the militants were able to establish bases in Tajikistan, taking advantage of the country’s instability following a 1992-1997 civil war, and create a presence in areas of northern Afghanistan under Taliban control.

With the American invasion of Afghanistan to root out the Taliban and its allies in October 2001, the IMU fled to Pakistan. From 2001 to 2007, the IMU set up training camps in South Waziristan under the protection of Waziri Taliban commander Maulvi Nazir, whose fighters were taking advantage of their mountainous homeland to regroup and launch attacks against American forces in Afghanistan.

The IMU was evicted in 2007 from South Waziristan to other parts of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) by Maulvi Nazir partly because Uzbek fighters offended local customs and acted like an “occupying” force in Pashtun territory. When the IMU joined Baitullah Mehsud’s faction of the Taliban around 2009, it had to accept Mehsud’s priorities, foremost of which was fighting the Pakistani state. The IMU and Pakistani Taliban remain in partnership today, with Uzbeks carrying out some of the most brazen attacks against Pakistani security forces, such as the December 2012 attack at Peshawar airport and the Bannu Prison Break in April 2012, which freed Adnan Rashid, who was on death row for having plotted to assassinate then President Pervez Musharraf into 2003. Since his escape, Rashid has admitted to his guilt in plotting to assassinate Musharraf, despite denying it for years while behind bars.

The IJU, which was first called the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), was founded in 2002 in South Waziristan by two ethnic Uzbeks who were former IMU fighters, including Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih (a.k.a. Najmiddin Jalolov). In contrast to the IMU, which had its roots in Namangan in the Ferghana Valley in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, the IJU had its roots in the post- 9/11 multi-ethnic jihad milieu of the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier in which America is defined as the main enemy. Even though Fatih may have intended for the IJU to focus on Uzbekistan, from its inception the IJU appealed to young and internationally minded “foreign” fighters, including Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Germans, and Turks, to fill its ranks.

After the IJU’s formation, some Uzbek fighters in Pakistan continued to follow Tahir Yuldash (or Yuldashov), the leader of the IMU from its formation in 1998 until his death in a 2009 U.S. drone strike. Yuldash prioritized overthrowing the “apostate” regime in Uzbekistan and other regimes in “Turkistan” (the name for Central Asia preferred by Islamists), but fighters in the IJU were too preoccupied with expelling the American forces in Afghanistan to focus on Central Asia.

Over the course of the 2000s the international agenda of the IJU gained popularity among IMU fighters, with the IMU eventually dropping the liberation of the Ferghana Valley as its top priority. So long as the IMU was based in Pakistan, the Uzbekistan regime led by President Islam Karimov was less of a direct threat to the IMU than the Pakistani army or international forces operating in the region.

However, Yuldash was recorded in a video released shortly after he was killed in a U.S. drone strike saying, “Our goal is not only conquering Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Our goal is to conquer the entire world.” This makes one question whether Yuldash’s decision to focus on Pakistan was to win the support of the Taliban, but not reflective of his true target, which remained on Uzbekistan.

As of 2013, the IMU is arm-in-arm with the Pakistani Taliban, but also sending forces to northern Afghanistan to help the Taliban in Afghanistan. With several thousand members from multiples nationalities, it more of a small army than a typical terrorist group, with capabilities from terrorist attacks to armed incursions in urban and especially rural areas, where it can seize territory, as it did in the Rasht Valley of Tajikistan in the late 1990s. The IMU’s mandate is more than only Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, with all of “Turkistan” in its aims. In fact, at times the IMU has been reported to also be called the IMT—Islamic Movement of Turkistan.

(The above is excerpted from “The Indigenization of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan,” written by Jacob Zenn for The Jamestown Foundation in January 2012.)

[The Turkistan Islamic Party \(TIP\) \(formerly known as ETIM – East Turkistan Islamic Movement\)](#)

Since its creation in 2008, the Uyghur-based Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) has vowed to carry out jihad against the “Communist Chinese occupiers” of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is the large western province of China that borders Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and is known to many of its Muslim inhabitants as “East Turkistan”— a term which is banned in China for its separatist undertones.

While evidence of actual TIP operations in China is slight and the TIP appears to remain confined to its training camps in the tribal areas of Pakistan, the TIP has tried to reach out to the larger Islamic world through a sophisticated and glossy online magazine, “Islamic Turkistan,” and sophisticated multi-lingual video propaganda messages targeted to Russian speaking Central Asians and militants from Turkey.

The TIP used to be known as ETIM, which was then more of a Xinjiang nationalist movement. Now the TIP supports broader internationalist goals beyond Xinjiang. According to the twelfth edition of the TIP’s Arabic language online magazine, “Islamic Turkistan,” which was published on jihadi forums in February 2013 (but also made available in the open-source at jihadology.net), the TIP’s goals are:

First: Creating religious fellowship of Muslims in Turkistan [the term jihadists use to refer to Central Asia] in order to wage Jihad for Allah and spread his word.

Second: The preparation of Muslims in Turkistan and bringing them back to the right Islamic path; to make them worship only Allah; and to implement the Sharia of Allah. It will also help Muslims in uniting and elevating the name and the message of our religion.

Third: Working and cooperating with other Jihad groups around the world in order to help them protect themselves and beat the infidels.

Fourth: Cooperating with loyal Muslims and the Jihadists in Turkistan and in other places in the Islamic world in order to protect the Islamic nation from the infidels. This includes numerous means such as military means, cultural means, economical means and more.

Fifth: Protecting the Islamic holy warriors and supporting them and giving them a helping hand around the world.

Notably, the first two leaders of ETIM and the former leader of the TIP, Abdul Shakur al-Turkistani, were all highly integrated in al-Qaeda’s ranks, with al-Turkistani having served as al-Qaeda commander for Pakistan’s tribal areas.

The largest recent TIP attacks took place on July 30-31, 2011 in Kashgar, Xinjiang Province, China. The attacks began on the evening of July 30 when a car bomb detonated on a street lined with pedestrians and food stalls frequented by Han Chinese. Shortly after, two Uyghur men hijacked a truck, killed its driver, and then

steered the truck onto the sidewalk and into the food stalls and then stabbed people at random.

On July 31, another attack occurred on a popular dining and shopping street for Han Chinese. After two blasts at one restaurant, as many as 10 Uighur men shot and stabbed people indiscriminately, including the firefighters who came to the rescue. Overall, more than 10 civilians and eight attackers were killed and more than 40 others wounded in the two days. More details are available in an article I wrote for the CTC Sentinel in September 2011 called "Violence Escalates in China's Xinjiang Province."

China has significant leverage over Pakistan because China is Pakistan's most important strategic partner, with the two countries forming an alliance to balance against India. It is likely that Pakistan has tried to keep the TIP in check in order not receive China's condemnation for allowing anti-Chinese militants to train on Pakistani territory. The U.S. seems not to have been able to exercise this same leverage over Pakistan, or Pakistan has simply been incapable or unwilling to stamp out anti-American militants in the tribal regions.

Jund al-Khilafa (JaK)

Jund al-Khilafah, meaning "Army of the Caliphate," is now based in Pakistan's tribal areas, but has cells reported in the North Caucasus. Jund al-Khilafah entered the international jihadi scene several months after Nursultan Nazarbayev won the presidential elections in Kazakhstan in April 2011 with 95.5% of the vote and after Kazakhstan passed a controversial religion law.

The group first released videos in September and October 2011 of three attacks it claimed to have led against U.S. forces in Afghanistan over summer 2011. Contrary to popular belief that Jund al-Khilafah emerged from nowhere, there were signs of Kazakh militant groups in the late 2000s operating with the Islamic Jihad Union and other North Caucasus insurgents. The Russian North Caucasus, which includes unstable regions such as Dagestan and Chechnya, is located is only 300 miles from Western Kazakhstan across the Caspian Sea. The flow of trade, militants, and Salafist ideology from the North Caucasus to Western Kazakhstan has been a cause for the spike in militancy in that region of Kazakhstan in recent years.

In 2011, Jund al-Khilafah carried out at least three attacks in Atyrau, Taraz and Almaty, while in 2012 its main operation was in connection to Mohammed Merah's killing spree in France. Other attacks in Kazakhstan have been carried out by Salafist-Jihadists in 2011 and 2012, but these militants do not appear to belong to a particular group. Rather, it has been through their Salafist education that they have become radicalized, as discussed in the article "Kazakhstan Struggles to Contain Salafist-Inspired Terrorism" written for The Jamestown Foundation in September 2012.

Hizb ut Tahrir (HuT)

HuT was founded by diaspora Palestinians in 1952 and believes it is obligatory for every Muslim to work toward the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate; that no other system of law but Sharia is permissible; and that it is *haram* (forbidden) for Muslim states to seek protection from America or other *kufaar* (non-Islamic) states. HuT has been suppressed in Uzbekistan, where it first gained popularity in Central Asia in the 1990s, and most of Kazakhstan, but in Kyrgyzstan HuT has reemerged with an estimated 20,000 to 100,000 members.

Moreover, after the ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, HuT made inroads into northern Kyrgyzstan, near Kazakhstan's border. Although HuT members profess non-violence, some of them have been radicalized by way of their increased contacts with Afghanistan and they are often reported to be storing weapons for "self-defense."

Many Islamists first join Salafist groups like HuT before moving on to Salafist-Jihadist militant groups like the IMU. Salafist groups are therefore a bridge to militancy. HuT has also begun using the Internet to recruit new members and spread propaganda and is focusing on recruiting youths and women in Central Asia.

While the majority of Central Asians do not support HuT, they may respect some of its objectives, such as its opposition to U.S. foreign policy and its call for more economic equality. The same is true for the IMU and other militant groups. While most people in Central Asia do not support the IMU, they may agree with the IMU's condemnation of governmental corruption. Some Kazakhs may also sympathize with Jund al-Khilafah's anger at the country's new religion law, but not agree with the group's use of violence to achieve its ends. Similarly, Uyghurs in Xinjiang may agree with the TIP that China has not adequately protected their cultural, linguistic and religious rights in Xinjiang, but not agree with the TIP's killing of ethnic Han Chinese civilians.

Note: Although it is beyond the scope of the discussion today, it is important to mention that the Caucasus Emirate is seeking to expand its financial and operational networks from the North Caucasus to the Russian Volga and Ural regions and Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. There has been a steady rise of Salafism in those regions in recent years, with many HuT cells broken up. New militant groups also have formed which target imams who do not support a strict interpretation of Sharia Law.

4) Do these groups have global operations, aspirations and capabilities?

Yes. Every one of the aforementioned Central Asian militant groups has carried out operations outside of the Central and South Asian region. Virtually all Central Asian militants desire the return of the idealized Islamic Caliphate which, according to

Salafists, existed in the 7th century when the Muslim Prophet Muhammad lived. On the regional level, most – if not all – Central Asian groups desire to create an Islamic Caliphate called Turkistan, which would unite all Central Asian peoples under one Islamic political system.

In the 1990s, militant groups like the IMU and the TIP's predecessor, ETIM, were at least in part nationalist insurgencies with an Islamist core, but this is not the case anymore. They are now Islamist militant groups with national, regional and global objectives. The IMU still wants to overthrow the Karimov government and the TIP has the goal to "liberate" Xinjiang from its "Communist Chinese oppressors," but they also harbor the goal of international jihad and seek to "liberate" their brothers in other lands.

For example, the TIP's online magazine has discussed Uyghur fighters fighting in Syria and lent their support to the militants (presumably Jabhat al-Nusra and other Salafist-Jihadists) to overthrow the al-Assad regime. This is doubly meaningful to the TIP because its two "near enemies" – Russia and China – are the biggest international supporters of the al-Assad regime, as the TIP discussed in its online magazine.

Jund al-Khilafah also has global ambitions. It has followed other Central Asian jihadi movements in supporting the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia and the greater Islamic World. In a statement in 2011, JaK said "This name [Jund al-Khilafa] reminds Muslims of their duty to revive the Islamic Caliphate as a system. ... It is the system of Shariah-based governance that must be prevail in every Muslim country from the east to the west. ... We believe that the region of Central Asia, in addition to the Islamic Maghreb [North Africa] and Yemen, are candidates to be the nucleus for the return of the Caliphate State in the future." It is notable that Jund al-Khilafah mentioned the Maghreb and Yemen, where strong al-Qaeda affiliates also operate—al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The new generation of Central Asian militants is exposed and well connected to the Taliban and al-Qaeda network, with whom they fought side by side in Afghanistan. This is the generation of Central Asian militants that has fought against the U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. They will look to find new business in the post-2013 era—if not in Afghanistan and Pakistan, then in Central Asia, and if not there then in Kashmir, the West or Africa.

5) What is the role of al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Central Asian militancy?

Al-Qaeda and the Taliban do not focus on planning attacks in Central Asia. However, Central Asia fits into their overall ambitions to rid the Muslim World of secular governments, especially those countries with close ties to the United States, Israel and the West. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are more than willing to provide support in

terms of training, financing and ideological preparation to Central Asian militants to enable them to carry out attacks in Central Asia.

Many leaders of Central Asian militant groups have been closely tied to al-Qaeda and moved within al-Qaeda leadership circles, such as former TIP leader Abdul Shakur al-Turkistani, who was killed in a drone strike in Pakistan's tribal areas along with members of the Pakistani Taliban in late 2012. The IMU and the Pakistani Taliban also operate a united front, as described by Amir Mir in a February 2013 article for The News called "Taliban form special unit for operations to free prisoners."

Finally, al-Qaeda and the Taliban play a crucial role in financing and sustaining groups like the IMU, Jund al-Khilafah and the TIP. One of the key ways they do this is through drug trafficking. The IMU in northern Afghanistan is often responsible for funneling drugs from southern Afghanistan to Central Asia and on to Russia and Europe. As but one example, one of the IMU's main leaders is Usman Ghazi, who replaced Osman Adil in August 2012 after Adil was killed in a drone strike. Ghazi is a former drug and arms trafficker.

Another way these groups are financed are from donations from the Persian Gulf region. This is why many of the TIP's publications are in Arabic. Jund al-Khilafah was reportedly funded by Salafist networks based in Western Kazakhstan, as detailed in "Terror Networks Link Kazakhstani Fighters in Afghanistan and North Caucasus to the Home Front," which I wrote for the Jamestown Foundation in July 2012.

6) Where are the areas most vulnerable to Islamist militant infiltration?

The three most likely areas where Islamist militant groups in Central Asia could infiltrate are:

- The Fergana Valley
 - Tajikistan's Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) and Rasht Valley
 - Western Kazakhstan
- The Fergana Valley includes parts of Uzbekistan, such as Andijon, parts of Kyrgyzstan, such as Osh and Jalalabad (not to be confused with Jalalabad, Afghanistan), and parts of northern Tajikistan. The interethnic clashes between the Kyrgyz majority and the ethnic Uzbek minority in the Fergana Valley in 2010 resulted in 500 or more deaths and about 300,000 displaced ethnic Uzbeks.

More recently, in January 2013, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan came to the brink of fighting after a skirmish in an Uzbekistan enclave in Kyrgyzstan. For more details on this recent conflict, please read Igor Rotar's article for The Jamestown Foundation called "Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan Heighten Tensions in Violent Local Border Dispute."

The numerous border issues in Fergana, if left unresolved, will be a constant source of conflict that could escalate into regional war in the future. There are also concerns that a military bloated Uzbekistan after 2013 could use military force to resolve such conflicts with Kyrgyzstan, especially if President Karimov's successor is more prone to use military force than President Karimov.

- Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomos Oblast, also known as GBAO, borders Afghanistan's own Badakhshan province and was the scene of clashes between the Tajik government and warlords in 2012. GBAO's long and poorly protected border with Afghanistan runs through remote and difficult terrain, which allows smugglers, political and religious extremists, and terrorists to travel to and from Afghanistan, and is an entry for Central Asian militants into the region.

The Rasht Valley in Central Tajikistan has also been an area of instability and political, religious and clan-based warfare. A short-lived Islamic State was set up by the IMU in a town in the Valley in the late 1990s.

- Western Kazakhstan is where the United States and other Western countries have important oil and energy interests. Kazakhstan's Tengri news agency reported that 90 percent of the province's 8,000 practicing Muslims, are believed to be between the ages of 13 and 30, and 70% of the young people are influenced by Salafism. Jund al-Khilafa emerged from Western Kazakhstan, which is less than a 300-mile boat ride from the Russian North Caucasus. Western Kazakhstan is also where the Zhanaozen protests, which turned deadly in 2011, took place. The Kazakh security services have been quite successful in breaking up terrorist cells in its Western region in 2012.

The events in Mali in 2012 are important to recall. How Central Asian militant groups seize territory would likely depend on events external to the groups' operations, but the militants could capitalize on insecurity anywhere, just as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb did in Mali. For now, it is most likely that Central Asian militants would be able to destabilize these aforementioned regions, but not seize territory as they tried to do in the late 1990s.

The weak and fractured states in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will continue to be a concern. It is important that the U.S. and other countries in Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and especially China and India work together to build the economies in these two countries. Development and security are inherently linked, and one cannot exist without the other.

7) Have Russia and China countered Central Asian militant groups?

Russia is mostly focused on combating militants in the Russian North Caucasus, such as Chechnya and Dagestan. China is mostly concerned with the TIP (which China

anachronistically still calls ETIM), but less on the Taliban and other Central Asian Islamist groups that do not specifically target China.

China's current policy with respect to Central Asian militants other than the TIP is likely short-sighted. As China grows in economic and political power, it is likely to be seen as an enemy on par with the United States. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, despite being based in northern Africa, threatened China after China cracked down on protests that turned into riots and violence in Urumqi in 2009. Most recently, the IMU's mufti Abu Zar al-Burmi, a Pakistani of ethnic Burmese Rohingya origin, threatened revenge against China for China's alleged support of the Burmese government's treatment of the Rohingyas in Rakhine State.

Russia's main security mechanism in Central Asia is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Exercises in September 2012 were focused on dealing with social uprisings similar to those seen in North Africa and the Middle East and the threat from Islamist militants. China's main security mechanism is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Russia wants to make sure that the CSTO, in which China does not participate, remains the key Central Asian security network. There are concerns that Russia will use the prospect of instability in Central Asia to further an agenda to gain greater political, economic and military influence in the region at the expense of the U.S. and China.

The SCO was created in 2001 as an economic and security body including Russia, China, and the five Central Asian countries. The SCO evolved from the Shanghai Five, which was created in 1996 in order to demarcate China's borders with its Central Asian neighbors, a goal that the organization achieved successfully.

Today, the SCO is focused on countering the three evils of "terrorism, separatism and religious extremism." This is not only distinctly Chinese wording, but also underscores that China and other SCO members will provide mutual support to one another if one member suppresses a domestic uprising, mass protest movement or insurgency within its borders. The SCO also plays an important role in opening doors for China to strengthen its economic ties to Central Asia.

It is unclear whether China would intervene to support an SCO member in the event of a major crisis. However, the crises in 2010 and January 2013 in southern Kyrgyzstan suggest that China would be extremely reluctant to intervene in a neighboring state's internal affairs. Russia might be less reluctant than China to intervene in the case of a Central Asian security crisis, but Russia, too, did not intervene militarily to stop the ethnic clashes in Osh in 2010.

In sum, Russia and China's security mechanisms are not specifically geared towards preventing Central Asian Islamist militant groups from launching attacks in Central Asia or responding to many of the causes that drive young Central Asians to join such groups.

8) Can the US-Uzbek relationship be the pillar in a post-2013 security framework?

Yes. For any U.S. strategy in Central Asia region to succeed, it will need Uzbekistan's partnership. Uzbekistan stands in the geographic center of Central Asia, bordering on every other Central Asian country, as well as Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has the largest population in Central Asia with 30 million people now, which is almost as large as the populations of Kazakhstan (17 million), Tajikistan (7 million), Kyrgyzstan (6 million) and Turkmenistan (5 million) combined.

Moreover, Uzbekistan's population is comprised mostly of ethnic Uzbeks, but ethnic Kyrgyzs, Kazakhs, Turkmen and Tajiks all form significant minority populations. Ethnic Tajiks, for example, populate two of Central Asia's most important historic and cultural cities, Samarkand and Bukhara, which are both located in southern Uzbekistan.

In sum, if Uzbekistan is unstable or unwilling to cooperate with the United States, it will be hard for the U.S. to achieve any of its goals in Central Asia. On the contrary, with Uzbekistan's support the United States can play a larger role in security, economic and political affairs in Central Asia in the long-term future. Uzbekistan is also the key country in Central Asia that rejects Russian domination of the region.

Uzbekistan, like the other countries in the region, welcome the U.S. presence as a way to balance against Russian and Chinese domination of the region. In this respect, the U.S. geographic distance from Central Asia is its strength; the countries do not need to worry about the U.S. directly infringing on Central Asian countries' autonomy, independence and sovereignty. In return, Central Asian countries can further U.S. interests in Central Asia and the Muslim World, including, for example, acting as an avenue for dialogue with Iran – if the U.S. so chooses.

The U.S. and Uzbekistan used to be strategic partners, but they have not been since the events in Andijon in 2005. In order for relations to be restored to pre-2005 levels it will be important for the U.S. to communicate to Uzbekistan – as well as other countries in the region – the importance of having a non-military strategy to respond to protests or other mass demonstrations.

The Uzbek military is well-trained, but a pure military response to events like those in Andijon is counter-productive and resulted in a disproportionate number of deaths to suppress the uprising. It is important that the governments in Central Asia and the United States set up a mechanism to share information about the international law and best practices related to protest movements, such as those that have occurred in the Arab World, and are now sweeping to Azerbaijan and possibly further to Central Asia.

It will also be important for the U.S. to carefully analyze and understand incidents of peaceful protests, uprisings, and insurgent actions when such incidents occur, to distinguish one from the other, without pre-judgment. This will help the United States deal with the national governments to resolve the issue peacefully, while allowing for the nationals of these countries the opportunity to express their views lawfully and peacefully in the public square.

A protest in Zhanaozen, Western Kazakhstan in December 2011 highlighted the importance of governments in the region learning about the developing international norms and best practices related to the freedom of assembly, which provide guidance to governments on how to respond to protests and to protestors on how to lawfully exercise their right to assemble. There has been growing literature on the laws and policies related to freedom of assembly since the Arab uprisings took place, which is made available at the following website (<http://www.icnl.org/research/resources/assembly/index.html>).

As for the issue of terrorism and Islamist militancy, perhaps no country has suffered psychologically and materially as much as Uzbekistan—Tajikistan being the other country which has suffered greatly. It is from Uzbekistan that the IMU originated and Hizb ut Tahrir initially established its first bases. HuT currently has found Kyrgyzstan to be the easiest country within which to operate because of the country's relatively weak internal security apparatus. From there, it can seek to expand its influence into the Fergana Valley as well as other parts of Uzbekistan.

After suffering terrorist attacks on its territory in the 1990s, including an attempted assassination of President Karimov and bombings of U.S. and Israeli diplomatic facilities, Uzbekistan succeeded in virtually expelling the IMU and HuT from its territory. However, the IMU shifted from Uzbekistan to northern Afghanistan, where it received protection and support from the Taliban. After 9/11, the United States further weakened the IMU almost to the point of its elimination before the IMU ultimately found safe haven in parts of Waziristan and where it has now rebuilt itself through its close alliance with the Pakistani Taliban.

There are concerns that the U.S. drone strike that killed Maulvi Nazir in South Waziristan in January 2013 will allow the IMU to solidify a long-term haven in South Waziristan as it had in the early 2000s. Nazir had been anti-IMU because of his agreement with the Pakistani army not support the IMU in return for the Pakistani army allowing Nazir to rule Wana, South Waziristan's capital, without Pakistani interference. Nazir's replacement Bahawal Khan, may not have the power or interest in continuing that relationship with Pakistan.

Uzbekistan has a clear determination to prevent the IMU from destabilizing the country as it did in the 1990s, and it can help stand as a bulwark to further Islamist militant infiltration of the Central Asian region. It is important, however, that any U.S. counter-terrorism strategy with Uzbekistan take into account that greater

political and religious opening in Uzbekistan is essential to eliminating some of the push factors that cause youths to join militant groups in the first place.

Should the United States reengage Uzbekistan as a strategic partner, it will be important not to do so at the expense of Central Asia's other regional power, Kazakhstan, which is currently a strategic partner of the U.S. Kazakhstan has a much smaller population than Uzbekistan and lacks Uzbekistan's central geographic location, but is the world's ninth largest country and has vast energy resources in its Western region.

Also important is Kazakhstan's role as perhaps the Muslim World's most consistent voice for religious tolerance and the peaceful co-existence of Muslims, Christians, Jews and others. This voice stands as a bulwark in Central Asia against Iran and Salafist influences from the Arab World, which promote a bi-polar worldview in which Muslims and the rest are constantly in opposition—a recipe for continued religious and cultural conflict.

Kazakhstan, which relinquished all of its nuclear weapons after the breakup of the Soviet Union, is a trustworthy partner through which the United States can communicate with Iran on a host of issues, such as Iran's nuclear weapons program— again, if the U.S. so chooses. Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries are desperate not to see the U.S. or Israel forced to take action to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons as they know this would lead to a surge in Islamist militancy in Iran and the region and could devastate Central Asia's ability to trade with Iran.

Kazakhstan is located between the Russian Bear and the Chinese Dragon. Russia seeks to dominate Kazakhstan politically and militarily; China intends to dominate Kazakhstan economically. The United States offers a strategic alliance to help Kazakhstan preserve its autonomy, independence and sovereignty against more powerful neighbors. Because Kazakhstan and Russia share a 4,300-mile border and centuries of historic ties, Kazakhstan will always inevitably be closely tied to Russia and forced to align its foreign and economic policies with Russia. However, this does not mean that Kazakhstan does not value its ties to the United States. On the contrary, it is because of Kazakhstan's dependence on Russia as well as China that it seeks strong relations with the United States. The same is true for Uzbekistan.

9) What influences undermine traditional practices of Islam in Central Asia?

Salafism is noticeably creeping into Central Asia, often through madrassahs and religious schools funded by Arab Countries and Pakistan. In other cases, Central Asians who return home after studying in the Arab World or Pakistan spread the Salafist ideology. Central Asia's proximity to the Russian North Caucasus, where the Caucasus Emirate is waging jihad against Russia, has led to a rise in Salafist-Jihadist influences in Central Asia. In fact, Jund al-Khilafah's inspiration was Said Buryatskiy,

an ethnic Buryat Russian convert to Islam, who was “martyred” fighting the Russians in the North Caucasus. His videos continue to inspire Russian-speaking Central Asian jihadists today.

Traditionally, Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan practiced Tengrianism, an animistic religion. Still today many traditional practices are incorporated in Kazakh and Kyrgyz Islam— also sometimes referred to as “nomadic Islam” or “traditional Islam.” This form of Islam is moderate, open-minded and accepting of other religions, unlike Salafism, which is commonly known “wahabbism” (Wahabbism) among the people in the region. Islam in Uzbekistan, Xinjiang, and Tajikistan, while more conservative than the Kazakh and Kyrgyz brand of Islam, has also historically been tolerant.

Most Central Asians agree that Salafist influence is rising and corrupting local brands of Islam. Central Asian government suppression of Islam has also generated resentment among the religiously conservative, leading some religious conservatives to lean towards groups like Hizb ut Tahrir, which then serve as vehicles for recruitment into militant organizations like the IMU.

10) What can the United States do to show leadership and foster cooperation between national governments to meet the emerging threats in Central Asia?

Although it is counter-intuitive, combating terrorism in Central Asia cannot be done solely by military means. In fact, with the U.S. set to withdraw from Afghanistan, there is almost no way for the U.S. to combat the Central Asian militant groups operating there, let alone the IMU and other groups based in Pakistan’s tribal areas. However, the U.S. can take the following concrete steps to reduce the factors that enable militant groups to form, recruit and re-generate.

- Engage with the younger generation of students and emerging leaders in Central Asia. The first generation of students born after the fall of the Soviet Union are graduating college now. They are aware of democratic values and would benefit from opportunities to learn the English language and engage with their American peers. Although they have been stunted by nepotism in the political systems in the region and their highly centralized governments, there will be political transition in the region in the next decade, especially in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It is through English language that youths and students can learn about America and understand the news beyond the Russian language anti-American propaganda that is dominant in the region today.
- Develop a concrete plan for Central Asia, perhaps centered on the New Silk Road strategy. If we want Central Asia to believe we are not abandoning the region to Russia and China, then we need to show commitment, leadership and effort and make proposals backed by concrete plans of action. China should be a partner in the New Silk Road Strategy because of its economic influence in the region.

- View Central Asia through a lens broader than only militancy, terrorism and Afghanistan. An excessive focus on these issues can discourage investors and reduce the focus on issues such as democracy and human rights. Moreover, the U.S. should be sure to commend the countries in the region for efforts in the right direction.
- Change the conception of “Russian and Central Asia” to a conception of “Central Asia” as a distinct region. The Soviet Union is long gone and while Russia’s political, economic and military motives in the region are similar to the past, the ideological element is gone. Viewing Central Asia as similar to Russia can lead to misunderstandings about the people of Central Asia and their countries’ aspirations, which differ from Russia.
- Realize that Salafism and liberal democracy are the top candidates to fill the ideological void in Central Asia and that the U.S. abandons the region to its peril.
- Understand that human rights cannot be imposed on the countries in the region, none of which are more than 25 years old. Rather, the exchange of best practices is the most effective way of engagement with these countries about human rights. Also, it is important to understand the local context. What the U.S. may see as a flagrant human rights violation may have much deeper historical, religious or traditional roots that must be understood before an accurate assessment is made.
- Consider inviting Uzbekistan and other countries in Central Asia as partners in Western institutions. The more we exclude these countries, the more they will fall into the orbit of China and Russia, and the less likely they will be to embrace democratic values. Moreover, the U.S. should work with democratic countries like Japan, South Korea, and India to further democratic values and open up economic opportunities in the region beyond China.
- Encourage countries like Kazakhstan to work with moderate religious countries in other regions, such as Indonesia in East Asia and Niger in West Africa to counter-balance the growing trends of Salafism throughout the Muslim World.
- Establish a Rapid Response Center, possibly in Uzbekistan, to ensure that the U.S. maintains high-level military contacts with local governments in the region and that the U.S. can respond to the types of human security threats that Islamist militants can carry out, including kidnappings of American citizens.
- Promote investment in Central Asia by American companies. Abandoning the region would also mean placing in jeopardy U.S. energy companies.
- Receive and share information about Islamist militant groups with Central Asian countries in order to disrupt militant operations and networks.

Final Remarks:

I thank you for inviting me to discuss the topic of "Islamist Militant Threats to Central Asia" with you today. I would look forward to answering any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me. My e-mail address is zenn@jamestown.org.

Biography:

Jacob Zenn is a Research Analyst of Eurasian and African Affairs for The Jamestown Foundation and an expert on Central Asian militant movements, including Jund al-Khilafa of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Turkistan Islamic Party of Xinjiang, China, and Hizb ut Tahrir in Central Asia. He has published on emerging militant threats to Central Asia for the The Jamestown Foundation's Terrorism Monitor, Eurasia Daily Monitor and Militant Leadership Monitor, West Point CTC Sentinel, Johns Hopkins SAIS Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, and Asia Times. A Charter Member of the National Language Service Corps for fluency in Chinese, Arabic and Indonesian, he has worked and carried out field research in the five Central Asian countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Iraq and the Russian Republic of Tatarstan, and studied Dari and Farsi languages at Samarkand State University in Uzbekistan, Uyghur and Uzbek languages at Xinjiang University in Urumqi, China and Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Russian languages at the London School in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Zenn received a J.D. from Georgetown Law in 2011, where he was a Global Law Scholar, a graduate degree in International Affairs from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Center for Chinese-American Studies in 2007, and a B.A. in International Affairs from Emory University in 2005. He is a non-resident research fellow of the Center for Shanghai Cooperation Studies (COSCOS) in Shanghai, China and an alumni of the U.S. State Department Critical Language Scholarship program in Malang, Indonesia and the Atlantic Council of the United States "Young Turkey/Young America: A New Relationship for a New Age" program. His professional commitments include research and analysis on the international law and best practices related to the Freedom of Association and Assembly and the socio-economic causes of conflict in Nigeria, the Sahel and Central Asia. His field research in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon in June 2012 inspired his Occasional Report for The Jamestown Foundation, "Northern Nigeria's Boko Haram: The Prize in Al-Qaeda's Africa Strategy." He is a resident of Pennsylvania's second congressional district.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, you got most of it in there, didn't you? Okay.

And we now—Mr. Barrick.

**STATEMENT OF MR. NATHAN BARRICK, STRATEGIC
CONSULTANT, CLI SOLUTIONS**

Mr. BARRICK. Chairman Rohrabacher, members of the subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the Islamist militant threat to Eurasia. I have to emphasize up front that my views are my own and they do not represent nor reflect the official position of any other organizations that I work with. Also I would like to start by clearly stating my agreement with the other experts that there are Islamist militant groups that threaten the governments in Central Asia. I also agree that this is an important regional security issue and that the United States should be concerned. Therefore, I would desire that my testimony here today not be misconstrued as an argument to do less.

We categorically should not reduce the level of security cooperation we have with our partner nations in the region. However, I would recommend being judicious in assessing whether we ought to be alarmed, and since we are not operating in an environment of unconstrained resources, we should also carefully calculate whether we need to do more than what we are already doing. First, as the Ambassador mentioned, Afghanistan will not automatically transition into a safe haven for Islamist militants after the withdrawal of International Security and Assistance Forces by the end of 2014.

Within months of ISAF's withdrawal, the militant organizations are likely to face strategic choices whether they will shift or continue to fight in Afghanistan. Even if they do attempt to shift to Central Asia, it is unlikely that their entire organizations will be committed to that fight. Central Asian militants are much more likely to be focused on assisting their militant allies and attempting to garner tactical successes locally than to be devoting efforts to attack planning in Central Asia. We are likely to have time to consider whether Central Asia requires increased assistance from us, especially since there is an open question on how much international counterterrorist effort will still be dedicated to Afghanistan post 2014.

Which brings me to my second point. The security forces in Central Asia have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing and responding to militants inside their countries. Indeed, it can be argued that without much outside assistance, as Mr. Poe mentioned earlier, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan forcibly ejected the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan out of Central Asia and into retirement, even if temporary, or Afghanistan in the late '90s and prior to the events of 9/11. Since then, these three countries, and Kazakhstan, have acknowledged several counterterrorist successes or mitigated the consequences of the sporadic attacks that have occurred. We should not ignore nor undervalue their own successes.

An important subpoint must be made as well. The United States has had occasion to question the methods our Central Asian partners have used in the past decade to respond to perceived threats. Specifically, in regards to Uzbekistan, the difference in perspectives about Andijon in May 2005 resulted in a breach in the bilateral re-

lationship that has not been completely reconstructed. United States interests in these countries, as senior officials have repeatedly emphasized, are addressed on a broad range of policy priorities. These facts underscore my firm assertion that we should not do less, but I also think it should be taken into close consideration in determining if, and how, we provide more security assistance in the region.

Central Asia has been recognized and appreciated by many American and European leaders over the past decade for allowing passage for logistical support to international forces in Afghanistan. However, could Central Asia have done more? I think it would be beneficial to hear from these countries whether or not, and how much specifically, they believe they have benefited from past security cooperation with us before we undertook to adjust our security assistance programs in the region.

There are other reasonable considerations to inform our decision making, and those must take into account the assessments of our military services, unified commanders, and intelligence organizations. How much capacity do our Central Asian partners have for expanded cooperation? Do specific militant groups even have the ability to operate within, or project into, Central Asia at a level that exceeds our partners' existing capabilities?

Finally, there is a growing body of academic literature assessing that militant Islamist beliefs do not resonate with Muslims in Central Asia. Central Asia is not populated by Muslims who are just yearning and dying to fight to live in a Caliphate. The nature of political and economic conditions in Central Asia do indeed serve as a recruiting ground for militants, but I want to reiterate that this effect, so far, has been driven by political and economic reasons and not strictly for religious motivations.

In the future, if Central Asian governments do not effectively implement reforms, the political and economic conditions will present those governments with greater security and stability challenges. Whether these challenges prompt existing leaders to maintain more draconian grips on power or their security organizations naturally assess and prepare for these threats, there is likely to be a gradual increase in the repressive tactics that are a two-edged sword for these nations. On the one edge, these governments can argue that their security forces have successfully handled threats, but on the other sharper edge, as many experts in Western countries believe, these security practices may actually further facilitate recruitment and stir popular support for the anti-regime objectives of the militant groups, if not the militants' Islamist views.

In conclusion, it is reasonable to look at Central Asia as one place where Islamist militants may turn after Afghanistan and Pakistan, if they are in fact able to turn elsewhere. The desire in Central Asia for U.S. assistance in countering Islamist militants is not the same as a need or a requirement for U.S. assistance. There is little argument against sustaining the security assistance and cooperative relationships we have in Central Asia. However, looking forward, the ability of these governments to address the militant threat does not appear to require more U.S. assistance, and we should leverage this fact in focusing on our other policy priorities in the region.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Barrick follows:]

Nathan Barrick

Strategic Consultant

CLI Solutions

Before the

Joint Subcommittee Hearing: Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia

Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

27 February 2013

Washington D.C.

Chairman Poe, Chairman Rohrabacher, members of the two subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the Islamist Militant Threat to Eurasia.

I have to emphasize up front that my views are my own and they do not represent, nor reflect, the official position of any other organization that I work with.

Also, I would like to start by clearly stating my agreement with other experts that there are Islamist Militant groups that threaten governments in Central Asia; I also agree that this is an important regional security issue and that the United States should be concerned. Therefore, I would desire that my testimony here today not be misconstrued as an argument to do less. We categorically should not reduce the level of security cooperation we have with our partner nations in the region.

However, I would recommend being judicious in assessing whether we ought to be alarmed and, since we are not operating in an environment of unconstrained resources, we should also carefully calculate whether we need to do more than what we are already doing.

Firstly, Afghanistan will not automatically transition into a safe haven for Islamist militants after the withdrawal of International Security and Assistance Forces by the end of 2014. Within months of ISAF's withdrawal, the militant organizations are likely to face strategic choices on whether they will shift or continue to fight in Afghanistan. Even if they do attempt to shift to Central Asia, it is unlikely that entire organizations would be committed to that fight. Central Asian militants are much more likely to be focused on assisting their militant allies in attempting to garner tactical successes locally, than to be devoting efforts to attack planning in Central Asia. We are likely to have time to consider whether Central Asia requires, or desires, increased assistance from us, especially since there is an open question on how much international counterterrorist effort will still be dedicated to Afghanistan post-2014.

Which brings me to my second point, the security forces in Central Asia have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing and responding to militants inside their countries. Indeed, it can be argued that without much outside assistance, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan forcibly ejected the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan out of Central Asia and into "retirement" or Afghanistan in the late 90's and prior to the events of 9/11. Since then, these three countries and Kazakhstan have acknowledged several counterterrorist successes or mitigated the consequences of the sporadic attacks that have occurred. We should not ignore nor undervalue their own successes.

An important sub-point must be made as well – the United States has had occasion to question the methods our Central Asian partners have used in the past decade to respond to perceived threats. Specifically, in regards to Uzbekistan, the difference in perspectives about Andijon in May 2005 resulted in a breach in the bilateral relationship that has not been completely reconstructed. United States interests in these countries, as senior officials have repeatedly emphasized, are addressed on a broad range of policy priorities. These facts underscore my firm assertion that we should not do less, but I also think it should be taken into close consideration in determining if, and how, we provide more security assistance in the region.

Central Asia has been recognized and appreciated by many American and European leaders over the past decade for allowing passage for logistical support to international forces in Afghanistan. However, could Central Asia have done more? I think it would be beneficial to hear from these countries whether or not, and how much, they believe they have benefited from past security cooperation with us, before we undertook to adjust our security assistance programs in the region.

There are other reasonable considerations to inform our decisionmaking and those must take into account the assessments of our military services, unified commanders, and intelligence organizations. How much capacity do our Central Asian partners have for expanded cooperation? Do specific militant groups even have the ability to operate within, or project into, Central Asia at a level that exceeds our partners' existing capabilities?

Finally, there is a growing body of academic literature assessing that militant Islamist beliefs do not resonate with Muslims in Central Asia. Central Asia is not populated by Muslims who are just yearning and dying to fight for living in a Caliphate. The nature of political and economic conditions in Central Asia do indeed serve as a recruiting ground for militants; but I want to reiterate that this effect is driven by political and economic reasons and not strictly for religious motivations. In the future, if Central Asian governments do not effectively implement reforms, the political and economic conditions will present those governments with greater security and stability challenges. Whether these challenges prompt the existing leaders to maintain more draconian grips on power or their security organizations naturally assess and prepare for these threats, there is likely to be a gradual increase in the repressive tactics that are a two-edged sword for these nations. On the one edge, these governments can argue that their security forces have successfully handled threats; but on the other sharper edge, as many experts in Western countries believe, these security practices may actually further facilitate recruitment and stir popular support for the anti-regime objectives of the militant groups, if not the militants' Islamist views.

In conclusion, it is reasonable to look at Central Asia as one place where Islamist militants may turn after Afghanistan and Pakistan, if they are in fact able to turn elsewhere. The desire in Central Asia for U.S. assistance in countering Islamist militants is not the same as a "need" or "requirement" for U.S. assistance. There is little argument against sustaining the security assistance and cooperative relationships we have in Central Asia. However, looking forward, the ability of these governments to address the militant threat does not appear to require more U.S. assistance and we should leverage this fact in focusing on our other policy priorities in the region.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

And Dr. Blank? We are going to need you to push a button there. Just remember that that uses energy that is produced by somebody to get your voice amplified, just to put it in perspective.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN J. BLANK, PH.D., RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Mr. BLANK. Well, I hope it is from California, sir. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee and the subcommittee. I need to emphasize that my remarks do not reflect the views of the Army, Defense Department, or the U.S. Government.

Jihadi or Islamist terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon not just confined to Central Asia. We find it, as Dr. Cohen has said, in the North Caucasus, in Central Asia, and we have also seen evidence of it in Azerbaijan where Iran is attempting to sponsor terrorist and insurgent movements against the Government of Azerbaijan because of its pro-Western policies. At least three plots were uncovered last year by the Azeri authorities against Azeri, Israeli, and American citizens and interests in Azerbaijan, including the finding of people with propaganda and weapons in their possession for such, what you might call, to use a Soviet term, agitation and propaganda and incitement to terrorism.

So this is a complex international phenomenon. In the North Caucasus we are dealing with a truly jihadi terrorist operation, the Caucasus Emirate, which is closely affiliated with al-Qaeda, and a subscriber to the ideology of al-Qaeda, and which the Russians have had very little success controlling and which they have contributed to by pervasive misrule and brutality, whereas in Central Asia there is no imminent threat, as was stated here earlier. After 2014, the situation becomes more cloudy. Most Central Asian and many expert forecasts of what will happen in Afghanistan are much more pessimistic than what the U.S. Army and Government is saying, and we heard already from Congressman Poe that the Uzbeks are particularly anxious about the future.

We can expect after 2014 that there will also be the possibility of succession crises or internal upheavals in Central Asian states, all of which are authoritarian, most of which are badly governed. And those kinds of upheavals could open up the door to the kind of political manifestations of terrorism we have talked about. As Mr. Barrick has said, Central Asia Islam is by no means jihadi, but the political and economic conditions of governance there create the potential for a mass base or at least a base of recruits who would subscribe to those kind of ideologies. Because no other political expression has been granted to them, they can only express themselves in terms of this vocabulary and this political rhetoric. So we have those particular areas in the Soviet Union or Eurasia to use a common word, which are potential terrorist areas.

I would like to conclude by talking about the U.S. interests here. The Azeri case is one where, I think, vital U.S. interests are at risk because Azerbaijan's capacity to furnish Europe with energy products and because of its importance in the Caucasus and vis-a-vis Iran, make its support for Azerbaijan despite its authoritarian government, I would argue, a vital interest of the United States Gov-

ernment. Our interest in Central Asia has been well articulated in today's testimony, but the fact of the matter is that already spending on Central Asia for 2012 went down. It is going to go down in 2013, and presumably, after 2014 it will go down still more given the constraints on the U.S. budget and on the U.S. military that are now coming into effect.

Furthermore, the interest of the United States in Central Asia has been, as Ambassador Blake has testified previously to Congress, fundamentally tied to the war in Afghanistan. As our presence in Afghanistan declines so will, I suspect, our interest in Central Asia and leaving it open to further international rivalry such as is called, The New Great Game, other words have been used, between Russia, China to some degree, Iran, India and Pakistan, and now Turkey appears to be gaining interest in this. So those actors as well as the EU, international financial institutions, and the terrorists will all be active in Central Asia as we reduce our profile due to financial and military constraints.

In the North Caucasus we are not going to be able to play much of a role because the Russians will not allow for anybody to come into what is sovereign Russian territory, and they are certainly not in the mood to listen to us about democratization, quite the opposite, as we have heard today. So it is very likely that this phenomenon, particularly insofar as it is connected to misrule and what my colleague, Max Manwaring, calls illegitimate governance, is likely to continue after 2014, and it is by no means certain that when we have left Afghanistan that we will have sufficiently weakened this threat to the extent that our partners and allies in Eurasia, and for that matter elsewhere, can become complacent. Complacency is probably the last thing that we can expect.

Thank you, and I submit my written testimony to the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Blank follows:]

Islamic Militancy in Eurasia

Professor Stephen Blank

Strategic Studies Institute

US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013

February 2013

The views expressed here do not represent those of the US Army, Defense Department, or the

US Government

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As of 2013 Islamic militancy and terrorism as well as the threat of their further extension exist throughout Eurasia, i.e. the former Soviet Union, Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Middle East. Naturally we can attribute explanations for so many manifestations of this phenomenon to varying causes and depend on local conditions. Nevertheless in all of these cases we find two recurring elements that go to comprise this threat. In all of the cases of actual or potential terrorism we find what Max Manwaring of the US Army War College has called “illegitimate governance.” And in many cases, not least that of Russia, this governance is getting worse. The second phenomenon behind Islamic militancy and terrorism (which are not always the same things but frequently do overlap) is state sponsorship. Often state sponsorship of terrorism or of Islamic or ethnic unrest exploits failures of governance in adjacent or nearby states and promotes militancy and/or terrorism as a deliberate act of state policy. Indeed, in various places and times, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan have each sponsored terrorists and subversive militants in nearby countries even as they are either vulnerable to or suffering from serious terrorist attacks on themselves. And certainly Iran and Pakistan are still doing so.

In Central Asia as well as in all the other afflicted areas listed above we find pervasive examples of Manwaring’s “illegitimate governance.” Tajikistan’s government is, for all practical purposes, a family run criminal conspiracy that is deeply involved in the drug trade to the point where diplomats have been arrested with large quantities of narcotics on them. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are brutal autocracies and extremely corrupt and avaricious governments whose depredations upon the indigenous population in the Uzbek case were probably the cause of the large uprising in Andijon in 2005. That uprising, which appears to have been violent before being brutally repressed, was nonetheless precipitated by the government’s efforts to snuff out and expropriate rival mercantile elements. Should government controls weaken we could reasonably expect to see similar phenomena in the future. In Kyrgyzstan we have a weak central government – though it may be gaining strength – that still cannot effectively or fully control its southern regions where crime and the drug trade flourish and where ethnic animosities are simmering. Meanwhile in Kazakhstan recent incidents suggest much greater socio-economic and political unrest than were expected by the government or by foreign experts. Those episodes also caught the government by surprise and it calls these signs of opposition terrorism even though that is not usually the case. But clearly these cases alarm the Kazakh authorities. Though Kazakhstan is the most benevolent of these states and doing better than any of them, it too is highly corrupt, run by a family, and like the other Central Asian regimes has no reliable mechanism for succession of the current ruler. Therefore while terrorism remains latent in Central Asia; in the event of major economic crisis or succession, we can expect, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, succession crises that could lead to insurgencies and terrorist movements vying for power if state power breaks down. Adding to the dilemma is that we have no reliable way of measuring the incidence or likelihood of terrorism in Central Asia.

The problem here is that virtually every form of dissent and opposition has been labeled by local governments as Islamic fundamentalism or worse and then harshly repressed. As a result there is neither a political vocabulary or movement or space available to dissenters other than the religious one of Islam and that is driven underground. Indeed I know of no published research that accurately tracks the likelihood or incidence of genuinely militant or terrorist (not necessarily the same thing) movements in Central Asia. A further problem here and in Azerbaijan is the fact that in all these places the religious authority is an arm of the state and thus inherently politicized. Thanks to that politicization in many cases we see the withering away of

genuine spiritual meaning without which existence becomes extremely difficult in any civilization. Moreover, in many cases there are reports of a withering of genuine knowledge of Islam among the faithful. There is thus a distinct possibility of a population that is unable to combat the siren song of radical Islam with appropriate intellectual tools. Since many of these state clerics are not particularly well educated and lack the resources that are being invested by Salafi or Shiite extremists supported by Iran, Saudi Arabia, or other actors, the ensuing spiritual vacuum could easily create an opportunity that radical religious-political elements could then exploit.

Furthermore as US and ISAF troops prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan there is great apprehension throughout Central Asia and Russia that the area might become vulnerable to Islamic terrorism originating in Afghanistan and then spreading into Central Asia or for Afghan based groups to assist indigenous terrorist groups. And there have been previous attempts at just such a diffusion of Islamic radicalism. Meanwhile despite continued statements by US military leaders in Afghanistan that the Afghan army is capable of taking a leading role in providing security after 2014 and in fighting the Taliban, and that the future Afghan government can prevail, among the Afghan public (as well as many foreign governments) there seems to be a widespread expectation that the government will fall and that the army will not or cannot fight. Consequently outside of the US military-political leadership there is a widespread expectation of a future civil war. Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov publicly stated in 2010 and repeatedly thereafter that an unstable and conflict-torn Afghanistan means that the threat to all of Central Asia will remain. Tajikistan's leadership has also made similar repeated statements. The other Central Asian governments and Russia have made similar statements. Thus there is a widespread expectation of a rising terrorist threat after 2014.

Four particular contingencies are easily imaginable if things go badly in Afghanistan.

- Obviously the greatest threat is that the Karzai government will fail to secure Afghanistan and that the Taliban, supported by its associated terrorist groups, if not the ISI, will relatively quickly triumph and take over Afghanistan. In that case the way will be open for all manner of international Islamic terrorist groups to operate there with impunity, including those aiming to unseat Central Asian regimes and attack India, the US or other European and Middle Eastern states. Moreover, they will presumably enjoy governmental support from the new Afghan state if not the ISI as well as mutual cooperation among themselves to expand their activities into neighboring states and forge alliances, either tactical or strategic, with internal opposition forces in Central Asian states, India, or further abroad. In turn this could lead to an upsurge of terrorism or even insurgency in vulnerable Central Asian countries.

- Alternatively Afghanistan falls into a civil war that simultaneously presents the Central Asian states with the classic security dilemma of the possibility that they may be forced to intervene against their better judgment in Afghanistan, or support some other major power(s) intervention there or that the war will spill over into their territories. Or else their territories might become the site of an insurgency. The local regimes are fully aware of both these possible outcomes and dread them.

- A third possibility is one of protracted civil strife or civil war in Afghanistan once the US departs. If this is the case rather than a relatively rapid collapse of the Karzai regime then not only are the neighboring states, including India, vulnerable to a Taliban effort to prevail by expanding the front to include them, using affiliated Central Asian terrorist groups as proxies, Afghanistan will come under increased foreign pressure from all the interested parties, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, NGOs, IFIs etc. possibly once again NATO and the US. In this outcome

everyone will be in some way extending the past history of the area by which Afghanistan became an object of major international contestation among the great powers, a rivalry that will inevitably pressure Central Asian states to support one or another side in this civil war and deal with great power requests for bases, logistical support, etc. Tajikistan's example is a harbinger of that trend. Not only will they be vulnerable to heightened threats of terrorism, drug running (especially to raise revenues for continued fighting), they will also face this intensified foreign pressure, probably mainly from Russia and China, if not India, Pakistan, and Iran too, without the benefit of the US counterbalance that they now enjoy and which allows them to deflect these other pressures.

•Fourth, a rapid Taliban takeover or a long-term civil war also undermines the Central Asian states' security because it will negate the economic gains they have made and are making from investing in Afghanistan and connecting those investments in trade, electricity, and potentially oil and gas with South Asia or the global market.

Finally there is the question of state-sponsored terrorism by Pakistan of groups operating in both Afghanistan and India, if not elsewhere. Until this pattern is decisively broken and terminated it would be very risky to count either on the security of Afghanistan or of India or for that matter Pakistan. Although Pakistan's situation goes beyond the bounds of this hearing; it is well known how potent a threat to it these terrorist groups are and how difficult it remains to break the relationships that have grown up between them and the Inter-Services Institution (ISI) in Pakistan. Without this rupture neither Pakistan nor its neighbors and potentially Central Asia as well can truly count on security. So in Central Asia the reality of illegitimate governance prepares the field for terrorism, while simultaneously the prospect of state sponsorship in the context of ISAF's departure from Afghanistan and domestic conditions in Central Asia creates grounds for genuine concern for the future there

Azerbaijan

Turning to Azerbaijan we find another variation of the dangers raised by the combination of misrule and foreign or state sponsorship. Azerbaijan's security, by virtue of its geography and energy capabilities, is a vital US interest and must be recognized as such. Nevertheless its political system resembles most of those in the post-Soviet Union in its authoritarianism and ideological justification of such a regime by virtue of a strong president centralizing power and authority in his hands. In other words, it too is prey to the pitfalls of illegitimate governance. Like Middle Eastern and Central Asian autocracies it also contains a strong element of familial and even dynastic aspiration. President Aliyev has astutely expanded and transformed the elite from regional clan groupings into bureaucratic factional ones, linked by patronage in typical patron-client relationships. But Azerbaijan has been more fortunate than many other such regimes because of the huge economic development generated by its plentitude of oil and gas.

Despite its current seeming stability Azerbaijan is vulnerable. Although there are many stabilizing factors beyond continuing high economic growth, even that growth is in question given some recent economic trends and the fact that Azerbaijan depends inordinately upon European purchases of its energy while Europe's economy continues to stagnate. The other stabilizing factors are the self-confidence of the elite, the prevalence of strong informal institutions and a government based on "understandings" rather than formal institutional and legal accountability and rules among that elite. Furthermore, if the energy price and demand for Azeri hydrocarbons stays high the regime can buy time to buy off potential threats to itself from within. Third, there is widespread political culture which is hardly democratic in nature and confirms, according to some analysts with the well-known "congruence thesis." This thesis

basically states that the government tends to be stable and retain its legitimacy if its authority pattern is congruent with other authority (and value) patterns of the society. Thus the regime appears to be stable for now. Nevertheless there are many signs of ferment below the surface and we know from the Arab spring and earlier revolutions that a seeming stability can fall apart quickly without onlookers and even interested parties being aware of that trajectory.

As a political system Azerbaijan strongly resembles other post-Soviet and even Arab regimes in its basic structures:

- We find the overwhelming dominance and even many manifestation of the cult of personality of the ruler, President Ilham Aliyev
- Strong signs of an attempt to make the ruling family permanently dynastic and dynamic element of the regime that could last even after the current President
- The absence of guaranteed human rights and increased signs of repression. Indeed, there are more political prisoners in Azerbaijan than in Belarus hardly an enviable record. This could become dangerous especially as more signs of opposition make themselves felt, e.g. the rise of Salafi Islam preachers and congregations. But that is not the only potential source of Islamist opposition.
- Pervasive corruption to the degree that President, Ilham Aliyev was named by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project as corruption's person of the year for 2012. This is not the kind of publicity the regime seeks abroad.
- Sham elections resulting in the dominance of a presidential party in the Parliament that is quite limited in its scope to perform true legislative functions.
- Despite the economic growth signs of regional and other forms of widespread inequality in the distribution of economic wealth.
- A form of politics heavily weighted to familial connections or to strong patron-client ties making the entire system a vast patronage network
- An anti-liberal and anti-democratic political culture buttressed by repression, and manifested in the prevalence of "understandings" or informal institutions and ties over formal-legal rule.
- A low-trust society and a weak, disorganized civil society and divided opposition
- Excessive dominance in the economy of hydrocarbons leading to the well-known resource curse that features prominently in energy-dominated economies
- Signs of the oppression or repression of ethnic or religious minorities leading to ever more recurrent protests
- Ongoing efforts by the state to formulate and disseminate a state nationalist ideology to create a legitimacy narrative and an image of a united state. In Azerbaijan's case this effort is buttressed by the threats connected with the unresolved conflict with Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh
- And like all these other states that it resembles we find the absence of a discernible legal formula for succession to the president and transition to a new ruler. This is an Achilles heel of all such regimes and the prospect of a succession crisis interacting with other crises generated by authoritarian misrule could lead to a partial or even more complete disintegration of the system as we have seen in the Arab world.

As a result apart from the pressure of the unresolved conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, both Moscow and Tehran have sought to undermine Azerbaijan and incite unrest, and in Iran's case violence. Both Russia and Iran have sought to exploit fissures arising out of the Azeri government's domestic policies. For example, efforts at modernization and reform,

including policies that extend the traditional Azeri approach to Islamic issues that has been tolerant of religious minorities and not committed to any of the various existing brands of Islamism currently on view, have triggered substantial opposition from more traditionally religious elements of the population. Examples are the government's effort to ban the Hijab, women's facial covering. Iran, playing the Islamist card for all that it is worth, has quickly moved to incite and organize this community through agitation and propaganda against the Aliyev government. Thus we frequently find Iranian media denouncing Azerbaijan as an insufficiently Islamic or even anti-Islamic state. Azeri officials recount that on a daily basis Iran's media attacks Azerbaijan as following "anti-Islamic policies." Iran also has its own security concerns relating to the security of its own territory that possesses a large Azeri minority in the Northwest and also sees Baku's tolerant brand of Islam and pro-Western policies as a threat so it has real motives for exploiting this opportunity. Even though its Azeri minority has been loyal, Iran clearly does not trust it especially as in 1920-21 and 1945-46 efforts were made to launch separatist movements from what was then Soviet Azerbaijan.

In particular Iran is extremely anxious that Azerbaijan might allow itself to serve as a base for either the US or Israel's military forces that would then be used to threaten and target Iran due to its nuclearization program. Iranian media is particularly outraged by Azerbaijan's closeness to Israel seeing it as an act of betrayal of Islam. Media reports of such military activity, even though Azerbaijan regularly denies them and reiterates that it will not let its territory be used to attack Iran, trigger Iranian anxiety and anger. Indeed, on many occasions Iran has let it be known that it will hit back at Azerbaijan if any such strike occurs. Apart from the Iranian danger to Azerbaijan, these threats also furnish Moscow with a pretext for its huge, ongoing, military buildup in the Caucasus that could on its own part be used to strike at Azerbaijan. Given the sizable Iranian military capability in the Caspian Sea and its arsenal of missiles and of pro-Iranian terrorist groups at its disposal, these can hardly be considered empty threats.

Iran's anxiety to deter any US or Israeli "forward presence" in Azerbaijan has led its officials to make public (and presumably private) threats to attack Azerbaijan in retaliation for a US/Israeli attack on Iran. But beyond incitement Iran has also moved to more violent and clandestine activities. In early 2012 Azerbaijan arrested 22 people, including some Lebanese operatives of Hezbollah for a plot to assassinate Israeli and US diplomats and Jewish children in Azerbaijan. It also arrested Azeri religious extremists and found propaganda material and weapons in their homes. This episode perfectly exemplifies the linkage between internal and external challenges to Azeri security, especially as Azerbaijan also caught the Iranian agent who was leading the incitement against the regime, with weapons and Iranian literature. And in May Azerbaijan exposed a terrorist plan to kill foreigners at the Eurovision contest. In December 2012 there were new reports of a fresh plot even as Iran and Azerbaijan were discussing how to improve relations between them. Thus Iran has incited Azeri unrest and three separate terror plots against Azerbaijan's government, Israel's ambassador there, and Azeri Jews were uncovered in 2012.

Clearly Iran has been waging a low-level but unremitting and long-running campaign of subversion, terrorism, and threats against Azerbaijan, fearing that it may be used as a base by Israel or the US. And on many occasions Azerbaijan has received Iranian threats that it would be attacked if it granted the US or Israel a base there. Thus, Elhan Shahinoglu, head of the Atlas Center for Political Research said at a round table in Baku that, "Tehran does not limit itself with anti-Azerbaijan propaganda and enhances military presence near Azerbaijan's border. Presently

they are holding military trainings there, drug traffic from Iran's territory to Azerbaijan would not cease,"

More generally, Richard Giragosian, director of the Yerevan-based Regional Studies Centre (RSC) says that Iran looks at the South Caucasus as a region where it can procure "critical elements" for its nuclear effort that the sanctions have restricted: "Many [Iranian] Revolutionary Guard units have pursued over the past several years setting up joint ventures with foreign partners — front companies — designed to pursue technical spare parts for military use and nuclear centrifuge development." Front companies of this type were closed in recent years in Dubai and Kuala Lumpur. "There is new concern that Armenia, Georgia, and other countries may become attractive for such a pursuit.

Moscow is not far behind. From time to time reports surface of its attempts to incite unrest among Muslim minorities in Azerbaijan, namely the Avar and Lezgin peoples. Elsewhere in the Caucasus its record is still worse. President Putin admitted in August 2012 that the war in Georgia was a premeditated one dating back to 2006 and that it explicitly included the use of separatists in the plan to create terrorist-like provocations that ultimately led to war. After that war Russia unleashed an intelligence, bombing, and terror campaign in Georgia from 2009-12 to destabilize the Georgian government. Although that campaign failed it does show that Russia is fully ready to employ its assets in such ways to advance its interests. Likewise, Moscow has sold many weapons to Iran and Syria that then "migrate" to Hamas and Hezbollah and many of the weapons it has sold to Venezuela went straight to the FARC in Colombia, so Moscow's hands are hardly clean when it comes to supporting terrorists. Bearing all this in mind, it is clear that if a major crisis were to strike at Azerbaijan Russia and/or Iran might well attempt to use the subversive instruments at their disposal to exploit that crisis and those instruments could include support for terrorism. Therefore and in that context, it is very ironic that Russia ironically found itself now to be on the receiving end of terrorism in the North Caucasus.

The North Caucasus

In the North Caucasus we see another example of the harvesting of the results of Russian illegitimate governance. This region, the poorest in Russia, is also arguably the most misgoverned area of the country. Indeed, recent press reports suggest that President Putin is about to replace most if not all of the regional governors. Meanwhile extrajudicial arrests and killings by government forces are on the rise in Ingushetia and probably that is not an unusual trend throughout the region as earlier evidence suggests. At the same time we have seen innumerable examples of corruption on a grand and petty scale throughout the region, most recently in regard to the Sochi Winter Olympics of 2014.

The misrule that lies at the root of this terrorist insurgency is therefore part of the essence of the system of power in Russia and reflects the overall degeneration of the Putin system that we see in so many other areas of Russian political life and state policies. For example, the overall system is characterized by an authoritarianism that is epic in its corruption (\$almost \$50 billion is reported to have left the country through corruption in 2012 according to state officials) and where the instruments of force are under no legal accountability, except to higher command levels. In other words none of them are bound by law. Not surprisingly the North Caucasus resembles or even epitomizes a Hobbesian state of nature and unending war.

The consequences of this war for Russia are already serious, if not dire. Apart from the war's serious financial costs Moscow's visible failure to terminate it has led the leading American analyst of that war, Gordon Hahn, to call Russia a failing state. Ethnic Russians are visibly emigrating out of the war zone reversing the historic pattern of migration that

accompanied and abetted the creation of the Russian empire, thus continuing trends seen a generation earlier in regard to Central Asia. Public disaffection has taken the form of riots in Moscow against the Caucasus' overall financial burden and some have even raised the possibility of simply letting the North Caucasus go, a recommendation that is still, however, unthinkable to most elites.

Paradoxically, the insurgency in the North Caucasus directly stems from the strategy that was successfully employed to pacify Chechnya in 1999-2007 and to establish the Putin system with its infamous power vertical throughout Russia. The causes for this failure lie in the motives that drove Moscow's successful counterinsurgency campaign in Chechnya. That campaign's ultimate goal was not just the salvation of the state but rather its total reconstruction on the basis of an ever more centralized autocratic and authoritarian regime run from Moscow and increasingly driven by the personal acquisitiveness and greed of its ranking officials to the point where today corruption is the system and brutality, misrule, and harsh, violent repression is the norm. The two principal causes of the ensuing resurgence of violence in an already troubled environment are thus the destruction of local mechanisms of local self-governance in favor of corrupt, self-seeking toadies of Moscow, and the brutal anti-Islamic policies of Russian leaders that aggravated tensions in an area adjoining an insurgency and with difficult economic conditions.

That these trends were directly responsible for the upsurge of violence was already clear by 2006 if not earlier. Gordon Hahn observed then that Putin's policies to create "a power vertical" and dismantle the residual traces of genuine federalism established by Boris Yeltsin in order to create what amounts to a centralized unitary state lay at the heart of the causes for this insurgency. These measures included the following steps:

- The creation of new, extra-constitutional districts as a means to facilitate federal interference in regional politics;
- New legal requirements rendering federal law supreme in all spheres of life that it addresses;
- A "federal intervention" mechanism allowing the president (with court approval) to remove a regional governor or republic president and call elections to a regional parliament should they refuse to follow court findings in cases of conflict between federal and regional law;
- The termination of power-sharing treaties between the federal government and individual Russian regions, effectively ending regional autonomy;
- Reorganization of the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, into a legislative body appointed by regional officials, half of whom are appointed by the Russian president;
- the re-centralization of budget revenues; and
- Presidential appointment, rather than popular election, of regional governors and republic presidents (and possibly even city mayors and district heads).

Not surprisingly, these steps galvanized greater nationalism in several Muslim republics and the only available vocabulary of dissent was Islamic radicalism. So the insurgency has evolved from being originally an ethno-nationalist one to a religious one with ethno-national elements and apparently led by the Caucasus Emirate (CE). The CE openly proclaims its ties to Al-Qaida and similar groups and espouses a Salafist theology and politics of radicalism that epitomizes the term Islamic radicalism. Absent democratic federalism, Russia's complex ethno-geography and administrative structure are likely to produce outliers like the CE. And in Russia's Muslim republics, those outliers tend to be Muslim ethnic groups that then create a pool

of potential allies and recruits for radical Islamists. In Dagestan, Putin's harmonizing of regional and federal laws—and his (re)interpretation of the Russian Constitution—triggered the dismantling of Dagestan's political system, that had previously preserved inter-ethnic harmony among Dagestan's many small ethnic groups through pluralistic representation in the executive and legislative branches. As a result, by 2003, Dagestan's two largest Muslim ethnic groups, Avars and Dargins, were on the brink of a major inter-ethnic conflict as a result of disputes over power-sharing within the region's ruling State Council.

Simultaneously the newly empowered *Silovye Struktury*, (Power Structures), freed from any accountability either to local or central Parliamentary or even quasi-democratic officials and organizations, and having no standing other than their loyalty to Moscow, because Moscow had ousted any truly popular and locally authoritative figures from power, conducted a veritable orgy of corruption and brutal anti-Islamic repression. Again Hahn is instructive on this point. In the wake of the Beslan tragedy, a COIN or counterterrorist operation that went horribly badly in September, 2004, he observed that

Putin has called for—and the Russian Duma has prepared—new legislation granting the Kremlin vastly greater police and security powers in the name of “counterterrorism.” Given the inherently anti-democratic instincts of Russia's security services, this new leeway has inevitably reinforced heavy-handed law enforcement practices. In mid-September 2004, for example, Moscow police conducted a series of “counterterrorism” sweeps that resulted in the detention of more than 11,000 suspects. Authorities in the Moscow Oblast rounded up about 2,500 unregistered people during similar sweeps. Such tactics have been particularly aggressive in Russia's Muslim republics, exacerbating the alienation of Muslims from the Russian state. Meanwhile, Vladimir Ustinov, Russia's Prosecutor-General, has publicly proposed the detention of the families of hostage-takers, noting the policy could be broadened to families of all “terrorists,” however that might be defined. And, according to Ustinov, the round-up of family members of terrorists should be “accompanied by a demonstration to these terrorists of what might happen to (their families).” This proposal has met with widespread approval in the Russian Duma. Russian authorities have also undertaken several assimilationist policies, including bans on ethnic and religious parties and on non-Cyrillic alphabets as well as an attempt to establish mandatory courses on Russian Orthodox Christian culture in schools. In this political climate, grassroots targeting of Muslims has predictably expanded, with cases of assault and harassment rising exponentially.¹

The reaction emerged quickly. By 2005 the entire region was on the brink of a massive outbreak of violence on top of what had already begun as the impact of Putin's policies made itself felt after 2002-03. Since 2006 Moscow has sown what it has reaped. But there is little sign that it understands the consequences of its actions. And in the absence of such democratic control over the power ministries and their forces uncontrolled brutality becomes a normal feature of military life that is only further augmented by the stresses of counterinsurgency.

Finally coming to grips with the danger represented by these linked insurgencies, Moscow in 2010 proclaimed a 118 page socio-economic strategy for the region and appointed a new plenipotentiary, Aleksandr Kholopnin to supervise the new strategy thus taking a page right out of the Tsars' playbook. However, this new strategy was compromised from the start and continued to fail. Proclaiming this new strategy in July 2010, Putin announced that the North Caucasus should become part of the international North-South transit transport corridor bringing

together Europe, Russia, and Central Asia, through overland and port projects. Moreover, large-scale investment projects, including those for the Sochi Olympics, should take place to sop up unemployment and bring domestic and foreign capital into the region. He also called for large-scale educational and cultural projects to create opportunities and to integrate the area into Russia's "informational space." A major part of this strategy, linked to the Sochi Olympics was the bizarre notion of turning this area into a major tourist attraction, e.g. a ski tourist park. By 2013 the government was in full retreat from this bizarre notion as Moscow appears less willing to invest the financial resources it once promised into the North Caucasus and now seems intent on replacing failing officials with its own new men.

However, this strategy either in 2010 or today wholly omits any mention of the political deformities or the anti-Islamic policies that have stimulated support for Jihadist movements and that are probably the major causes of the insurgency. It is clear that Moscow erred greatly in proclaiming an end to the anti-terrorist war in Chechnya in 2009 but at least there it had an authority in power backed up by guns and money to provide a rationale for this decision. In the North Caucasus Moscow's strategy forfeited those advantages. The appointment of Kholopnin, a throwback to Tsarist governor-generals, failed to achieve anything because his functions were very limited and it merely represented a bureaucratic shuffling of the cards not a new policy. Through 2012 it is clear that Moscow was not prepared to confront the pathologies of its own system of governance. Moreover, the prognoses of the strategy for rapid economic growth in the region are not based on any genuine analysis, as is often the case in Russian formal official documents. Absent meaningful political reform neither the capital for investment nor the growth claimed here will occur, and there certainly will not be a reduction in unemployment to the degree that Moscow hopes for, or a loss of support for the rebels.

Indeed, Russian military men do not believe in the strategy. One general in Dagestan told Matthias Schepp of *Der Spiegel* that the war cannot be won quickly and will take years to suppress despite the tens of thousands of troops, police and intelligence personnel in the area. Moreover Islamists cannot be controlled by the normal means possessed by a state based on the rule of law -- which in any case is not Russia. Therefore it is naive to hope that socio-economic amelioration can force radical Islam into retreat, especially as that instrument of reform is weakening. In any case given the pervasive corruption at the regional as well as central levels, the state is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with implementing any kind of coherent socio-economic program of action to meet regional needs. Neither do the Ministries of Finance nor of Economic Development see this strategy as feasible, a fact that casts doubt on the Ministry of Regional Development's Strategy, of July 2011. They claimed there is not enough money to support the program and would not approve it. As a result total development programs for the North Caucasus amount to \$10 Billion rather than the \$50 Billion called for in the strategy. Typically the government has consistently underestimated the costs of its strategy also causing problems. Thus the cost went from Putin's 2010 estimate of \$14 Billion to \$45 Billion when Viktor Barsegin, Minister of Regional Development presented the final draft. This suggests that there was not only insufficient funding for the program but also that it is not a serious plan if it tripled in value in less than 8 months. Such problems also suggest that not untypically it was a political program bereft of serious analytical support that can only compromise its future implementation. And, as suggested above, we may be seeing a retreat fro that plan as of 2013.

To be sure, Presidents Medvedev and Putin attempted reforms in 2008-11. Following the Chechen case they moved to improve intelligence gathering and dissemination and better inter-operational coordination among the Siloviki with the creation of federal and regional anti-

terrorism committees for searching out and destroying CE Amirs and operatives. They removed from office the longest-serving and utterly corrupt regional bosses and republican presidents. And they launched another amnesty in 2006 that had some success. Russian security and local police forces have also become quite efficient at eliminating top CE leaders, with the exception of Umarov. Also during his second term, Putin undertook a massive reconstruction effort for Chechnya.

In Medvedev's 2009 presidential address he called the North Caucasus Russia's "most serious domestic political problem" and announced a federal program to invest 800 billion rubles in Ingushetia, which since summer 2007 had been the center of gravity of the jihad, with the largest number of CE attacks of any North Caucasus region. And then in 2010 he and Putin introduced this massive socio-economic strategy. Medvedev's new appointees to the North Caucasus each tried in his own way to improve local governance and in many cases campaign against corruption. But despite some improvements the attacks and insurgency continue with no sign of weakening through early 2012.

New military moves have not worked either. Kholopnin does not control the "Silovye Struktury" whose depredations appear to continue unchecked. Moscow has more than enough people in place to suppress the insurgency but its state structures which are uncoordinated, anti-Islamic, and either resort to indiscriminate violence, or are massively corrupt, patrimonial and anti-Islamic. As a result they undo any good caused by attempts at improved governance. In 2009 the FSB obtained overall control of the military operation and its figures report that 1 percent of the region's population, not a mere few hundred of insurgents, is active in the insurgency. Nonetheless it is the Ministry of Interior forces (the VVMVD) that bear the brunt of combat operations. It has received major increases in spending and improved weaponry as well as reforms to make it better armed, more mobile, and capable of fighting a counter-revolutionary war, but there is little to show for this activity as the insurgency continues without letup. Yet in late 2012 the regular army had to be called in, clearly a sign of the VVMVD's insufficiency. Finally Medvedev, in response to major demonstrations in Moscow in December, 2011 proposed to decentralize Russian administration and reintroduce elections for the post of republican presidents and governors, a policy he had rejected two years earlier specifically in regard to the North Caucasus, but which obviously was being considered again before the demonstrations in December. Putin has now reversed that policy returning to appointed governors who will undoubtedly incarnate all that is wrong with his system. Thus there is no sign that control over the armed forces that habitually abduct people for ransom and engage far too often in indiscriminate violence has stopped. Under the circumstances terrorism and insurgency will continue and we should make no mistake about it.

This insurgency, whatever its roots is now led by the Caucasus emirate a self-proclaimed Jihadi enterprise with links to al-Qaida and it will not go away anytime soon. As a result an intractable terrorist insurgency that is merely the latest installment in a two hundred plus year war has rebounded upon Russia and it has no viable answer other than to try and extinguish it by force, discredited neo-Tsarist political methods, or huge half-baked and easily corrupted economic programs. In other words, in the North Caucasus as elsewhere we see the interplay of illegitimate governance triggering the recourse to extremist Islamic rhetoric, political organization and violent military action. Indeed, in many ways the North Caucasus may serve as a paradigm of the phenomenon.

Concluding Remarks

For the US cooperation with Iran is out of the question and with Pakistan the process has been very unresponsive and unrewarding as is well known. Neither can we truly engage in major cooperation with Moscow either in Central Asia or the North Caucasus. In Central Asia, Moscow simultaneously wants us to stay in Afghanistan, give it some sort of control over what we plan to do there, and at the same time eject us from our military bases or from any opportunity to effectuate long-term presence of a commercial and political nature there. In the North Caucasus it might be possible, as in Afghanistan, to organize a relatively low level of intelligence sharing about imminent threats. But cooperation would not go much further. There would soon be an outcry in this country against the brutality with which Russia conducts its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies. More importantly Russia will not allow anything that smacks of even the slightest abridgement of its sovereignty. Russia views sovereignty as the right to act without any legal accountability whatsoever in world affairs just as its government is traditionally autocratic at home and will not be bound by any kind of legal or institutional limitation or accountability. Consequently any attempt to raise the issue of international involvement, not to mention oversight, of Russian conduct in the North Caucasus will be dismissed out of hand. Furthermore one of the hallmarks of Putin's rule has been the systematic indoctrination of the elite and population in the belief that the US is Russia's enemy and seeks to undermine its supposedly foreordained rise to greatness. Any initiative regarding the North Caucasus would, under the circumstance, be regarded with utmost suspicion even if it was considered seriously.

The fact is that to bring about good governance that would preclude the outbreak of terrorism in these and other places is probably beyond our capability and resources, not to mention our understanding which, as Iraq and Afghanistan show, falls woefully short of the mark. And the US military is no more equipped to undertake those responsibilities than is the rest of the government. While we can prod foreign governments to behave in more liberal and democratic fashion towards their own citizens and provide security cooperation to their forces engaged in counterterrorism, the scourge of terrorism in these "wrecks of empire" is unlikely to disappear anytime soon. Indeed, given the persistence of illegitimate governance in all these places it is possibly more likely to increase than to decrease in the foreseeable future.

¹., Gordon Hahn, "The Perils of Putin's Policies," *Journal of International Security Affairs*, X, No. 1, Spring, 2006, pp. 65-66

Mr. ROHRBACHER. All of your testimony will be made part of the record, and I appreciate how difficult it is to get it down to 5 minutes or 6 minutes. As you know, I used to be a speechwriter for President Reagan, and it was a lot more difficult to write these short speeches than it was to write the long ones, because you have so much to say that is so important. And I think I will be yielding my time for questions, and then I will close it out after the other members have had their say. But I will yield my time to Mr. Marino.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, Chairman. Gentlemen, thank you for being here. I would like to start with Mr. Barrick, and perhaps then Mr. Zenn you could answer the question, and then I have two other questions for the other gentlemen.

Mr. Barrick, you stated that what could be done, what could the countries in Central Asia do to assist along the lines that the U.S. has been. I was just at a conference in Belgium, a NATO conference, and quite a few of the countries keep looking to the U.S. to do more and more. Do you have an insight on what Central Asia has done and what more they could do, and how?

Mr. BARRICK. Yes, thank you for your question, Mr. Marino. As Ambassador Blake mentioned earlier, the support that Central Asia has provided for the Northern Distribution Network has been vital for the forces there. In my reference to what they could have done more, I think that relationships have also been very difficult in terms of when we look at Uzbekistan, when we look at the negotiations over basing, when we stress that our presence in the region is going to be temporary. And during the trip, Mr. Rohrabacher and Mr. Poe both mentioned the concerns that Uzbekistan has expressed about Afghanistan. But it is interesting that there are no Uzbekistan troop contingents supporting ISAF. And that is primarily what I have in mind, is that despite their concerns there was not an initiative for them to support militarily the effort of ISAF in Afghanistan. I think that is one question that they should answer in terms of how concerned are they, really. Secondly, they could have been more inviting in terms of allowing international forces to assist along their borders if they were concerned, and I don't think that that is something that they are interested in.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you.

Mr. Zenn, do you have anything to add to that, sir?

Mr. ZENN. I would simply add that I think what they could have done for us is to work better on their political transition in the upcoming years, political liberalization, because ultimately, at the end of the day the militant groups will seize on political instability, overly centralized governments, in order to try to attract people that are disaffected from the country into their cause.

Mr. MARINO. Right. Thank you. Dr. Blank, and then Dr. Coen, and we are probably going to get buzzed here to go vote shortly, so I have about, a little more than 2 minutes. What are Russia and China's interest, and are they seriously concerned with terrorist attacks against the U.S.?

Mr. BLANK. Both Russia and China individually seek to create a block of space in Central Asia integrated around their economies, each one supporting the geopolitical interests of Russia and China and preventing Islamic terrorism from gaining a foothold either in

Central Asia or Russia proper, in the Russian case, or in Central Asia and Xinjiang, in particular, in the Chinese case. Their concern is not so much with U.S. terrorism as with the fact that Afghanistan could become a base for this kind of terrorism, and they have supported our military effort there.

But as we described earlier, their support has been ambivalent and self-serving. Russia supports the NDN but, frankly, wants us out of Central Asia as soon as possible, and if we stay in Afghanistan they want us to coordinate all our moves there with Russia, essentially giving Russia a prior right of veto or regard over our activities. China has been less overt in what it wants from the U.S. in the future, but I would suspect that the Chinese do not want to see us in Central Asia and are concerned about Islamic terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but they are prepared to invest a reasonable amount of money in Afghanistan. And they are also, I think, counting on their ability to discipline Pakistan in order to prevent that from happening in their frontier as well as their own bilateral ties with the Central Asian and the Russians. So that is how I would answer that question.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you.

Dr. Cohen?

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Marino. I think there is one issue that nobody talks about and nobody publishes about, and that is that there is an institutional connection between the Government of China and the Government of Pakistan. And that connection cannot ignore or cannot be divorced of the ISI and the ISI's role, not just in support of the Taliban, but also in support of other terrorist radical Islamic organizations in the region. And looking at the battlefield past 2014, if I was an Uzbek or if I was a Kyrgyz, I would be really worried about how weakening the terrorist activities of the Pakistan supported groups are going to be at the same time when China is moving massively, economically, into Central Asia and outsourcing security to Russia.

The Chinese, for the next short term, short term being 30 years, don't care about security. They are happy to make a buck or a yuan in Central Asia, leaving the security to the worries of the Russians. But year after year, if you compare economic statistics, the Chinese beat the Russians in the economic battlefield in Central Asia. And what we see, yes, Stephen is right. There is an understanding between Moscow and Beijing that they don't want us in Central Asia, but at the same time, what you really see is evidence of increasing economic competition in natural resources, energy, and other areas between Moscow and Beijing.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you, sir. And I yield back.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Thank you very much. And now, Mr. Keating, and then I will do the follow-up. We have got 15 minutes before a vote, so it is working out just right.

Mr. KEATING. We don't want to bring you back or have you stay until after vote, so I will just try and be brief. The one thing I heard from all our panelists, both panelists, has been don't overlook the potential that is there. Let us learn from our other lessons in Central Asia. And that just isn't limited to our self-interest in using that region as we exit Afghanistan, it is far deeper than that. I think the fact that we had this hearing today will demonstrate

that we have a great concern in that regard and that is something that we don't want to see overlooked.

I think the other area of agreement, the only shades of difference I might see, one of timing. I noticed that, and it is my own thoughts as well, that the first thing in the area that we will, and I think Mr. Barrick mentioned this clearly, is the economic concerns might not lead us, the failure of developing those and having that area become vital economically might trump the need to deal with some of the military concerns and the terrorist concerns afterwards. But we have to be vigilant as that goes on. It can't just wait to see if that happens. That is where some of the other comments were.

With all that being said, we started to talk about China, Russia, the U.S. economically, and particularly how China uses Xinjiang to represent their interests as well. We have talked about the areas of disagreement and Russia not wanting us in. Can you find, any of you, can you find areas where there can be points of agreement in that respect? I haven't heard any of the potential for that from any interest. I will leave that as my only question, and you can all have the chance to answer it.

Mr. BARRICK. I will start on that. I think when we look at it, one of the organizations that has tried to address this area regionally, includes Russia, China, and most of Central Asia, is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and they are focused on economic development. The problem inside Central Asia, and this addresses another part of what Mr. Marino was asking, what can Central Asia do more is cooperate better with each other in terms of how they work both in security and in economics. And for us when we look at this region, this region is bounded Russia, China, Iran, and India, Pakistan, and when we look at economic integration being something that can provide stability and support in this region, it involves all four of those corners working together and cooperatively with us. And given even our own difficulties and the broader range of issues that we have with these countries, it shows how difficult and complex it is. But I still believe economics and trade is one place where they can find agreement.

Mr. BLANK. I respectfully disagree, because all the evidence shows that there is very little regional cooperation among Central Asian states. Uzbekistan, for example, is distinguished by the frequency of incidents of economic warfare, to use the right term, that it has conducted against its neighbors like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, too many incidents to name here in the time allowed. Russia and China are competing economically. They are not cooperating economically, they are competing for energy and for infrastructure investments.

China has its own Silk Road project, essentially, which is, to be honest, probably more far advanced than ours is and much further advanced in Central Asia than India's investments. India has just been a dime late in the day short, a dime short and a day late in Central Asia and continues to be so. As our investment goes down this is going to become all the more evident. So I am rather skeptical about the feasibility, even though I think it is desirable for such grand schemes to take place, because the facts on the ground work against it. Regional cooperation is limited in its extent. The

amounts of money that are required for investment in order to sustain this are astronomical, and they are certainly beyond our capability. And the Central Asian governments themselves do not cooperate. Even when they give aid to Afghanistan it is often on rather unfortunate terms that they do. So it is a much more clouded picture unfortunately.

Mr. KEATING. There is 20 seconds left, Dr. Cohen. Go ahead.

Mr. COHEN. If I may, on security. There is, on the basic level, the desire to prevent these governments from collapsing and being replaced by Islamist radicals, and that is the desire of Beijing, Moscow, and Washington. So that is a starter. On economic side, the corruption, expropriation of businesses, including of some Western interests in Uzbekistan and elsewhere, is such that there will be no Western investment to speak of until such time as the rule of law, good governance, and transparency are improved. It is not impossible. Kazakhstan did it to a certain extent. There is place to improve, even in Kazakhstan, but Kazakhstan in comparison got so much more, by orders of magnitude more foreign investment, especially in the energy sector. And there should be no reason why the Tajiks, the Kyrgyz, the Uzbeks will not get the same kind of investment.

China, on the other hand, is willing to barge in with massive investment for railroads, for highways, for mines, dealing with governments, *tete-a-tete*, directly with the governments. This puts us at the disadvantage. So not only are the Chinese eating Russia's lunch, they are eating our businesses' lunch.

Mr. KEATING. Yes, they are state capitalism. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I would like to thank the witnesses, just a few questions on my part. One note that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has in its language in its own charter that one of their major reasons it was created was to stop what they call splitism, meaning self determination of various peoples who don't want to live with the borders that were given to them by some dictatorship somewhere or some colonial power. Isn't this, when you think of that then, doesn't that put the Chinese, how you say, insertion into this area in a much more honest light?

Mr. BLANK. Well, the campaign against splitism unites all the members because each one of these states has minorities in them, and they are all extremely sensitive to the question of their territorial integrity. And this is, of course, one of the most fundamental questions in international relations globally. It is not just Central Asia, it is Africa, for example, and up until World War II it was Europe. And there are still areas of Europe in the '90s, like Yugoslavia, where we had this kind of problem. So they are all determined to preserve the state that they presently have within the borders that have been set up over time and are now recognized with them as international borders.

That does mean that the borders have not been changed. China has been able to basically compel some of the Central Asian states to cede territories to them by virtue of China's economic power over them in the last several years. Tajikistan is one example, Kyrgyzstan another, and those are the two weakest states.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, Chinese occupation of Tibet has something to do with getting people to acknowledge that they are under Chinese rule as well. I mean Tibet was a sovereign country at one time and—

Mr. BLANK. But Tibet is not part of Central Asia, so I did not mention it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Well, let me ask this about Turkey. There is a country we haven't mentioned yet, let us just do a real quick down the line. Is Turkey playing a positive role now? Has there been a shift? As we know, Turkey has become more Islamic in the last 10 years, has that been bad? Has that been something that visually we can see that it is taking Turkey away from the positive role that we believe it has played before? But you have only got 15 seconds for comment.

Mr. COHEN. The quick answer is yes. It has been perceived by the governments in Central Asia, first and foremost by Uzbekistan, as a negative. They kicked out the Gulen movement to a school system, and others are very nervous about the same Gulen movements school system. They do not want more Islamization at home. These are post Soviet par excellence secular regimes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So Turkey, in the last number of years as it has shifted toward a more Islamic statement, national statement that is actually identifiable in Central Asia and has had an impact in its relation there.

Mr. Zenn?

Mr. ZENN. Thanks. I would add that Turkey has very close linguistic, ethnic, cultural and religious links to Central Asia, so it is capable of having influence in the region. It is also capable of being a bridge for us to incorporate Central Asian countries into Western institutions since Turkey is incorporated into Western institutions. At the same time it has played a positive role with many educational institutions.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We know those things, but we also know that Turkey has been going toward a more Islamic direction.

Mr. ZENN. The question is, in the future if Turkey continues to move in a more Islamic direction then this could relate to more Islamist schools in Central Asia as well, so that would be a cause of concern.

Mr. COHEN. Prime Minister Erdogan just last month announced that he would like to see Turkey joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. And I had an article in the National Interest about that basically criticizing the Prime Minister. With all due respect, if he wants to be in NATO and the European Union, he is in NATO, if he wants to be in the European Union, you cannot dance on two weddings.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Barrick?

Mr. BARRICK. And I would say in response to that that part of Turkey's interest in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization may have been the lack of development in terms of membership in the EU. Turkey historically wanted to have a greater role in Central Asia when it became independent of the Soviet Union, but I think in their initial approaches in trying to be a big brother and to capitalize on the connections that Mr. Zenn emphasized, they didn't play it right. And they stepped on toes and they did not develop

those relationships very well. In 2005, in Kyrgyzstan, it was Turkish businesses that were looted and damaged in some of the rioting. I think they are cautious about how quickly they want to get back into Central Asia. And just like our businessmen have concerns about the environment, so do the Turkish businessmen.

Mr. BLANK. That is true, but nonetheless, one can discern a rising tide of Turkish investment in Central Asia as Turkey's economy grows. The question of whether or not they really want to be members of the SCO is open, but they have certainly upgraded their profile, moving to become a dialogue partner, if not an observer, of the SCO in the last few years. So I would say the jury is still out to what extent Turkey can play a role in Central Asia, and if it continues to resume the movement toward democracy that we did see some time in the last decade, it could provide a model of a state that is at once Islamic but yet democratic that would be encouraging, I think, to many of us. But as I said, this all remains to be seen. I think we are at a very early stage here.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I agree with that. If we see this balance maintained so that you have more—people forget that Turkey did have a dictatorship, a military dictatorship basically for decades, and now as it is becoming more democratic and the government does reflect the Islamic nature of its people, as long as that is done in a balanced way and that they recognize that radical Islam is an enemy of real democracy because it is an enemy of human rights, we will see how that all plays out with Turkey. I think that will be evident as we move forward and we see what groups they try to ally themselves with in terms of Central Asia, et cetera.

Again, one just last note and then I am going to let Judge Poe close off the hearing with his comments and questions, whatever he has. He will have the last 5 minutes. Let me just note that I think it is vital that we make sure that, number one, we stick by our friends. That is why I am pushing Dr. Afridi. It is so important for us not to let someone who is such a hero who helped bring to justice this mass murderer of Americans, Osama bin Laden, it is so important for us not to let him, not to abandon people who side with us, so that people won't be afraid to step up and be our friend and side with the democratic forces, knowing they are not going to be left hanging out on a limb.

With that said, I see two major forces that we need to bring to play, and if nowhere else their influence should be brought to play in Central Asia in order to prevent the spread of radical Islam. Because A, a massive increase in the number of countries that are under the influence of radical Islamic dictatorships or Islamofascism as it has been called, would be catastrophic especially if those countries were the core of Central Asia. And the two countries we need to work with us in that endeavor, not only the local countries and local people involved, but Russia and India. Those are two forces that can play an important role, and I think it is incumbent upon us to reach out and try to be as cooperative with those two powers as we possibly can.

And with that I will leave that sentiment on the table, and I will let Judge Poe close out the hearing with his questions or his final statement.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks again for being here. I think the world is having to deal with what was sown many years ago when different entities, the Europeans primarily, got out a red pen and started redrawing the world's map and making new countries and moving traditional boundaries in Asia and Central Asia. All of a sudden that conflict is having to be dealt with, with the different countries in Central Asia as well. That is just my opinion.

I want to go back to something that was talked about in the first panel. Mr. Marino brought it up, and I would like for you gentlemen to be a little more specific, if you can, on the issue of money. It is all about money. Everything is, it seems. But the terrorist groups, they get their money from somebody or someplace. Not just al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but IMU and the IJU, they need money to operate. Where do they get their money? Who gives it to them? Does any of that money come from actual governments, and what can we do to prevent the money train? So it is about money. You can weigh in on it. That is my only question. We can start with Dr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. Judge Poe, I think this is an excellent question, and our Treasury is doing a pretty good job tracking the money flows for sort of traditional al-Qaeda because that is where the priority was. Central Asia was not necessarily always on the radar screen. But as someone who does not have access to classified information but who talks to people from the region regularly and visits the region, I would say there are two sources. One is the donations, the so-called Zakat, the traditional Islamic charity that comes from the Gulf, including Saudi and the Gulf states, Qatar, Kuwait, et cetera. The second source is drug trafficking, both in terms of growing, in terms of refining, and even more so in terms of trafficking the Afghan poppy products, heroin, opium, et cetera.

So you have for the U.S. Government both the Treasury track to intercept the flow of money from the Gulf, the State Department track to put more pressure on our friends, the governments in the Gulf, to prevent private foundations and individuals from financing the jihad, as they call it, in Central Asia, but also for our DEA and other law enforcement agencies to train and cooperate with the governments in the region. The problem is, some of those governments, like Tajikistan, are known to be very corrupt, and individuals in those governments are known to be deeply involved in drug trafficking. So we have a problem right there.

Russia was loudly protesting our drug policy in Afghanistan, calling for crop eradication, for spraying the crops and destroying the crops. That would probably increase the ranks of the Taliban by 1 million or a couple of million peasants whose crops were destroyed. So our policy in Afghanistan was to destroy the labs and try to intercept the traffickers. It was not efficient enough and the Russians walked away from a cooperation agreement of combating drugs. Unfortunately I must say as a lifelong Russia watcher, the Russian drug enforcement is not without a blemish. It has some corruption, some serious corruption in it as well.

Mr. POE. No kidding.

Mr. COHEN. So our options are limited, but we need to work both on the drug track and on the Gulf track, and to the extent we can

watch, the Pakistani track and other countries outside of the Middle East who may also provide funds, including by the way some of the Muslim diasporas in places like London, or in places like Dearborn, who may provide some donations for this so-called jihad in—

Mr. POE. Let me reclaim my time, because there are three other folks I would like to get to weigh in on this. Mr. Zenn, specifically Pakistan helping supply money to the Taliban, what do you think?

Mr. ZENN. Yes, I think Pakistan would help supply money to the Taliban. There is close relations between the Pakistan and Taliban, that is historical. And then the next bridge is that the Taliban has very close ties to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which is the largest Central Asian militant group. In fact, the IMU is like a vassal to the Taliban. They operate together. They are allies. So any money that gets to the Pakistani Taliban will ultimately get to the IMU as well and a bunch of other Central Asian militant groups that can help the Taliban pursue its objectives in Central Asia. And then there is a large stream of networks between Salafists in Central Asian home countries or even in Russia or even in the Gulf that send money to Salafist-jihadists in Afghanistan itself.

Mr. POE. So it is not unreasonable that the United States gives a lot of money to Pakistan, a lot, billions, military and supposedly, just foreign aid. That some of that money goes to the government and they in turn give that to the Talibanis, as I call them, and that ends up going into their coffers fighting against Americans in Afghanistan. Is that something that just might be going on?

Mr. ZENN. I don't think it is unreasonable to say that money from the Pakistan Government in some way gets to some members of the Taliban who then pursue Pakistan's objectives in Afghanistan, which involve the Taliban and Afghanistan. And then the Taliban in Afghanistan has its objectives against the Americans.

Mr. POE. Just a couple quick answers for the last two. Go ahead, gentlemen.

Mr. Barrick?

Mr. BARRICK. Yes, I concur with Dr. Cohen's description of how the militant groups get their funding. I would also like to address Mr. Rohrabacher's comment on friends. And I think we should treat our friends carefully. And what we need to be careful of is that we have relationships with China, Russia, and India, and we should be wary that they don't place us in a situation where they seek to trade their interests in the region for ours, because we have more important interests elsewhere, and that we then disappoint friends that are relying on us.

Mr. POE. Dr. Blank, last comment? Let us hear him.

Mr. BLANK. To address your question, Congressman Poe, I agree with my colleagues about the sources of support for the Taliban, and for that matter for the North Caucasus, which is the really most violent of all these terrorist movements inside the former Soviet Union right now, the most active. Every day there are incidents in the North Caucasus and in the heartland of Russia. Finally, there is Iran. Now we know that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. We know that they are sponsoring insurgent and terrorist groups in Azerbaijan. We also know that they were sponsoring groups in Afghanistan. So those groups are getting support

including funding from Iran and probably the IRGC or the MOIS, which is Iranian intelligence. So again it depends on which terrorist group you are talking about. And the sources of funding are generally very secret, deeply buried, multiple, and very often tied up with criminal networks of one sort or another.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. And I think that, Your Honor, would you like to have a 1-minute summary?

Mr. POE. No, thanks, Mr. Chairman. It has all been said. Thank you very much. Everybody has said it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right. Well, I thank the witnesses and thank all of you, thank the staff for putting together this hearing today, and with that said, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:23 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X



MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats
Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Chairman

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
Ted Poe (R-TX), Chairman

February 26, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held jointly by the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available on the Committee website at www.foreignaffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Wednesday, February 27, 2013

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia

WITNESSES: Panel I
The Honorable Robert O. Blake
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Justin Sibrell
Deputy Coordinator for Regional Affairs and Programs
Bureau of Counterterrorism
U.S. Department of State.

Panel II
Ariel Cohen, Ph.D.
Senior Research Fellow for Russian and Eurasian Studies
The Heritage Foundation

Mr. Jacob Zenn
Research Analyst
The Jamestown Foundation

Mr. Nathan Barriek
Strategic Consultant
CLI Solutions

Dr. Stephen J. Blank
Research Professor of National Security Affairs
U.S. Army War College

By Direction of the Chairman

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade* HEARINGDay Wednesday Date 2/27/2013 Room 2172Starting Time 1:03 pm Ending Time 3:23 pmRecesses n/a (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Dana Rohrabacher and Chairman Ted Poe.

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session Executive (closed) Session Televised Electronically Recorded (taped) Stenographic Record

TITLE OF HEARING:

Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*Reps. Rohrabacher, Poe, Keating, Sherman, Marino, Cook, Duncan (SC), Lowenthal, Cotton, Kennedy, Perry, Castro, and Yoho.*NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes No
*(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)*STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)**Prepared Statement of The Honorable Robert O. Blake**Prepared Statement of Mr. Justin Sibereil**Prepared Statement of Ariel Cohen, Ph.D**Prepared Statement of Mr. Jacob Zenn**Prepared Statement of Mr. Nathan Barrick**Prepared Statement of Dr. Stephen J. Blank*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 3:23 pm
Subcommittee Staff Director