

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2004

The Honorable Colin L. Powell
Secretary
The Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As Members of Congress, we write you today to express our concerns over the recent developments with regards to Russia's democratic direction and progress. The apparently selective use of the rule of law, along with a new predominance of Russian military-intelligence officers or "siloviki" in key positions of power, have hampered the ability for Russia to continue to prosper under a free democracy.

It had been our initial impression that President Putin—shortly after taking office—was firmly committed to reforming the country by bringing in foreign investment, creating rule of law, and tackling tough economic reforms. Regrettably, within the past year, there have been some signs that Russia has become stagnant in its quest towards full democracy and a free economic system. In addition, Russia has the potential of sliding backwards into the power struggles that plagued the developing nation throughout the 1990s.

As you may already know, a recent study by the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Sociology stated that as many as 2,000 of the Russian elite—including private business owners and high-ranking government officials—are former members of the security forces. Three regional governors are former senior officers of the KGB, as are the heads of the St. Petersburg Telephone Network, Domodedovo Airlines, Petersburg Fuel Company, the Slavneft Oil Company, as well as Mr. Sergei Ivanov, the Russian Defense Minister. As graduates of the old Soviet political establishment, these men do not respect the equal application for the rule of law, civil rights, or a free and independent media.

In 1998—when Mr. Sergey Kirienko was Prime Minister—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released \$4.8 Billion in aid to Russia. As we have been made aware, this funding allegedly never reached its intended beneficiaries. In addition, there have been accusations that President Putin had failed to cooperate with the Russian government's investigation. As we have been told, President Putin officially put a "stay" on case No. 18/221050-98—the investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation into the "improper use" of the IMF's \$4.8 Billion. If such a "stay" exists, has it been lifted by President Putin? And, has the Office of the Prosecutor General had the chance to revisit the investigation without meeting any opposition from the involved parties? If the \$4.8 Billion is in fact still missing, has the United States played an active role in investigating the whereabouts of the funds? If so, what were the results of that investigation? Mr. Secretary, the apparent discrepancies in the application of the rule of law—such as this particular example—should be of the utmost concern to the Russian government, as well as of extreme importance to the United States.

Mr. Secretary, we respectfully encourage the State Department to work with President Putin to ensure a path towards democracy in which the rule of law is equally respected among all citizens. We must remember that Russia is a young democracy in which ideals like the rule of law and independent courts are still in their infancy. As a result, the United States must continue to pursue a strong working relationship with Russia, while at the same time we must view any effort by Russia to return to a command-economy or the re-imposition of Soviet-style political repression as damaging to the U.S.-Russian relationship. With the upcoming Russian elections rapidly approaching, it is our sincerest hope that President Vladimir Putin's Administration will move forward and strive towards continued democracy and a free enterprise system.

Sincerely,

