

Testimony for Hearing, "15 Years After Tiananmen: Is Democracy in China's Future?"

Congressional-Executive Commission on China

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By Randall Schriver

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Commission today on this, the 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Anniversaries are a good time to look back and reflect on what has happened in a relationship in the intervening years. And it is a good time to look forward as well, to examine where we are going and how we can get there in a way that best meets our national interest and enhances peace and prosperity in the region and the world.

The tragedy of Tiananmen 15 years ago still casts a long shadow in China today.

You see it in the continuing scrutiny of people gathered in groups of three or more by a very noticeable security presence in the Square.

You experience it in the continuing heartbreak of the mothers of Tiananmen victims who ask the government for an accounting of their children who have been missing since 1989 -- and get detained for their efforts.

You hear about it in conversations about the impact Tiananmen has had on the inability of Beijing to find creative ways to increase popular participation in national governance.

It remains an event, as former Ambassador to China Jim Lilley wrote in his recent book *China Hands*, quoting a Chinese professor, "when even the Heavens were saddened."

Fifteen years on, China needs to reexamine Tiananmen. This reconsideration is long overdue. When it does come, I believe it will usher in a period of ferment and serious discussion about whether China's government, a discussion that will be similar in tone and as far-reaching and significant as the verdict on Mao Zedong which ended the Cultural Revolution more than a quarter century ago.

So while China today is a vastly different, vastly more confident, vastly more influential, and vastly more prosperous nation than it was 15 years ago, Tiananmen -- as an epochal event in China's modern history and in the memory of those who lived through it -- continues to resonate. Tiananmen will not become "history" in the sense of becoming a part of the past until the present leadership deals -- with honesty and candor -- with the tragedy of 1989. Former Party Secretary and Premier Zhao Ziyang may have gone to Tiananmen Square, in his words, "too late" in May of 1989 to influence the ultimate course of events, but it is not too late for those in power today, some of whom were with Zhao on that fateful day, to take the steps necessary to come to terms with the past and begin to move forward to a better future for China.

For our part, we continue to engage the Chinese leadership and public on key issues that were implicitly part of the foundation of the popular protest in Tiananmen: the right of people to participate in government decisions that affect their lives, to have a say in who leads them, to live in a nation governed

by law and not men, to speak and write freely, to worship and believe in a manner of their choosing, and to be given a fair and impartial trial with legal representation.

Our commitment to engage China on these issues in the years since Tiananmen is well reflected in the State Department's May 17 report to Congress on "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004." As the President said in a speech the same day to the National Endowment for Democracy, there will come a day when "China's leaders will discover that freedom is indivisible -- that social and religious freedom is also essential to national greatness and national dignity. Eventually, men and women who are allowed to control their own wealth will insist on controlling their own lives and their own country."

My hope is that will translate into a China whose future greatness will be predicated on its commitment to extending and strengthening the rights of its people.

Let me briefly summarize what the Administration has done in the past year alone to encourage the advance of these rights:

-- U.S. officials -- in Washington, China, Geneva and elsewhere -- publicly and privately highlighted the need for improvements in human rights conditions, called for the release of prisoners of conscience, and, in recent days, protested detentions of those, like HIV/AIDS activist Hu Jia, who have sought to hold the Chinese authorities accountable for the treatment of those who live with this dread disease.

-- We have engaged in a wide-ranging bilateral Human Rights Dialogue with China, which yielded some promising commitments in 2002. Regrettably the Chinese failed to move forward with their promises, especially those relating to visits by the UN Special Rapporteurs for Torture and Religious Intolerance, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and we ended up introducing a resolution at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this year. We are hopeful that we can restart soon -- and see results from -- the kind of high-level dialogue that will move China toward reforms that will make a resolution in Geneva in 2005 unnecessary.

-- We have a Resident Legal Advisor in China who organizes events promoting the rule of law and who speaks regularly about fairness in criminal procedures and about the importance of training a new generation of judges and lawyers who will mete out justice impartially.

-- We are working in China with NGOs and Chinese entities to reform the judicial system, improve transparency in governance, protect worker and women's rights, promote best practices and combat corruption, and strengthen civil society.

Let me elaborate a bit more on these projects. In September, we sponsored a seminar attended by more than 150 Chinese judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys on problems of criminal defense. The U.S. Embassy also awards small grants to members of China's NGO movement in support of democratic values and in 2003, the U.S. funded 13 projects with diverse purposes, including teaching U.S. law at a Chinese university and supporting environmental and health care advocacy NGOs. This coming year, we will fund capacity building projects for NGOs in Shanghai, social security rights for the rural aged, labor rights protection for migrant workers and NGO-mediated public participation in environmental governance.

We are also promoting China's compliance with international labor standards. Through the Partnership to Eliminate Sweatshops Program, a State Department project designed specifically to address unacceptable working conditions in manufacturing facilities that produce for the U.S. market, we are funding the work

of four non-governmental organizations in China. These groups will develop programs to build local capacity to ensure compliance with labor standards, promote labor rights awareness in the Chinese business community, and develop advanced training materials which are suitable for use in individual factories.

These are wide-ranging strategies, programs and commitments and they grow out of our awareness, as the President said to the National Endowment for Democracy, that the calling of our country is to advance freedom, our duty is to support the allies of freedom and liberty everywhere, and our obligation is to help others create the kind of society that protects the rights of the individual.

As I said in my statement before the Commission on July 24 last year, we will continue to call for China to make the right choices and to understand clearly that issues affecting the dignity of men and women will not go away. As long as we continue to have concerns about human rights and religious freedom, and as long as China is unable or unwilling to address them, we will not realize the full flowering of the U.S.-China relationship.

I'd also like to say a few words about America's engagement with China in other areas apart from human rights and democracy, important as those matters are and how they define who we are as a people and the values we share.

Our relationship with a rapidly changing and dynamic China is, as the Secretary has said, too complex to contain in a single sound bite. But we are committed to building the kind of relationship that will promote a broad range of U.S. interests. The Administration has welcomed the emergence of a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China which rises up to meet the challenge of its global responsibilities, whether at the United Nations, in the World

Trade Organization, in meetings of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group or as a part of a non-proliferation group like the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

For the most part, on a wide variety of issues, including North Korea and counterterrorism, trade and non-proliferation, we have had the kind of discussion that advances a common agenda based on mutual interests. Rather than go over those matters again, I would be pleased to discuss them further in response to questions you might have.

However, a few comments about America's interest in and relationship with Taiwan and Hong Kong would be appropriate before I close.

First, Taiwan. The Administration welcomed the responsible and constructive tone struck by President Chen Shui-bian in his May 20 inaugural address. We hope that his message -- especially on Taiwan's willingness to engage across-the-board on cross-Strait issues, not excluding any possible formula for creating an environment based on "peaceful development and freedom of choice" -- will be greeted positively by the PRC and taken as a basis for dialogue, which can lead to the peaceful resolution of outstanding differences. I also note that despite some harsh rhetoric in China's May 17 statement on Taiwan -- particularly the harmful references to the potential for the use of force -- there may be some constructive elements on which the two sides can build.

As the President has said numerous times, we will continue to honor our obligations under the three U.S.-PRC communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act; there has been no change to our "one China" policy. It is also our intent, as Assistant Secretary James Kelly said at an April 27 hearing of the House International Relations Committee, to support and enhance the policy of seven Presidents to maintain

peace and stability in the Western Pacific while helping to ensure Taiwan's prosperity and security. But, again, in the final analysis, the Taiwan issue is for people on both sides of the Strait to resolve in a way acceptable to each, without the use of force and without seeking to impose unilateral changes in the status quo.

As for Hong Kong, we are supportive of the principle, as expressed many times by the Chinese themselves, that the people of Hong Kong should govern Hong Kong. The United States has been very clear: our longstanding policy is that Hong Kong should move toward greater democratization and universal suffrage. The Chinese also have reaffirmed this, most recently by Premier Wen Jiabao in his European sojourn last month. However, on April 26 this year, the Standing Committee of National People's Congress in Beijing stated that there would -- for the time being -- not be any changes in the electoral methods to select the Chief Executive in 2007 and the Legislative Council in 2008, a move that inhibits the pace of democratization.

Beijing and the Hong Kong Government should take steps to ensure sustained movement toward a government that truly represents the people of Hong Kong. Ultimately the pace and scope of political evolution in Hong Kong should be determined by the people of Hong Kong themselves. It is important that China understand our strong interest in the preservation of Hong Kong's current freedoms, as well as our interest in the continued democratization of Hong Kong as called for in the Basic Law. U.S.-China relations will suffer if the cause of freedom and democracy suffers in Hong Kong. None of us -- in Hong Kong, in Beijing, in Washington or elsewhere -- would benefit from such an outcome. We will be very clear, I assure you, of what we expect.

To get back to the theme of today's hearing, let me close my statement this morning with an observation that Secretary Powell made at the Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas, on November 5 last year. It remains true today.

“Only by allowing the Chinese people to think, speak, assemble and worship very, very freely, only then will China fully unleash the talents of its citizens and reach its full potential as a member of the international community.... For our part, America hopes to work with China to help the Chinese people achieve their dreams, their hopes, their aspirations for a better life for their children.”

By dealing with the aspirations of those who assembled in Tiananmen fifteen years ago, I am confident that China can begin to realize the potential the Secretary talked about. In the process, it can meet the highest hopes of Chinese -- and Americans -- for a better world.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your comments and questions.