

March 6, 2002: Commissioner Shea to Speak Before Helsinki Commission on Central Asia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent government agency advising the Administration and Congress, will participate in a briefing by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) on "U.S. Policy in Central Asia and Human Rights Concerns." On behalf of the Commission, Commissioner Nina Shea will address religious-freedom violations and U.S. policy in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan on the eve of Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov's visit to Washington, D.C. Background The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has issued a number of recommendations with regard to the United States' relationship with Uzbekistan. The campaign against terrorism affords the United States a unique opportunity to encourage much-needed improvement by Uzbekistan's government in its abysmal treatment of religious exercise. In so doing the United States demonstrates its commitment to its principles and values, including the very rights and freedoms the terrorists would destroy. (The recommendations are available on the Commission's Web site at www.uscirf.gov.) In view of the ongoing, egregious, and systematic violations of religious freedom in Turkmenistan, in 2000 and 2001 the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom called on the State Department to designate Turkmenistan a "country of particular concern," or CPC, pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA). However, the State Department so far has not made such a designation. What: Helsinki Commission Briefing - U.S. Policy in Central Asia and Human Rights Concerns When: Thursday, March 7, 2:00pm - 4:00pm Where: Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2325

Michael K. Young, Chair

- Felice D. Gaer Firuz Kazemzadeh Richard D. Land Bishop William Francis Murphy Leila Nadya Sadat Nina Shea The Hon. Charles R. Stith The Hon. Shirin Tahir-Kheli Steven T. McFarland, Executive Director