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## February 17, 2004: USCIRF: Press Conference on CPCs - FOREIGN MEDIA ONLY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MEDIA ADVISORY - FOREIGN MEDIA ONLY** USCIRF Chair Young Press Conference on CPCs WASHINGTON - U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Chair Michael K. Young will hold a press conference for foreign media on Wednesday, February 18, at the State Department's Foreign Press Center to discuss the Commission's recommendations to Secretary of State Colin Powell on countries of particular concern (CPCs). The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) requires that the Secretary of State identify those governments that engage in particularly severe violations of religious freedom, designate them as "countries of particular concern" (CPCs), and implement meaningful policy in response to such designations. The IRFA also requires the Secretary of State to take into account the Commission's recommendations. The Commission has recommended to Secretary Powell that he designate the following 11 countries as CPCs for the systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom that the governments are responsible for or have tolerated: Burma, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Eritrea, India\*, Iran, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam. The State Department has not yet named Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan or Vietnam. CPC designation carries an obligation that one or more of certain actions specified in Section 405 of the IRFA be taken, unless the President determines that pre-existing sanctions are adequate or otherwise waives the requirement. For every country named a CPC to date, the only official actions taken have been to invoke already existing sanctions rather than to take additional action to advance religious freedom pursuant to IRFA. "We strongly urge Secretary Powell to name those countries that have not yet been designated and to engage these governments in as many ways as possible in order to better promote religious freedom in these countries. We particularly encourage use of the policy tools outlined in International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA). Moreover, the Commission has made specific policy recommendations on China, India, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam, and we encourage him to give special attention to those recommendations," said USCIRF Chair Michael K. Young. WHEN: Wednesday, February 18, 1:00-1:45 p.m. WHERE: State Department Foreign Press Center National Press Club building 529 14th Street NW, Room 800 (8th floor)\*Commissioners Bansal, Gaer, and Young dissent from the Commission's recommendation that India be designated a country of particular concern (CPC). Their views with respect to India are reflected in a separate opinion. Commissioner Chaput also joins this separate opinion, and would place India on the Watch List rather than recommend that it be designated a CPC.

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