

**Statement by John D. Negroponte
Deputy Secretary of State
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs**

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Chairman Boxer, Senator Murkowski, members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here today to talk about the situation in Tibet.

A little over a month ago, what began as peaceful protests in Lhasa erupted into violence and the loss of lives and property spanning the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China. The United States welcomes a stable, peaceful and prosperous China, and we have a broad agenda with that country, which is a growing economic powerhouse, a nuclear P-5 member, and an increasingly important actor on the international scene. At the same time, we engage China in a way that is supportive of our political values — urging respect for human rights, religious freedom, and democracy. The United States recognizes Tibet as part of the People’s Republic of China, but we have very serious concerns about the recent events, human rights conditions, and limits on religious freedom there. The United States calls upon the PRC Government to exercise restraint in resolving the recent unrest and urges dialogue with the Dalai Lama, but it is up to China and the Tibetans to resolve their differences. In this testimony, I would like to touch on the recent events in Tibet, outline our response, and discuss next steps.

Recent Events and the Administration’s Response

To the best of our knowledge, peaceful protests began in Lhasa on March 10, led by several hundred monks from three monasteries. Reports that Chinese police mistreated and arrested some of the monks angered Tibetans in Lhasa. On March 14, interaction between the protesters and the authorities in Lhasa descended into violence, including attacks on ethnic Han and Hui Muslim residents and their property. This violence led to a security crackdown and widespread arrests by the Chinese authorities. Over the next several days, protests spread to many other Tibetan areas of China. Chinese authorities have confirmed that security forces responded to protests in some areas with deadly force. Accurate information about the number of people killed or injured in the protests, riots and subsequent crackdown and

on the number of people arrested has been difficult to ascertain. While the Chinese government has organized two tightly controlled trips for journalists and one for diplomats to Tibetan areas, it continues to restrict access to those areas, impose a virtual media blackout, and refuses access to the detainees. Last week, China's state-run media acknowledged the detention of approximately 4,000 individuals in Lhasa and in parts of Gansu Province. Reports of mistreatment of detainees are numerous.

We are deeply troubled by the reports of bloodshed, arrests and mistreatment of detainees, and share the concerns of Members of Congress and the American people over these disturbing events. The President and Secretary Rice have called for the Chinese government to exercise restraint and for all sides to refrain from violence. We urge all Tibetans to heed the Dalai Lama's call for non-violence as well. We have, at all levels of the Administration, urged China to engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama directly and through his representatives. At the same time, we urge China to take a close look at long-standing policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions because of their impact on Tibetan religion, culture, and livelihoods, to allow unfettered access to Tibet for diplomats and journalists, and to release protestors who expressed their views peacefully. We are also concerned about strident rhetorical attacks against the Dalai Lama.

Since the outbreak of protests in March, we have spoken out about Tibet frequently and at the highest levels. The President expressed his concern to President Hu during a March 26 phone call. Secretary Rice has called Foreign Minister Yang and has spoken with him and publicly about the situation numerous times. I have personally discussed the situation with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong and with the Dalai Lama's Special Envoy, Lodi Gyari (LOW-dee GARE-ee), who I understand will be testifying in a few moments. On Monday, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, met with the Dalai Lama in her capacity as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. On the other side of the Pacific, our Embassy in Beijing, led by Ambassador Randt, has repeatedly pressed U.S. concerns with high-level officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Secretary Paulson also raised our concerns during his most recent trip to China. While we have made heavy use of our bilateral channels, we have also joined the European Union and others in raising our concerns at a March 25 meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Other leading members of the international community have joined us in calling for restraint and dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

U.S. Support for Human Rights in Tibet

I'd like to underscore that our support for human rights in Tibet did not start just this year. Our efforts with the PRC have spanned the history of our relationship since we established diplomatic relations in 1979. As the Secretary recently said, we show our support for human rights in Tibet in what we do every day in our working-level interactions with China. The President's meetings with the Dalai Lama in both of his terms in office and his attendance at the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony honoring the Dalai Lama last fall are important demonstrations of support at the highest levels of the U.S. government. The efforts of our Office for the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, established over ten years ago, are another tangible example of our commitment to human rights and religious freedom for Tibetans.

The Tibetans have legitimate grievances, stemming from years of repression and Chinese policies that have adversely impacted Tibetan religion, culture and livelihoods. In the months preceding the protests, restrictions on religious freedom were further tightened, leading to increased frustration among the local Tibetan population. In order to be a great and respected power, China will have to make real efforts to guarantee to its own citizens the internationally recognized rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in China's own constitution and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During the Secretary's trip to Beijing in February, the Chinese agreed to resume our human rights dialogue. We hope to move quickly to resume the dialogue and use the opportunity to hold substantive discussions on the situation in Tibet at that meeting.

As the President said, there is no better person for Chinese authorities to talk to than the Dalai Lama since he is the undisputed spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He is also a man of peace. The Chinese government should seize the opportunity to talk to those Tibetans, represented by the Dalai Lama, who oppose violence and do not seek independence for Tibet. If Beijing does not engage with the Dalai Lama now, it will only serve to strengthen those who advocate extreme views. An increasingly influential China has the responsibility to protect and uphold the rights of and respect for minority groups like Tibetans. Stability in China is also in our interest.

We want to see a confident, strong China that protects the human rights of its citizens and acts responsibly around the world. Stability will not be possible unless Beijing addresses the grievances of the Tibetans and works together with them to preserve their culture, language and religious freedom.

Tibet and the Olympics

The Dalai Lama has said that he supports Beijing's hosting of the Olympic Games and does not support a boycott. President Bush has announced his intention to attend the Olympic Games in Beijing and has made clear that he believes that it is important to show the Chinese people that we welcome their entrance onto the international stage. As our Secretary said recently, these Olympics are not just a moment of pride for the Chinese government but also for 1.3 billion Chinese citizens. Calls for an Olympics boycott or sanctions could polarize attitudes on both sides.

While, for these reasons, the U.S. government wants to see a successful Olympics and does not support calls for an Olympics boycott, we recognize that some have a different view about a boycott. This position reflects real concerns, widely held in the United States and elsewhere, over China's human rights record. Let me assure you that this Administration will continue to take the opportunity before, during and after the Olympics to talk to the Chinese about Tibet and human rights. We continue to urge China to fulfill its Olympics bid commitments to increase access to information and expand freedom of the press, including in Tibetan areas, as well as take other steps to improve its record on human rights and religious freedom.

The Way Forward

Our policy toward China aims to shape the choices that Chinese leaders make about how to use their growing power. We use our bilateral discussions, as the President has noted, to make our concerns clear to Chinese officials and to encourage China to be a responsible actor at home and around the world. For the Chinese government and the Tibetan people of China, there is a way forward. Through outreach and genuine dialogue, China and the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the vast majority of Tibetans, can begin to bridge differences, explore the meaning of genuine autonomy and address longstanding grievances. As part of our China policy, I believe that the United States can play a constructive role in continuing to urge substantive, results-based dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama

to better the lives of Tibetans in China. We note that there have been six rounds of talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2002, with the last held in 2007. In the end, only the Chinese government and the Tibetans themselves can address and resolve their differences. We look to them to do so peacefully and in accord with international standards of religious freedom and human rights.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.