

**Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary Dr. Daniel B. Baer
For the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on
“Religious Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights in Asia: Status of
Implementation of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, Block Burmese JADE Act
and North Korean Human Rights Act”
June 2, 2011**

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for inviting me today. It’s my pleasure to be able to testify today on religious freedom, democracy and human rights as embodied in the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002. On behalf of Undersecretary of State Maria Otero, the Administration’s Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, I can tell you that the Department of State is aggressively implementing the provisions of the Act.

The Administration’s goals are twofold: to promote a substantive dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, and to help sustain Tibet’s unique religious, linguistic, and cultural heritages. The Administration at all levels – from the President, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary Otero, Assistant Secretaries Campbell and Posner, to myself – has urged the Chinese Government to engage in a dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama that will achieve results. We remind the Chinese government that the vast majority of Tibetans advocate non-violent solutions to Tibetan issues and genuine autonomy – not independence or sovereignty – in order to preserve Tibet’s unique culture, religion and its fragile environment. Regrettably, the Chinese government has not engaged in a substantive dialogue with the Tibetans since January 2010.

The U.S. government believes that the Dalai Lama can be a constructive partner for China as it deals with the challenge of overcoming continuing tensions in Tibetan areas. The Dalai Lama’s views are widely reflected within Tibetan society, and command the respect of the vast majority of Tibetans. His consistent advocacy of non-violence is an important factor in reaching an eventual lasting solution. China’s engagement with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to resolve problems facing Tibetans is in the interests of the Chinese government and the Tibetan people. We believe failure to address these problems could lead to greater tensions inside China and could be an impediment to China’s social and economic development.

Another critical avenue for implementing the Act is our support for non-governmental organizations that work in Tibet and assist Tibetan refugees in the region. Both the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International

Development (AID) support cultural and linguistic preservation, sustainable development and environmental preservation in Tibet and Tibetan majority areas, as well as Tibetan refugee communities in other countries, through numerous programs. In addition, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration continues its long-standing support for Tibetan refugees through ongoing support to non-governmental organizations as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In fiscal year 2010, \$3.5 million was provided to support reception services, education, healthcare, and water and sanitation for Tibetan refugees in South Asia, including new arrivals from China. Under Secretary Otero recently visited our programs in India and Nepal where we assist Tibetan refugees, and where we are actively seeking ways to strengthen Tibetan refugee settlements.

The U.S. Agency for International Development's India Mission expects to issue an award for a new \$2 million, two-year program to support Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan in July 2011. The new program will support the development of organic agriculture for selected Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan; and build a workforce among Tibetan youth remaining in the settlements. USAID anticipates the program will result in increased economic opportunities which will encourage youth to remain in the settlements, strengthen community ties, and preserve cultural and linguistic traditions.

We are extremely concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in China and in particular in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas. Recent regulations restricting Tibetan language education, strict controls over the practice of Tibetan Buddhism and the arrests of prominent non-political Tibetans reflect the difficult human rights situation there today.

Religious restrictions in Tibetan areas have dramatically worsened in recent years. Discriminatory religious policies exacerbated tensions between Han Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists and triggered the 2008 riots that claimed the lives of Han and Tibetan civilians and police officers. Chinese authorities control Tibet's monasteries, including the number of monks and nuns and interfere in the process of recognizing reincarnate lamas. Monks and nuns are forced to attend regular political "patriotic education" sessions which sometimes include forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama. . Reports state that as many as 300 monks were forcibly removed from Kirti again in April of this year, and paramilitary forces still have the monastery on lockdown. To date, we have no further information about the welfare and whereabouts of those monks that were removed.

The effects of China's Tibet policies are well-documented in the separate Tibet sections of the State Department's 2010 International Religious Freedom

Report and the 2010 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China, released by Secretary Clinton on April 8. Our reports state clearly that the Chinese government represses freedom of speech, religion, association and movement within Tibet and routinely commits serious human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings and detentions, arbitrary arrests and torture. Our reports also reference the forcible return of three Tibetans to China from Nepal in June 2010, the first confirmed case of forcible return of Tibetans from Nepal since 2003.

The Administration's engagement on human rights issues in Tibet is high-level and consistent. President Obama and Secretary Clinton have spoken on these points directly to Chinese officials many times, including to President Hu during his January 2011 visit to Washington. The President and Secretary Clinton met with the Dalai Lama in February 2010, and the Secretary raised Tibetan issues directly and at length during the 2010 and 2011 Strategic and Economic Dialogues with China. Undersecretary Otero has met with the Dalai Lama four times since October 2009, and with his special envoy, Lodi Gyari, nine times in the past twelve months. Other senior officials have engaged Mr. Gyari as well.

During the April 2011 Human Rights Dialogue in Beijing, Assistant Secretary Posner and I raised our concerns about China's counterproductive policies in Tibetan areas of China, reiterated our call for a resumption of dialogue, and raised specific cases. We were joined in that effort by then-Ambassador Huntsman, who visited the Tibetan Autonomous Region in September 2010. The U.S. Mission in China has made visiting Tibetan areas and engaging on human rights and religious freedom in Tibetan areas a top priority. While in Beijing in April, we met with United Front Work Department, which handles Tibet policy for the Chinese Government, and pressed the Chinese to set a date with Lodi Gyari for the next round of talks. We also met with Minister Wang Zuo'an [WONG ZHUO AHN] from the State Administration of Religious Affairs. Separately, we provided to Chinese authorities a comprehensive list of individuals from across China who have been arrested or are missing; that list included many Tibetans, including six cases that we specifically mentioned in our meetings.

Our goals – to promote a substantive dialogue between the Chinese Government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama, and to help sustain Tibet's unique religious, linguistic and cultural heritages – are designed to further the intent of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 and create a more stable and more prosperous Tibet where Chinese authorities recognize and foster internationally recognized human rights. In furtherance of our goals, we have, since 2005, made the establishment of a consulate in Lhasa a priority. We continue to press the Chinese government to answer our request, while we reiterate our long-standing interest in regular and comprehensive access to Tibetan areas for international

diplomats, journalists and non-governmental organizations. The State Department offers Tibetan language courses at our Foreign Service Institute and our staff at Consulate General Chengdu includes Tibetan speaking staff. In addition, we are working to translate our human rights and religious freedom reports into the Tibetan language. These measures reflect the Administration's continuing commitment to fully and effectively implement the Act, so that Tibet's unique culture and environment are preserved and allowed to prosper in the 21st century.