

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher knows now "where Uzbekistan is heading to"

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US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher spent several quite busy days in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Boucher met with President Islam Karimov, Foreign Minister Norov, and National Security Council Secretary Atayev. He visited Samarkand with its ancient monuments and talked to the student body and tutors of the Islamic University.



US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher. Photo by Ferghana.Ru

"Yes, I know better now where Uzbekistan is heading to," Boucher said at the press conference on June 2.

The US official said Washington was interested in cooperation with Uzbekistan for the sake of prevention of terrorism and trafficking and in the name of economic development and human rights promotion.

"We are here to retain the existing level of trust between the United States and Uzbekistan," Boucher said. "So far as I can tell, restoration of this level of trust is what we all aspire to."

Boucher then ritualistically condemned Taliban, said a few words on the state of affairs in Afghanistan, and proceeded to elaborate on the innermost ambitions of the Central Asian population.

"We all know that the overwhelming majority of the population of Central Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan wants wholly different living standards. They want to be able to give their children education, they want jobs, and they want a chance to participate in the government and see adequate governments in their respective countries," the visitor said.

Asked the traditional question on whether or not the human rights situation had been discussed, Boucher said that it had actually been the central item on the agenda. Again, he traditionally complemented Tashkent on progress in the sphere of human rights "in connection with Habeas Corpus" he said referring to the law adopted in 2005.

Asked if reestablishment of the US military base in Uzbekistan was possible, the US official said Karimov and he had discussed other matters including the use of the territory of Uzbekistan for non-military transit to Afghanistan.

Boucher said the Americans wanted to see the population of Uzbekistan free, safe, and prosperous. He did make at least one person free. Imprisoned over two years ago, human rights activist Mutabar Tajiyeva was released from jail in time for the US official's visit. Apparently in order to give Boucher something to tell the caring international community about.