

US congressman: Russia & US must cooperate

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MOSCOW (AP) - Russia and the United States must cooperate in tackling global threats despite their differences over Georgia and other issues, a key U.S. congressman said Tuesday.

Rep. Howard Berman, who chairs the House of Representatives' foreign affairs committee, said that the two nations are facing common threats such as nuclear proliferation and international terrorism.

He said Washington and Moscow must also cooperate on other global issues, such as energy security, climate change and the world food crisis.

"We will undoubtedly spend time discussing those areas where we have differences, and I don't intend to minimize them," Berman said after talks in Moscow with his Russian counterpart. "My hope is that we can spend even greater amount of time figuring out what we can do together to confront these grave threats."

Berman, a Democrat from California, met with Konstantin Kosachyev, a Kremlin-connected member of the State Duma who is a regular critic of the United States and NATO.

Berman noted the withdrawal of Russian troops last week from a buffer zone outside Georgia's breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia except for some disputed areas.

Moscow was obliged to pull its troops out of the buffer zones under a peace deal brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy following Russia's August war with Georgia.

Russia says it has fully met its obligations, but Georgian authorities have accused Russia of failing to meet its obligations, pointing to Russian troops that remain in two areas near South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia insists the areas are in fact part of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Russia also said it would keep nearly 4,000 troops in each of the separatist regions -- plans that the United States, the European Union and NATO say violate the cease-fire commitment to withdraw to prewar positions.

Russia has recognized both regions as independent nations -- a move that has drawn a strong condemnation from the West.