

Students

UCLA Law Students Hammer out Agreement in Uzbekistan

By Cody Cass

With the breakup of the Soviet Union ten years ago, the deadliest array of biological and chemical weapons in the world was left unguarded on a small island in the Aral Sea. Four hundred miles from Iran, 800 miles from Iraq, and 500 miles from Afghanistan lies what has been dubbed “the world’s largest anthrax burial ground.” With no troops, money, or plan for cleanup, the anthrax cache was free for the taking. In its quest to protect the world from this terrorist’s treasure trove, the Department of Defense enlisted the assistance of three UCLA Law students.

An October 22, 2001 agreement with Uzbekistan to clean up lethal anthrax deposits on Vozrozhdeniya Island bears the signature of Jonathan Steinsapir '02, and the fingerprints of classmates Emily Daughtry '03 and Erin Wilson '02.

The trio, working through UCLA’s externship program, served various roles in constructing the treaty. Erin worked to lay the groundwork in an umbrella cleanup agreement between the countries in spring 2001, Emily ironed out the deal’s details over the summer and fall, and Jonathan was flown to Uzbekistan to close the negotiations. Their story made headlines in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *UCLA Today*.



Jonathan Steinsapir '02 after a day of negotiation.

While their accomplishments are extraordinary, the responsibility entrusted to UCLA students is not unusual. Since the 1980’s, UCLA Law externs have reviewed legal agreements by the United States or its embassies through the Department of Defense Office of the General Counsel.

“The string of exceptional students we sent them in the past assured the department that these students could do the job,” explained UCLA Law Professor Richard Steinberg, who selected the trio.

“It’s a good example of the kind of contribution that law students at UCLA can make,” said Associate Deputy General Counsel for international affairs Jack Beard, who oversaw the externs from Washington. “Their contribution is all the more important and appreciated (in the wake of September 11).”

Jonathan agreed, declaring, “This is my way of serving my country.”

The group was chosen based on their strong interest and involvement in international politics. Emily, for example, worked at the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies in Monterey for six years before going to law school.

“They are a very talented group of law students,” said Pentagon Counsel Beard, “and they did an outstanding job.”