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Slave labor

The United States does not have conclusive evidence to prove items imported from the Soviet Union have been made in forced labor camps, a Senate panel was told yesterday. William Von Raab, the Customs commissioner who last year unsuccessfully tried to get enforcement of the ban on importation of slave labor-made items that has been on the books since the 1930s, said the CIA was "unable to obtain sufficient facts to make a solid case that any particular goods we receive from the Soviet Union is made with forced labor." Some 4 million people work in Soviet forced labor camps, according to testimony before the Senate Finance International Trade Subcommittee. It is believed that about 10,000 of those people are political prisoners. A Helsinki Commission report found that nearly \$140 million in imports in 1982 from the U.S.S.R. are believed to have been made in Soviet labor camps. The Washington Legal Foundation is representing more than 30 members of Congress in a lawsuit against the Reagan administration seeking enforcement of the slave-labor import ban.

— John Elvin

This column includes staff and wire service reports.