



## Remarks With American Chamber of Commerce Chairman Andrew Somers at a Russian-American Business Breakfast

Secretary Colin L. Powell  
Marriott Grand Hotel  
Moscow, Russia  
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**MR. SOMERS:** Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, now we are delighted that Secretary of State Powell is with us this morning. He requested this meeting. He would like to have a dialogue and I will confine my remarks in order to not speak more than the Secretary, who said he is going to confine his remarks in order to hear what you have to say. I will not go over his brilliant career, but I think I can speak with everyone here that it's been rare in public life that a man combines the sense of moderation and balance in the midst of extremity, and yet has a reputation for application of force when it's required. We all know his history and we are delighted that a man of his world stature has asked to see the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia and our Russian colleagues who are running very large Russian companies here. And, of course, I'd like to acknowledge Mr. Ambassador, I would like to thank you, for Ambassador Vershbow and his team, their tremendous support of business here. And I would like to thank you also for the time that your deputy, Richard Armitage, has given us when we've been to Washington with delegations with the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia.

With that, I would now like to turn the podium over to you, sir.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, thank you, Ambassador, Andy, Mr. Chairman. It is a great pleasure, too. I do appreciate all the accepting my invitation to have a dialogue this morning. And that is truly what I would like to have -- a dialogue. It would be easy for me to give you a speech or just take questions from you and provide answers, but this is your opportunity to tell me what message you want me to take back to the United States to share with the President, to share with my Cabinet colleagues.

I have had a very excellent trip so far. Yesterday, I spent several hours with President Putin and a number of hours, as well, with Foreign Minister Ivanov, as well as the Minister of Defense Ivanov. And in all of those meetings, we celebrated the strength of the U.S.-Russian relationship right now, three years into this administration. We have accomplished many things together: a new strategic framework, the Treaty of Moscow, expanded trade opportunities, working together on number of regional issues--whether it's the Six Party framework to deal with the North Korean nuclear problem or how we have worked together to deal with the challenges provided by our friends in Iran with their nuclear program. The way in which we work with the Russian leadership when we were trying to defuse the crisis in the subcontinent, when it looked like India and Pakistan might be going to conflict a year and a half or so ago. Worked pretty closely with the Foreign Ministry Ivanov at that time.

At all levels American and Russian officials are cooperating. You know of the close relationship that exists between the President and President Putin, and with myself and Mr. Ivanov, and Mr. Rumsfeld and Dr. Rice with Sergey Ivanov, and at all levels. But it is just not personal relationships that count, personalities come and go. What is really happening is that institutional relationships are being created.

And nowhere is this institutional relationship more important than the way in which we deal with business, trade and commercial issues, because ultimately the engine of any society, especially democratic society, is how one provides for the means for people to earn a living, for people to make a profit, for people to put in place their ingenuity, their initiative, their entrepreneurial spirit and create businesses and trade opportunities, for the purpose of making a profit, as all of you here are interested in doing. But more fundamentally than that, for the purpose of providing jobs for people, so the people will have faith in their democratic system, people will believe they can provide a better life for their children. So ultimately we are here to make a profit, but to provide for people so people can see that this is the correct direction in which to move.

So, I am very pleased with the state of the U.S.-Russian relations right now and especially pleased that things are improving in the sector of trade, but there are still problems, there are still challenges. President Putin and I, and Ministers Ivanov and I, spoke yesterday about some of the difficulties that are ahead because we are getting along so well, we are such good friends with all of our Russian colleagues, we can speak candidly and openly when we see areas that we think we should speak more about or where we would like to see improvement from our perspective and also to hear back from them whether they think we are giving them correct advice or not.

This is the basis of the friendship, to speak candidly with each other. It is the kind of friendship that exists between the United States and Russia. Another way in which that was manifested was Mr. Ivanov and I in Georgia, the day before yesterday for the inauguration of the President of Georgia, Mr. Saakashvili, and how in our conversations yesterday we agreed that Georgia should be a place where we would cooperate with each other and not compete with each other. Why? Because that would best serve the people of Georgia.

And this is the spirit in which we conduct our relations with the Russian Federation. There have been disappointments in the past. We had a major, major disagreement over Iraq last year. It was a disagreement that wasn't resolved between the two sides, but now we're moving forward. Now we know we that we have to come together to help the Iraqi people build a new society for themselves, build a democracy for themselves, and we spoke yesterday of many areas of cooperation where we can achieve that goal.

And, so I am very pleased to be with you this morning. I thank you, Andy, for giving me the opportunity to meet with this group, and I am delighted to hear from you or answer any questions to begin the discussion, but more importantly just to hear from you what you see in U.S.-Russian relations, what we can do with respect to improving the manner in which we support business efforts.

I am sure I will hear a word or two about visas and I want to take that message back.

(Laughter)

Well, here we go. But I can say to you, and while the press is still here, we have had to make some changes in our visa processes simply to make sure we knew who was coming into our homeland, to secure our homeland, and also to provide safety for travelers going back and forth, but I am trying to do it in a way that will make it clear to people around the world that the United States is still an open place. We want you to come, we want you to send students to the United States, we want to expand those kinds of programs, we want you to come and visit our cultural attractions, we want you to come and spend time in the United States, and especially to do business in the United States. And so, we are working hard with the Ambassador and with my consular affairs people back in the United States, as well with the Department of Homeland Security, to ease the visa process so that it is much easier to obtain a visa when you need one, and to come and enjoy business or culture or entertainment or educational opportunities and activities in the United States.

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