



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Announces Reduction in Nuclear Arsenal

Press Conference by President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin
The East Room

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PRESIDENT BUSH: It's a great honor for me to welcome President Vladimir Putin to the White House, and to welcome his wife as well. This is a new day in the long history of Russian-American relations, a day of progress and a day of hope.

The United States and Russia are in the midst of a transformation of a relationship that will yield peace and progress. We're transforming our relationship from one of hostility and suspicion to one based on cooperation and trust, that will enhance opportunities for peace and progress for our citizens and for people all around the world.

The challenge of terrorism makes our close cooperation on all issues even more urgent. Russia and America share the same threat and the same resolve. We will fight and defeat terrorist networks wherever they exist. Our highest priority is to keep terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Today, we agreed that Russian and American experts will work together to share information and expertise to counter the threat from bioterrorism. We agreed that it is urgent that we improve the physical protection and accounting of nuclear materials and prevent illicit nuclear trafficking.

And we will strengthen our efforts to cut off every possible source of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, materials and expertise. Today, we also agreed to work more closely to combat organized crime and drug-trafficking, a leading source of terrorist financing.

Both nations are committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, once hostilities there have ceased and the Taliban are no longer in control. We support the UN's efforts to fashion a post-Taliban government that is broadly based and multi-ethnic. The new government must export neither terror nor drugs, and it must respect fundamental human rights.

And Russia and the United States -- as Russia and the United States work more closely to meet new

21st century threats, we're also working hard to put the threats of the 20th century behind us once and for all. And we can report great progress.

The current levels of our nuclear forces do not reflect today's strategic realities. I have informed President Putin that the United States will reduce our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade, a level fully consistent with American security.

Russia and the United States have also had vast discussions about our defensive capabilities, the ability to defend ourselves as we head into the 21st century. We have different points of view about the ABM Treaty, and we will continue dialogue and discussions about the ABM Treaty, so that we may be able to develop a new strategic framework that enables both of us to meet the true threats of the 21st century as partners and friends, not as adversaries.

The spirit of partnership that now runs through our relationship is allowing the United States and Russia to form common approaches to important regional issues. In the Middle East, we agree that all parties must take practical actions to ease tensions so that peace talks can resume. We urge the parties to move without delay to implement the Tenet work plan and the Mitchell Report recommendations.

In Europe, we share a vision of a European Atlantic community whole, free and at peace; one that includes all of Europe's democracies, and where the independence and sovereignty of all nations are respected. Russia should be a part of this Europe.

We will work together with NATO and NATO members to build new avenues of cooperation and consultation between Russia and NATO. NATO members and Russia are increasingly allied against terrorism, regional instability, and other threats of our age. And NATO must reflect this alliance.

We're encouraged by President Putin's commitment to a political dialogue in Chechnya. Russia has also made important strides on immigration and the protection of religious and ethnic minorities, including Russia's Jewish community. On this issue, Russia is in a fundamentally different place than it was during the Soviet era. President Putin told me that these gains for freedom will be protected and expanded.

Our Foreign Ministers have sealed this understanding in an exchange of letters. Because of this progress, my administration will work with Congress to end the application of Jackson-Vanik Amendment to Russia.

Russia has set out to strengthen free market institutions and the rule of law. On this basis, our economic relationship is developing quickly, and we will look for further ways to expand it.

A strong, independent media is a vital part of a new Russia. We've agreed to launch a dialogue on media entrepreneurship, so that American and Russian media representatives can meet and make practical recommendations to both our governments, in order to advance our goal of free media, and free exchange of ideas.

Russia and the United States will continue to face complex and difficult issues. Yet, we've made great progress in a very short period of time. Today, because we are working together, both our countries and the world are more secure and safe.

I want to thank President Putin for the spirit of our meetings. Together, we're making history, as we make progress. Laura and I are looking forward to welcoming the Putins to our ranch in Crawford, Texas. I can't wait to show you my state, and where I live. In the meantime, I hope you have a fine stay here in Washington, D.C. And it's my honor to welcome you to the White House, sir, and welcome you to the podium.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: Ladies and gentlemen, I don't know whether I would have an opportunity to address such a representative audience of the press and media. I would like to begin, anyway, with a thanks to the President of the United States, not only for his kind invitation to visit the United States and Washington, but also for his very informal initiation of our negotiations earlier today. Myself and my colleagues are very pleased to be here, this historic building of the White House. And President Bush deemed it appropriate not only to tour me, to guide me through the premises of this house, where he lives, he -- saw almost every picture hanging on the walls of this great building.

It's not only very interesting, but it is not only very interesting, but it also changes for the better the quality of our relationship.

I would like to once again thank the President and the American people, and I would like to express our condolences in connection with the recent plane crash in the United States. As they say in Russia, tragedy does not come alone. And tragedies always come in many numbers. I am confident that the U.S. -- American people would face this tragedy very bravely.

I would like to inform you that the Washington part of our negotiations is being completed and our discussions proved very constructive, interesting and useful and will continue at Crawford. But the preliminary results we evaluate as extremely positive.

This is our fourth meeting with President Bush in the last few months. I believe this is a vivid demonstration of the dynamic nature of the Russian-American relations. We have come to understand each other better and our positions are becoming closer on the key issues of bilateral and international relations.

We are prepared now to seek solutions in all areas of our joint activities. We intend to dismantle conclusively the vestiges of the Cold War and to develop new -- entirely new partnership for long term.

Of course, we discussed in detail the subject matter of fight against terrorism. The tragic developments of September 11th demonstrated vividly the need for a joint effort to counter this global threat. We consider this threat as a global threat, indeed, and the terrorists and those who help them should know that the justice is inescapable and it will reach them, wherever they try to hide.

Also, post-crisis political settlement in Afghanistan was discussed. The most important thing for today

is to return peace and the life and honor to Afghanistan, so that no threat originate from Afghanistan to the international stability. Of course, we do not intend to force upon the Afghani people the solutions; it is for them to resolve those issues with the active participation of the United Nations.

We discussed in detail our dialogue related to strategic offensive and defensive weapons. Here, we managed to achieve certain progress. First of all, it has to do with the prospects of reaching a reliable and verifiable agreement on further reductions of the U.S. and Russian weapons.

Here I must say, we appreciate very much the decision by the President to reduce strategic offensive weapons to the limits indicated by him. And we, for our part, will try to respond in kind.

On the issues of missile defense, the position of Russia remains unchanged. And we agreed to continue a dialogue and consultations on this. I believe that it's too early now to draw the line under the discussions of these issues, and we will have an opportunity to continue the work on this -- one of the very difficult issues at the Crawford ranch.

We also exchanged on a number of topical issues of international importance: the Balkans, Iraq, and we reiterated in a joint statement the resolve of the United States and Russia to facilitate settlement in the Middle East and the early resumption of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

We also discussed seriously the development of relations between Russia and NATO, including, taking into account a changed international situation. We consider that there are opportunities for an entirely new mechanism, joint decision-making and coordinated action in the area of security and stability.

We considered in detail a number of economic cooperation issues. The Russian-American dialogue in this area has become recently more constructive and more tangible. Such major investment projects as Sakhalin I and Caspian Pipeline Consortium are gaining momentum. Successful is cooperation in the airspace, mining, chemistry, car building and other industries.

Direct contacts are expanding between entrepreneurs of the two countries, including within the Russian-American business dialogue. It is with satisfaction that we note a certain progress in issues related to the Russia's accession to the WTO. In recognizing Russia as a market economy country, and we've felt a great degree of understanding that such issues should be resolved, I mean, dealing with the Jackson-Vanik amendment, not de facto, but in legal terms. And in this context, our Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State, Messrs. Ivanov and Powell exchanged letters reiterating the resolve of Russia and the United States to observe human rights and religious freedoms.

Of course, the capabilities imbedded in the bilateral relationship have not been fully implemented. The key -- we have quite a lot of things to do, but we are confident that the success is by and large predetermined by our resolve to cooperate energetically and constructively. That, and I'm confident, would benefit both countries. And which is reflected, also, in our visit to this country today.

Thank you.

Q Mr. President, welcome to the White House, sir. Mr. President, the Northern Alliance forces took over Kabul, and there are reports of executions of POWs and other violent reprisals. Can the Alliance be trusted to form a broad-based government? If not, what should happen next to stabilize Afghanistan, and what role, if any, should U.S. troops play in that political phase?

PRESIDENT BUSH: First of all, we're making great progress in our objective, and that is to tighten the net and eventually bring al Qaeda to justice, and at the same time, deal with the government that has been harboring them.

President Putin and I spent a lot of time talking about the Northern Alliance and their relationship to Kabul, as well as Mazar-e Sharif and other cities that have now been liberated from the Taliban. I made it very clear to him that we would continue to work with the Northern Alliance to make sure they recognized that in order for there to be a stable Afghanistan, which is one of our objectives, after the Taliban leaves, that the country be a good neighbor, that they must recognize that a future government must include a representative from all of Afghanistan.

We listened very carefully to the comments coming out of the Northern Alliance today. And they made it very clear they had no intention of occupying Kabul. That's what they said. I have seen reports, which you refer to, and I also saw a report that said, on their way out of town the Taliban was wreaking havoc on the citizenry of Kabul. And if that be the case -- I haven't had it verified one way or the other -- but I wouldn't be the least bit surprised. After all, the Taliban has been wreaking havoc on the entire country for over a decade, this has been one of the most repressive regimes in the history of mankind. And -- but we will continue to work with our Northern Alliance -- with the Northern Alliance commanders to make sure they respect the human rights of the people that they are liberating.

I also saw reports -- and I think President Putin mentioned this today as well -- that in some of the northern cities, there was great joyous -- a wonderful joyous occasion as the citizens were free, free from repression, free from a dictatorial government. But we are both mindful and particularly mindful of the need for us to work with our Northern Alliance friends to treat people with respect.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: All of our actions were aimed at liberating the northern parts of Afghanistan and the capital of Afghanistan, liberate from the Taliban regime. And any military action is accompanied not only by the military resistance, but also an information resistance. What we are witnessing right now, exactly.

We tend to forget now the destruction of the cultural heritage of humankind. We tend to forget now the atrocities by Taliban. And we are talking less than usual of the Taliban harboring international terrorism. The information that Northern Alliance are shooting -- are shooting the prisoners of war was launched a few days ago. The Northern Alliance was not in Kabul a few days ago; they were liberating northern parts of the country.

And for those who do not know, I will tell, the northern part of the country is inhabited by the ethnic groups represented in the Northern Alliance, I mean, Uzbeks and Tajiks. It is very difficult for me to imagine them shooting their own population. I utterly exclude this. If there are any instances in the course of the military action of the violation of human rights and treatment of the prisoners of war, we

must investigate and take action. But we need proof.

Talking of this, we should not forget the things that we see, the way people meet advancing Northern Alliance troops, liberating the cities and villages of the Taliban. The women getting rid of chadors and burning them. And this, I would like you, ladies and gentlemen of the press, to pay attention to.

Thank you.

Q Specific numbers were mentioned here with regard to the reductions of offensive weapons. When, and if at all, one could expect that such specific numbers made public be substantiated by some papers, maybe during a possible visit by President Bush to Moscow? And by the way, when could this visit take place?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Got to get invited first. (Laughter.)

Do you want to start?

PRESIDENT PUTIN: President Bush is aware of that. And I would like to reiterate, he has an open invitation to visit the Russian Federation, with an official working or a private visit, in any format, at any time convenient for him. I mean, the best time would be during the time of the beginning of the year, White Nights in St. Petersburg. Of course, the official part would start in Moscow in the capital of the Russian Federation.

But as for the business part, I think that before that time, our advisors will continue working. And we, for our part, for the Russian part, are prepared to present all our agreements in a treaty form, including the issues of verification and control.

PRESIDENT BUSH: I think it's interesting to note that a new relationship based upon trust and cooperation is one that doesn't need endless hours of arms control discussions. I can remember watching the news, years ago, and seeing that people would sit at tables for hours and hours and hours trying to reach reduced levels of nuclear armament.

My attitude is, here's what we can live with. And so I've announced a level that we're going to -- that we'll stick by. To me, that's how you approach a relationship that is changed, and different. And we'd be glad to -- and I looked the man in the eye and shook his hand, and if we need to write it down on a piece of paper, I'll be glad to do that. But that's what our government is going to do over the next 10 years.

And we don't need an arms control agreement or an arms control -- let me say this -- we don't need arms control negotiations to reduce our weaponry in a significant way. And today you've now heard for the first time the level that I think is commensurate with the spirit of reducing our own weaponry, and at the same time, keeping the peace.

Q You mentioned vast discussions on the ABM Treaty. What progress are you making? And are

you convinced you won't have to withdraw from the treaty now?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I'm convinced that the treaty is outdated and we need to move beyond it. And we're having discussions along those lines. We had good discussions today; we had good discussions in Shanghai; we had good discussions in Slovenia; and we'll have good discussions in Crawford. This is obviously a subject that's got a lot of ramifications to it. I clearly heard what the President has had to say and his view of the ABM Treaty; he's heard what I've had to say. And we'll continue working it.

But my position is, is that it is a piece of paper that's codified a relationship that no longer exists -- codified a hateful relationship. And now we've got a friendly relationship. And I think we need to have a new strategic framework that reflects the new relationship, based upon trust and cooperation. But we'll continue to work it.

Q A question to President Bush. His advisors expressed concern over the situation with the freedom of speech in Russia. But after September 11th, it would seem to me that the situation is changing somewhat in the United States, too. There are special rules for covering -- anti-terrorist operation, bin Laden is denied any opportunity to present his views in the media, quite appropriately, in my view. And so on and so forth.

The authority of the special services have been extended, and there have been rumors that some of your members of your administration went to Hollywood explaining to them a few things. Where is the line in the sand where -- beyond which it is impossible to cross, delineating a voluntary restraint on the part of the media and --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes. First of all, I have been trying to tame our press corps ever since I got into politics, and I've failed miserably. (Laughter.) They get to express their opinions, sometimes in the form of news -- (laughter) -- any way they want to.

I asked them the other day, would it be okay if I cut a 30-minute tape, a piece of propaganda, no questions, just here -- here it is, here's 30 minutes of me talking; please run it, not only across your airwaves but run it internationally, if you don't mind; I've got something to say about the conflict and our fight against evil. They said, no, they're not going to do that. If I'm going to get on the news, they've got to ask me questions.

And so we extended the same courtesy to Osama bin Laden. He doesn't get to just cut a 30-minute tape where he may be calling his soldiers to action, where he is definitely condemning all Jews, Christians, threatening individuals, to be able to put a 30-minute propaganda tape on the free airwaves. And we made that suggestion; we didn't dictate, we just suggested. And some of the news organizations -- or all the news organizations readily agreed that was a responsible posture to take. And for that, I'm grateful.

But the press in America has never been stronger, and never been freer, and never been more vibrant. Sometimes, to my chagrin, and a lot of times to my delight. But whoever thinks that I have the capability, or my government has the capability, of reining in this press corps simply doesn't

understand the American way.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: I would also offer a couple of words. Today, giving a rostrum to international terrorists would be equal to giving an opportunity to -- newspapers of the second world wartimes to an opportunity to print Dr. Goebbels' articles. This question could be termed in the following way: What is the limit and what is the measure of giving an opportunity to the terrorists and destructive element to use media in pursuit of their anti-human, inhuman, objectives? Let's look at it this way.

Q Yes, sir, Mr. President, thank you. If I could return to the situation in Afghanistan, where the concern seems to be a potential breakdown in civil order, and a possible dramatic increase in civil conflict between the tribes in the Northern Alliance and other groups, which President Putin's country has experience with, what specifically can be done in the next several days to ensure the safety of the citizens of Kabul? And does the Northern Alliance, now that they've taken that city, enjoy pride of place at the bargaining table in the future of Afghanistan?

PRESIDENT BUSH: There is no preferential place at the bargaining table. All people will be treated the same. That's what we're working with our friends, the Russians, on. That's the concept we're working on with the UN. And that's only fair. That's been the vision all along. That's been the vision we talked about in Shanghai; it's the vision we have shared again today.

Secondly, I repeat, the Northern Alliance, with whom President Putin has got some influence and I've got some influence, has told us both they have no intention of occupying -- and they said this publicly -- they intend not to occupy Kabul, which is fine. That's the way it ought to be. And we will continue to work with their commanders. We've got troops there with their commanders, and we will continue to urge restraint.

Again, I think before we jump to conclusions, we want to make sure we understand what the facts are, because the evacuating army has been one that has held this country -- has terrorized this country for a long period of time. But any -- regardless of that, any -- any -- army, advancing or retreating, needs to treat people with respect. And we will continue to work that they do so.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: Well, the thing is that the Northern Alliance did not take Kabul by storm. The Northern Alliance is looming over -- has been looming over Kabul for a long time. That was our mutual agreement with President Bush. And suddenly they discovered, all of a sudden, that Kabul had been abandoned, and they had to insert their certain security elements to prevent looting and robberies and murders. There was complete lawlessness in that city and the situation must be put under control and it was very difficult. It would be very difficult for us if we -- to meet with the Northern Alliance leaders to tell them that they've negated their obligation.

The city of Kabul was abandoned by Taliban. They were trying to preserve their manpower and their equipment, a very cunning move on the part of Taliban. Maybe, technically, their decision was right. But we should not be deluded on that score. Quite a serious amount of work is still ahead. They did not disappear; they just moved out of the city a few kilometers from there, and I am absolutely in agreement with the President on the need to follow the developments with a view to preventing abuses of human rights and maltreatment of the POWs, although the line we agreed upon has not been yet

reached.

Dear colleagues, the final question.

Q Two questions to two Presidents. Mr. Bush, what is your evaluation of the situation in Pakistan, which was always in the sphere of influence of the United States, and whether there are any dangers that the forces up in opposition to General Musharraf would gain control of the nuclear weapons?

And to President Putin, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan made available their airbases and their air corridors to the United States armed forces, giving the green light. Can you tell us whether you gave a green light to that? Aren't you apprehensive of the struggle for power and influence in that area?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I had a very good dinner with President Musharraf last Saturday night in New York City. It was the first time I had met him. My Secretary of State had met him in Pakistan, as had my Secretary of Defense and other officials in my administration. All of us came away with our respect for President Musharraf and our desire to make sure that his administration is successful in Pakistan.

The best way to make sure that terrorists do not end up with nuclear weaponry in that part of the world is for President Musharraf to provide a stable government and to fulfill what he said he would do, which is to have elections in a short period of time. And I believe he is -- he deserves our nation's support, and so we are putting together an economic package that will help him with debt, help him with the expenses of the ongoing operations, helping with trade. And we will continue a dialogue with the Pakistan leader, with the full intent of finding ways we can cooperate, in order to bring stability to that part of the world.

Q With regard to the possible redrawing of the spheres of influence, and the enhanced American influence in Central Asia, I would like to say the following: I am more concerned with the presence of the terrorist training camps in the Northern Afghanistan, who send guerrillas to the Caucasus -- have been sending in the recent years, after Ahmad Shah Massoud was killed, I had a very, very sad feeling. That was prior to September 11th. And I told President Bush at that time that perhaps some serious developments are in the making. And this is concerning -- this concerns me very much.

If we look at the relationship between the Russian Federation and the United States from the old standpoint, distrust and the enmity, that's one thing. If we are looking through the prism of partnership and alliance, we have nothing to be afraid of. This is one thing.

Secondly, one shouldn't forget that both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are independent states and decide, therefore, in policies independently, who cooperate with and at which level. But focusing my attention at the following circumstance, and I related to President Bush quite frankly. We just mentioned President Musharraf. We all should support President Musharraf. This would be the right thing to do. And we agree with this, and we accept this.

It is also true that American flags are being burned in the streets of the Pakistani cities; one should not leave that unnoticed. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Muslim countries, too, American flags are not being burned. Moreover, those countries cooperate, for the first time, so openly and so consistently

with the United States and with the international alliance against terrorism. Being Muslim countries, with their own problems, none of them are squeaking or crying foul, they are trying to address their own problems on their own.

And in these conditions, the continued application of Jackson-Vanik amendment to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and so on and so forth, one wouldn't call it justified and just. We need to, and want to, build a new relationship in the new 21st century.

Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you.

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