



# The President's Trip to Europe and Russia

For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
May 28, 2002

## **NATO-Russia Council Established**

Remarks by the President at Opening Session of NATO-Russia Council Meeting  
Main Conference Room  
Pratica di Mare Airbase  
Rome, Italy

 [Go to the President's Trip Portal Page](#)

 [Video \(Real\)](#)

 [Audio](#)

11:03 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Secretary General, thank you for your leadership. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your grand hospitality. You've been a great host. And I want to welcome our friend, President Vladimir Putin, to this table, and all my NATO colleagues.

Today marks an historic achievement for a great alliance and a great European nation. Two former foes are now joined as partners, overcoming 50 years of division and a decade of uncertainty. And this partnership takes us closer to an even larger goal: a Europe that is whole, free and at peace for the first time in history.

NATO was born over a half a century ago as an alliance committed to defending democracy and advancing freedom. Today, we renew our commitment to these important goals. And as we reach out to a new Russia, that is building freedom in its own land and is already joining us in defending freedom against a common enemy, we do so in the spirit of peace and friendship.

The attacks of September the 11th made clear that the new dangers of our age threaten all nations, including Russia. The months since have made clear that by working together against these threats, we multiply our effectiveness.

The NATO-Russia Council gives us the opportunity to move forward together on common challenges, and to begin building ties that can be expanded far into the future. We will start with areas where our ability to help one another as equal partners is unmistakable, areas such as countering terrorism, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, emergency planning and search and rescue operations at sea.

We will improve our coordination in places where we are already working together, such as the Balkans. NATO, Russia and our other partners can take great pride in the greater peace and stability we have

brought to that region.

We will also look ahead to other areas, where we can expand our cooperation, such as missile defense and airspace control that can strengthen the security of all of Europe.

Nothing we do will subtract from NATO's core mission. We will be practical, moving forward step by step. And as our trust and track record of success grows, so will the breadth and depth of our work together.

The NATO-Russia Council offers Russia a path toward forming an alliance with the alliance. It offers all our nations a way to strengthen our common security, and it offers the world a prospect of a more hopeful century.

Thank you very much.

END 11:06 A.M. (L)

---

**Return to this article at:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020528.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT