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President Bush Meets with Russian President Putin at Camp David

Remarks by the President and Russian President Putin in Press Availability Camp David

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PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you all for coming. I'm proud to welcome my friend, Vladimir Putin, to Camp David. President Putin has visited the White House, he's visited our ranch in Crawford, and now he visits Camp David. I'm honored to have him here, and I appreciate the great dialogue we've had last night and today.

For decades, when the leaders of our two countries met, they talked mainly of missiles and warheads, because the only common ground we shared was the desire to avoid catastrophic conflict. In recent years, the United States and Russia have made great progress in building a new relationship. Today, our relationship is broad and it is strong.

Russia and the United States are allies in the war on terror. Both of our nations have suffered at the hands of terrorists, and both of our governments are taking actions to stop them. No cause justifies terror. Terrorists must be opposed wherever they spread chaos and destruction, including Chechnya. A lasting solution to that conflict will require an end to terror, respect for human rights and a political settlement that leads to free and fair elections.

President Putin and I talked about expanding our cooperation in Iraq and in Afghanistan. The President and I agree that America, Russia and the entire world will benefit from the advance of stability and freedom in these nations, because free and stable nations do not breed ideologies of murder or threaten people of other lands. I was encouraged that -- that it was clear that our governments will continue to work together on this very important matter, a matter of freedom and peace.

The President and I also discussed ways to broaden Russian-American military cooperation. We're determined to improve our joint ability to fight terror, to keep peace in troubled regions and stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We strongly urge North Korea to completely, verifiably and irreversibly end its nuclear programs. We strongly urge Iran to comply fully with all of its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We're seeking to intensify our missile defense cooperation, because both of our countries are threatened by outlaw regimes that could be armed with deadly



weapons.

We welcome the growing economic relationship between our two countries. We will continue to work together to expand cooperation in the energy sector. We recognize lower trade barriers and mutual investment will benefit both our nations. American and Russian officials are meeting more often and discussing broad range of issues.

Old suspicions are giving way to new understanding and respect. Our goal is to bring the U.S.-Russian relationship to a new level of partnership. I respect President Putin's vision for Russia: a country at peace within its borders, with its neighbors, and with the world, a country in which democracy and freedom and rule of law thrive. Because of the President's vision and his desires, I'm confident that we'll have a strong relationship which will improve the lives of our fellow citizens, as well as help make the world more peaceful.

Mr. President, welcome.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I would like to cordially thank the President of the United States of America, Mr. Bush, for his invitation. Our host has created, beginning yesterday, a very relaxed and tranquil atmosphere, conducive to having a calm and open, very frank talk on the major problems and on the broader picture of relations between Russia and the United States.

Our talks today have once again confirmed that our relations are based on a clear vision and a clear understanding of special responsibility of Russia and the United States for ensuring international security and strengthening strategic stability. We have convinced -- we have proven once again that our partnership is not subject to political deal making.

Despite all the difficulties that we have to overcome, the spirit and the basic principles of our relationship have remained the same: mutual confidence, openness, predictability and consideration and respect of interests of each other. We value very much the level of relationship that we have reached with the United States.

According to already established tradition, President Bush and I have focused on specific issues. And fight against terrorism continues to be among priorities of our cooperation. I agree with the assessment that the President of the United States has just given. In this sphere, we act not only as strategic partners, but as allies. Our agencies are conducting an open and a professional dialogue on the entire range of questions in this sphere, including attempts by terrorist organizations to commit new terrorist acts and to gain access to weapons of mass destruction.

We have also discussed today about the implementation of provisions of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions. After the ratification of the treaty, its implementation, in our assessment, is going successfully. We intend to take this work under our control in the future, as well.

Russia and the United States intend to pursue close cooperation for strengthening international regimes and non-proliferation mechanisms. We discussed in detail the situation around nuclear

programs of Iran and North Korea. In our -- it is our conviction that we shall give a clear but respectful signal to Iran about the necessity to continue and expand its cooperation with IAEA.

As to the North Korean nuclear problem, I believe that the primary -- the priority now is to unblock the conflict situation around the Korean Peninsula to create a favorable climate, favorable atmosphere for a constructive dialogue. And Russia believes that ensuring nuclear non-proliferation regime should be accompanied by extending to North Korea guarantees in this sphere of security. We intend to continue our joint work with the United States in resolving this issue.

I would like to stress separately the situation around Iraq. Our countries, just like the entire international community, have a common task: to ensure the speediest possible settlement and normalization of the situation in Europe. We want to see Iraq a free, democratic and united state. We believe that in solving the very difficult problems that the people of Iraq are -- that the people of Iraq are facing today, an important role shall be played by the Provisional Governing Council of Iraq, along with the special representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

We also talked about the situation in the Middle East. And we believe that there is no reasonable alternative to consistent implementation of the road map. Significant attention during the negotiation was paid to Russian-American cooperation in trade and economic sphere. I would like to remind you that in the first six months of 2003, the volume of Russian-American mutual trade has increased more than by one-third. It's a good platform for future progress.

There is also good grounds for future cooperation in energy sphere. We are also improving cooperation in the sphere of information and communication technologies and in the exploration of space.

And in conclusion, I would like to draw the primary result of our negotiations. We have succeeded in reaching substantial progress on the way of forming the relations of real and mutually respectful partnership between Russia and the United States. I would like to thank President Bush for his constructive approach and for his interest in the discussion of all the questions, of all the issues that we have touched upon. This was a very useful meeting.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thanks. We'll take a couple of questions here, two per side.

Q Yes, sir. You mentioned that you talked about Iran. Did you receive any specific commitments from President Putin that Russia would stop selling nuclear technology to Iran?

And to Mr. Putin, did you -- are you ready to make any commitments now to contribute either troops or resources in Iraq? And, if not, what will -- what will help you to get there?

PRESIDENT BUSH: We share a goal, and that is to make sure Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon, or a nuclear weapons program. We also understand that we need to work together to convince Iran to abandon any ambition she may have, ambitions toward the development of a nuclear weapon. What's important is we understand it's in our national interest that Iran doesn't develop a nuclear weapon.

So the most important thing that came out of these meetings was a reaffirmation of our desire to work together to convince Iran to abandon her ambitions, as well as to work with other nations so that there is a common voice on this issue. You heard the President say that the IAEA process must go forward. We firmly agree. I found this part of our discussions to be very satisfactory, from the U.S. point of view.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: We indeed paid much attention to this issue. I would like to reiterate that Russia has no desire and no plans to contribute in any way to the creation of weapons of mass destruction, either in Iran or in any other spot, region in the world. I would like to reiterate that we comply firmly with the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, because this course is in our national interest.

As to the joint work, we are ready to proceed. As to our possible participation in the normalization of the -- in the settlement in Iraq, in the normalization of life in Iraq, Russia is interested in seeing it occurring as soon as possible.

At the same time, we understand that this is a very complicated process that should be based on a solid legal and administrative base, and should go ahead stage by stage. The degree and the extent and level of Russia's participation in the restoration of Iraq will be determined after we know the parameters of the resolution -- of the new resolution on Iraq.

Q First question, addressed to both Presidents. There is an opinion that Russian-American relations have, nevertheless, a declarative character. Have you given any specific instructions to your governments the -- as you discussed it in your communique?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes.

Q And the second question --

PRESIDENT BUSH: No, we only got one question, please. You've already asked two, one to me and one to him. Now you want to ask four, two to me and -- no, forget it.

Q Two parts --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Oh, two parts of the same question?

Q Because my colleague asked two questions, on Iraq and Iran. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: Okay. (Laughter.) I knew she set a bad precedent. (Laughter.)

Q So the next question is for you, Mr. President Bush. Sir, the question is, as you know, as you probably do know, Mr. President, that visa practices implemented by your embassies abroad, including by your embassy in Russia, with respect to those people who would like to travel to the United States, and that does not add sympathies to -- does not add sympathies. And do you know that even journalists who came here to cover your visit had to undergo -- undergo a special interview at the embassy in Moscow? And do you expect any changes to take place in these practices?

And as a follow-up question, does my question -- will my --

PRESIDENT BUSH: No wonder you got interviewed. (Laughter.)

Q And as a follow-up question, can I be assured that my question will not lead to a denial of visa for me, personally? (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT BUSH: No. Nyet. (Laughter.) No, the President raised the issue of visas. He expressed concern that our visa policy was cumbersome and didn't expedite the travel of legitimate journalists and business people and artists and educators. Our intention is not to slow down visits. Our intention is to make sure that visitors who come are reasonable people. What is happening, is that policy -- the visa policy changed after September the 11th, 2001, and we're trying to make it as modern and as efficient as possible. And we've got some work to do.

And it was so long that you asked your first question, I'll try to remember what it was. Oh, yes. Yes, we've got a checklist of things we need to work through. We understand that it's one thing to set a strategic vision for our relationship, but there must be practical consequences of the relationship. We're tasking different agencies and agencies' heads with discussions and action plans that we will be able to monitor.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: Regarding declarative character of the relations between Russia and the United States. Where do, as we say in Russia, legs grow, where do some questions come from? This happens because people expect from us constantly some kind of revolutions. Now, just positive development in the relationship is no longer sufficient for them. I would like to point your attention that due to rapprochement between Russia and the United States we manage to establish and to create in the world, an atmosphere and trust -- of trust and strategic stability.

This had very practical results, including in such sensitive areas as combatting terrorism. I have never said this in public, I'm going to do it today. When counterterrorist operation began in Afghanistan, we were approached by people, through several channels, we were approached by people who intended to fight against Americans in Afghanistan. And if by that time President Bush and I had not formed appropriate relationship, as we have, so no one knows what turn would the developments in Afghanistan had taken. You know what was Russia's position, and it helped, to a great extent, to achieve further results that we have achieved in Afghanistan, and was for a very good purpose.

I have just said that in only six first months of this year, the volume of our mutual trade has increased by more than one-third. We are talking about Russia's balanced policy in the world energy sphere. We conduct a very high level energy dialogue with the United States, including at the very top level. And it's difficult to say what prices would be now -- how high prices for fuel in international energy markets would be now, if we had not had such dialogue.

We continue to pursue cooperation in such sensitive areas as space. And it is, indeed, so that upon the results of today's meeting, we have compiled a checklist of different issues on which we have given instructions to specific agencies in our government. That is why our cooperation is not declarative, but

extremely concrete and pragmatic.

PRESIDENT BUSH: The next questioner will ask one question, in defiance to the precedent-setting by the AP reporter.

Q Mr. President, are you disappointed that more countries have not come forward with pledges of aid for Iraq's reconstruction?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I am pleased with the amount of cooperation we're receiving -- a coalition of nations inside of Iraq working hard to bring security to that country, as well as to help rebuild a country. I recognize that some countries are inhibited from participation because of the lack of a U.N. resolution. We are working to get a satisfactory resolution out of the U.N. We spent some time discussing that today.

As well, there will be donor conference -- a donor conference that we will be attending, and look forward to getting more participants. It is in the national interest of free nations that Iraq be free and peaceful. And one of the things that interested me about Vladimir's comments was that he recognizes that we cannot allow power vacuums to exist into which rogue nations will enhance their capacity to hurt free nations.

So our message is two-fold. On the one hand, it's in the interest of nations to work for a secure and peaceful Iraq. And, secondly, it's in our -- in our moral interest to help the Iraqi people get back on their feet after living under such tyranny. Remember, we discovered torture chambers, rape rooms, and mass graves where children and women, as well as men, had been brutalized and buried.

Q The question is for both presidents. Now we can state that despite differences over Iraq, these differences have not led to the worsening of relations either between you, personally, or between our two countries. How can it be explained, due to what reasons did it actually happen?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Trust. Listen, I -- Vladimir and I had some very frank discussions about Iraq. I understood his position. He understood mine. Because we've got a trustworthy relationship, we're able to move beyond any disagreement over a single issue. Plus, I like him, he's a good fellow to spend quality time with.

PRESIDENT PUTIN: Thank you, George, for your warm words. I would like to confirm everything that has been said by the President, and to send him a response.

I would like to add just one thing. There are two reasons why such problems between our states and between us, personally, have not emerged. We had differences over Iraq, in terms of practical ways how to resolve this problem, but we had understanding on the essence of this problem.

And the second and the most important point, fundamental interests of our two countries are much more solid, are much stronger than the developments that you have just mentioned. And in our actions, we wish to be guided by these strategic interests of our two countries, without excessive

emotions or ambitions.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Good job. Thank you.

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