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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Expanded Meeting with Vladimir Putin,  
President of the Russian Federation (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense  
Andrew Card, Chief of Staff  
Condoleezza Rice, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Karen Hughes, Counselor to the President  
Stephen Hadley, Assistant to the President  
and Deputy National Security Advisor  
Ari Fleischer, Assistant to the President  
and White House Press Secretary  
Alexander Vershbow, U.S. Ambassador to  
Russia  
A. Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of  
State for European Affairs  
Thomas Robertson, Director for Russian  
Affairs, NSC Staff, (Notetaker)  
Eric Edelman, Principal Deputy Assistant to  
the Vice President for National Security  
Affairs  
Nikolai Sorokin, Interpreter  
Kyrill Borissow, Interpreter  
  
Vladimir Putin, President  
Vladimir Rushaylo, Secretary of the Security  
Council  
Igor Ivanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Dmitriy Medvedev, First Deputy of  
Administration  
Sergiy Prikhodko, Deputy Chief of the  
Administration  
Yury Ushakov, Russian Ambassador to the  
United States  
Marshal Igor Sergeyev, Assistant to the  
President on Defense Issues

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Classified by: Stephen E. Biegun

Reason: 1.5(d)

Declassify on: 11/21/11

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Anton Danilov-Danilian, Director for  
Economic Policy, Presidential  
Administration  
Georgiy Mamedov, Deputy Minister of Foreign  
Affairs  
General Yuriy Baluyevsky, First Deputy  
Chief, General Staff, Russian Armed Forces  
Vladimir Chkhikvishvili, Director,  
Department of North America, Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs  
Sergey Ryabkov, Senior Counselor  
Igor Neverov, Deputy Chief of Mission  
Yuriy Filatov, Deputy Director, Department  
of North America, Notetaker  
Valeriy Zaitsev, Interpreter  
Aleksey Obukhov, Interpreter  
Andrey Tsybenko, Interpreter

DATE, TIME November 13, 2001, 11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. EST  
AND PLACE: Cabinet Room

The President: Welcome to the Cabinet Room. This is where I meet with Cabinet secretaries once a month as a group. It's probably the first time an American President and Russian President are together in the Cabinet Room. (S)

I want to tell our teams of our commitment to a new relationship, a new alliance with Russia. We speak of our friendship. It may take longer for our nations to be friends, it won't be instantly, but I am determined to see it. (S)

On our strategic relations, our Ministers are working on how to talk about all this at the press conference. We both have our interests, and we don't always agree. (S)

President Putin has been very strong about representing his country's interests. Now I told him my wife and I don't always agree 100 percent of the time, but we still love each other. President Putin says he and his wife do agree all the time; his marriage is unusual; he does everything she says. (S)

I believe it is in the American people's best interests, my nation's best interests, that we have an alliance with Russia in both the short-term and in the long-term. (S)

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The President has been most cooperative in the war with terrorism. He has been very helpful, he has given us advice about Afghanistan, and his work with Afghanistan with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has been invaluable. ~~(S)~~

Our relationship is more than military. It is also economic, cultural, and it will mature with time. ~~(S)~~

I want to welcome you to the formal part of our meetings. Later I will welcome you to the informal part, to my favorite place at home in Texas. I can think of no better gesture than to have the Putins as the first foreign leader in our home. ~~(S)~~

As for NATO, I can say that it is in my nation's and the world's interests that Russia be given a unique role with NATO, a role that both President Putin and we can be comfortable with. I can't speak for all of NATO, but I can speak for America as a part of NATO. We welcome a dialogue. It's important for the Russian government to construct a new relationship with NATO. ~~(S)~~

I welcome the President's assistance on counter-proliferation and counterterrorism. He and I know that evil can strike in different ways. We have a lot to work on. ~~(S)~~

So, Mr. President, you can proceed with any subject you would like. I understand that at lunch we will speak about commerce. ~~(S)~~

By the way, I told the President we would be getting rid of Jackson-Vanik, that we would take steps to help Russia get into the WTO. There's a lot of important things we can do together. We want the relationship to succeed. ~~(S)~~

I can be very frank with the President when we are alone. Not that I wouldn't be with the rest of this group. But when we are alone and look at each other across the table we can be frank. ~~(S)~~

I didn't mean to give a "speech," and I apologize. Just wanted you to know how strongly I feel. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: Thank you. This is an extremely important and interesting historical place, where one of the most powerful countries in history was created. Developing our partnership is very serious, and very important. We discussed it extensively, and I will mention some of it in general terms. You are aware

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of our position on strategic relations. We are looking for a way forward to a decision acceptable to both our countries with respect to our national security and to calm world public opinion. We think we can find solutions, based on mutual understanding and taking into consideration each side's interests. This relationship has lots of components. The most important is enhanced trust. (S)

For us, frankly, strategic stability encompasses not only ballistic missiles, but also tactical nuclear missiles. Frankly, while they are located beyond the borders of the United States, they could reach Russia. So it is an important subject, whether ballistic or tactical. These problems we have inherited from the past, and we must work carefully and patiently to solve these issues, and I think solutions are possible. (S)

There are other issues besides these. Our experts must work to prevent proliferation of weapons; not just missiles and nuclear weapons, but also biological and chemical. (S)

The President: Yes. (S)

President Putin: Our experts are prepared to cooperate on preventing CW and BW proliferation. As I understand it, it is clear that the types of anthrax in the United States are most likely not weapons-grade. They apparently are "softer" types unlikely to have been developed in the United States or Russian laboratories. Our experts must work seriously with yours. (S)

We need to understand the logic of your positions, your plans with respect to the BW Convention. We are continuing destruction of our chemical weapons. We want to continue working efficiently, we have developed the relevant programs. Sometimes we hear from your experts that the United States has concerns whether everything is being destroyed. We wish to be utterly transparent. It is in our interests to destroy all stockpiles. Let's keep working. (S)

I'd like to say a few words on nuclear arms. We need to understand your plans with respect to nuclear testing. Will you resume testing or not? If so, what kind of tests, modes, and types? This is of concern to Russia, and to others. (S)

The President: We have no plans to test right now, and I've made that clear to the American people. This is not to say that ten years from now, we might decide to do it. But we will keep the testing ban in place. (S)

( President Putin: I understand. This is an important statement for us. Another issue I would like to draw attention to is that concerning flank restrictions of our armed forces and arms in Europe (under CFE). I don't think we have to make a decision here. We've observed every restriction and are consistently removing our weapons and soldiers from Transnistria and Georgia, even though the Georgian leadership is not behaving well today. We stand by the Istanbul commitments President Yeltsin made, and they will be fully implemented. (S)

Our last soldiers left their base in Georgia. There is one aspect of flank restrictions you need to understand. (S)

(Explanation about what flank restrictions refer to.)

( We exceed the limits in the Caucasus area, for reasons that are understandable and justified. As the situation continues to get better, we will continue to remove our soldiers. It is not so much that we are fighting with Chechens, rather with Arabs and fighters from other Islamic states. We have destroyed about 400 of these foreign fighters, but 500-700 still remain active against us. Our experts should think about this so that the flank issue would cease to be a problem for us. We need to speak of our ABM treaty relationship, strategic stability, flank limitations and disarmament. (S)

A major problem in the world is nonproliferation. We are prepared to work closely together. I want to draw the President's and his colleagues' attention not only to Iran, but also to Pakistan. We discussed this extensively in the Oval Office. There is a different aspect, that with Musharraf hiding weapons. He should not be allowed to gain de facto legalization as a nuclear power in the region in the process of safeguarding his nuclear weapons. It's not in our interests, nor in yours. India, China, and Pakistan are of concern. We should not expand the nuclear club to take in Pakistan or India. Musharraf should feel pressure from you and from the world community. (S)

As for developments in Afghanistan, as we agreed in Shanghai, I met with the Northern Alliance in Dushanbe. We focused their efforts on the situation in the north in Afghanistan. They promised, in principle, not to capture Kabul before the question of a new government had been decided. (S)

( It was a surprise for me when I heard the news they had taken Kabul. Now they claim they didn't attack Kabul, and didn't



break the agreement. They were approaching Kabul when the Taliban abandoned the city and they did not attack, and did not take by force. In order to avoid looting, they inserted some security forces. (S)

The President: I heard the same thing. (S)

President Putin: I spoke to Rahmonov and Karimov of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and they had nothing unusual to say, except they said that the United States was pushing the Northern Alliance to attack Kabul. (S)

The President: That's not true. The Taliban escaped, they're fleeing like rabbits. (S)

President Putin: The Taliban left on purpose to keep and protect their personnel and equipment, move them to their areas of traditional support where the Northern Alliance are less able to fight. Those same areas support the Taliban. They had originally moved into other areas of Afghanistan; now they have returned to their own areas. There is a real danger of the flow of personnel and arms from Pakistan, and we will be unable to prevent them from fighting for the Taliban. I am not saying that Musharraf would personally do this, but some of his generals might. (S)

The President: We, too, are worried about the flow from Pakistan into Afghanistan, but we are also concerned about the flow of al-Qaida from Afghanistan to Pakistan. We need to think about how we can seal the border. We have the same concern, I would be interested in your advice. Our ministers should discuss this. (S)

President Putin: It's hard to give advice, and it's not only hard, but impossible to seal the border. We need to destroy them like rats, or buy them off. When the Taliban moved into North Afghanistan with the support of Pakistan five years ago, the field commanders would just change their uniforms and flags (and their turbans). Now it's happening in reverse. (S)

But of course the Taliban have now withdrawn in an organized fashion to their staging posts in order to regroup. It doesn't matter where the center of terrorism is, north or south, it must be destroyed. Frankly, for us, it was most important to clear Northern Afghanistan where the training camps for Caucasus terrorists were located. But for you, it is important for you to go wherever you need to get those sponsors of terrorism who

continue to threaten the United States. We should not limit ourselves to Northern Afghanistan. We are ready to work with you to clear all of Afghanistan. If we let them regroup, they'll come back. (S)

The President: We are not quitting until we have achieved our objective. (President taps on table.) No matter how tired others may become, we will be steady, we will be relentless, and we will get them, we will hunt them down. We will not forget the mission. I promise you, Mr. President, I am determined and the Secretary of Defense here is determined, no matter how long it takes. North, south, east, or west, we'll get 'em. "Dead or alive." (And I have a preference.) (S)

President Putin: The Northern Alliance's troops are approaching Kandahar. They are basically ready to assault Kandahar. It is the Taliban's base. We agree with you fully that we need to be active. According to our data, bin Laden is somewhere down there in the south in Afghanistan. He used to be closer to the Iranian border, but Iran has become more active and he has moved. We have tried to engage Iran and other neighbors to work jointly with us. I know you have problems with Iran. (S)

The President: We had a good 6 plus 2 meeting yesterday. Igor (Ivanov) did a fine job in facilitating the meeting. But, no, we're not in love with them, nor they with us, but perhaps we can work on a better relationship with your help. (S)

President Putin: We are trying. They also want the situation to be stable for the long-term. Perhaps if they set aside their ambitions. Extreme Islamist circles don't allow us to formalize our cooperation, but we will keep trying. But this is an important success. In liberated northern Afghanistan, they are playing music, women are burning their chadors. Unfortunately we don't see this on TV. (S)

The President: Some on TV want the Taliban to win. (S)

President Putin: On the Northern Alliance in Kabul: even yesterday the government communicated that they shouldn't introduce armed forces into Kabul. They should make clear that these are just security forces (police) to restore law and order so as not to rock the boat for Musharraf. Otherwise it would be a defeat for him. (S)

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The President: Yes, some Pakistanis started claiming that the Northern Alliance was already raping women in Kabul before they even got there. (S)

It will take time for the U.N. to put a team together, so we will have to manage this transition between the military victory and the establishment of a new government. But I understand what you're saying about the consequences and the public relations problems we face. (S)

President Putin: We need to speed up the solution of the future of Afghanistan. We need to engage them on the problems of tomorrow and land a place for the Northern Alliance. They say that their forces are dying in liberating Afghanistan while their political future is being decided by those far away sipping coffee while they fight. (S)

The President: You mean the King? (S)

President Putin: Yes, there are very strong reactions in military circles to the King. Whatever, it must be done quickly. In the south we need to think about what we will do. We have now demonstrated results in the north. While there is some negative in what has happened in Kabul, it is positive that Kabul is free. It will be hard for the Northern Alliance to go farther. With the Pushtun tribes perhaps we can take a stick and force Musharraf to do his job. It is not enough for him to simply put down demonstrations. We need to create a government and normalcy, he can help in cleaning up the south. We have great experts in some of the Arab countries. They will have an interesting thought. They'll say, the goal is achieved, Kabul is liberated. Now stop all activities. That would be a trick; don't buy it. We have only achieved our tactical objectives by liberating the north. Now we have to capture Kandahar. (S)

The President: You're right. The goal has not been achieved. (Taps the table.) Five thousand people, including Russians, were killed. We will not stop until we have justice. They will be hunted down, and we will get them. I promise you we will not stop until we have brought al-Qaida to justice. Don't worry about the United States. Others may wring their hands. I told our Arab friends who wanted us to stop for Ramadan, that they (al-Qaida) may try to get us during Ramadan. We're not stopping and we're not leaving until we get them. (S)

President Putin: You've taken the right stand. We'll be with you. (S)

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The President: I am not in the least bit worried about you. I might be about some of our allies. As great nations, we're the most vulnerable targets. You understand the stakes: 1) you know what happened, that they attacked the United States and what that means and; 2) you have been attacked yourself in Moscow, had buildings blown up, seen innocent women and children killed. No, I'm not worried about you. You're the type of guy I like to have in the foxhole with me. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: We also need to support Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Pakistan is a curious ally, strange bedfellow. They help while, at the same time, they burn American flags. Others are different. Some may be better allies than your traditional allies. They are Muslim countries who have problems that they want to address on their own. They do not ask you for help. They go ahead and help without making noise. We have to think about how we can help them. ~~(S)~~

Regarding our possible participation in search and rescue for downed air crews. We have spetsnaz troops armed with the necessary means, communications, and helicopters, who have experience in Chechnya. They are now in Dushanbe. They have trained there with your people. I won't speak publicly about this, but we are prepared to use them in Afghanistan if necessary. We have a division, 12,500 men in Tajikistan, plus we have another 10,000 border guards who protect Tajikistan's borders. They are mobilized, well-armed and a powerful threat to the Taliban. ~~(S)~~

I am grateful you have decided for compensating us to finance arms purchases for weapons for the Northern Alliance. ~~(S)~~

The President: The Secretary of Defense is always looking for more money for his budget, although I guess that's coming from another budget. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: No matter. In Russia we have an expression: "Money doesn't have any smell." ~~(S)~~

The President: This is coming from the Defense budget, right? Or is this coming from Condi? ~~(S)~~

President Putin: We love her even more for that. At the time of Secretary Rumsfeld's visit, we saw attempts to buy Russian arms from the Kyrgyz, and the Kazakhstanis, but not from us. There's a certain logic. The Americans buy arms, increase their

( influence. But how could you buy from the Kyrgyz whose soldiers are in sneakers? They sold their arms and uniforms. You can get the arms more cheaply there and send them on to Afghanistan. ~~(S)~~

But I am thankful to the Secretary of Defense that he listened to me when he was in Moscow and had an impact on the decision. Now that the Northern Alliance has entered Kabul, we will tell them to be moderate or we'll stop providing them with arms. Believe me, we want to cooperate with you, honestly and transparently. ~~(S)~~

The President: It is in our interests that we succeed in fighting al-Qaida but also that we succeed in stabilizing Afghanistan. There are 60 al-Qaida cells all over the world. They are just as bad in Russia as in the United States. We are tracking them in the United States and seeking them out. And I can assure you that if we have intelligence of a threat in Russia, we'll tell you immediately that we had specific information. ~~(S)~~

( Thanks for your comments on Georgia, and on non-proliferation. I am told it's time for lunch. As you call them experts, and I call them advisors, they need to understand we have started out on a new relationship, one that is based on trust and cooperation. I know you feel the same way. ~~(S)~~

-- End of Conversation --