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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President of Russia

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: Don Gentile, Jill Sandler,
Jeff Houle

DATE, TIME April 2, 2002, 10:15-10:31 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Good morning, Vladimir. (U)

President Putin: (In English) Good morning, George. (U)

The President: How are you sir? (U)

President Putin: (In English) Very good, how are you? (U)

The President: I'm great. I'm a little worried about the Middle East but pleased and thankful for your hard work on the chickens. Thank you, sir (C)

President Putin: Are you in Crawford or in Washington? (U)

The President: I'm in Washington. (U)

President Putin: Actually, I hope you have had good rest. (U)

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Putin: I have two issues to discuss. The first relates to what we discussed in the conversation of March 27, and the official message of March 29, and all things about U.S. poultry. And, as we agreed, the urgent steps were taken to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Actually, your experts did a very good job. And as a result, this joint protocol was signed to remove any problems. And now, it's very important that the U.S. would act as soon as possible to implement the steps. The protocol creates a good basis to resolve the problem in the near future. And, I paid special attention to your proposal, your idea to establish a permanent joint commission on the issues

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for foodstuff safety. I do believe it's a very good proposal, and we are considering it, and I will inform you of our decision very soon. And actually, I do believe that our agreement will reduce the tension of this situation and contribute to resolving problems in the economic sphere, including abolition of the Jackson-Vanik amendment. (S)

And also, very active work is being done and progress is being made on further reductions of offensive weapons and the declaration on the new strategic relations. We have already submitted our additional proposals in this regard and are waiting for these to be discussed at the meetings with Ivanov and Powell on April 10 and 11. (S)

Now, the main thing, actually, this is exactly what I wanted to talk to you about. Maybe you know that Prime Minister Berlusconi is now my guest and just one minute ago I said, "Good-bye" to him, and he told me to give his best regards to you. (S)

The President: Thanks. (U)

President Putin: And actually, we have a proposal. It is about the preparation and signature and launch of Russia-NATO at-20. And if everything is okay, if God favors us, you will be here in Moscow 23-25 May. And, as far as I know you have plans to visit European countries, to visit Chirac, Germany perhaps. But, you know anyway, if you could stay one more day in Europe, we could meet in Rome in order to organize the Russian-NATO summit and launch these mechanisms. And actually, it would be good for me if we resolved it before the NATO summit in Prague. This would reduce the tension and pressure in my country so it would be very good to do before the Prague summit. And, actually, my impression is that this would be good for Mr. Berlusconi because he is in a difficult political situation, under great pressure from his left, good to shift the internal political tension to other affairs and show the importance of Italy in the International arena. I don't know, actually, it's up to you. I would think this would be acceptable to you. In any way, you know better but such a step of launching of this 20 mechanism would be very good, a logical result and a nice finish to your European tour, and this would be a very good stop for your European tour. Actually, what do you think of this? (S)

The President: Let me give it some thought, Vladimir. I'm very much in favor of at-20 to satisfy some of your concerns. And I'm glad we're making progress in this. So I'll take a good look at it and get back with you. Secondly, I want to thank you again for your work on the poultry issue. We made excellent progress where your leadership made a difference. This is a good model on how we can solve economic issues, and we will move quickly on the implementation of the protocol. Finally, I am very pleased we are making progress on strategic relations. According to what

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Colin Powell has told me, we have a document that is bracketed, and we just have to work out the language, and that is very positive. I think we're going to have an historic meeting, and I look forward to it. I was talking to Condi about the details. It is going to be an exciting trip for Laura and me, and I can't wait to see you there. (S)

President Putin: George, you know that I will be waiting for you, and we'll go on with preparing your visit. And, please think it over and I don't need any immediate response from you. (S)

The President: Okay. (U)

President Putin: And, as far as I know, that regarding these basic documents for Russia-NATO, they are nearly ready. The basic points are agreed and the next step is the political consent, but anyway, we want to make your visit historic and do it as well as possible. And of course, we are also worried about what is going on in the Middle East and pay lots of attention to it. Unfortunately, this situation isn't developing favorably for Sharon. A lot of negative things are happening. For example, one of the European priests became a victim. It's very sad. They seized an Orthodox church in Jerusalem. And, I am familiar with your statement on the issue of Arafat. We share your approach, and I believe you feel that we will continue working within the framework of the four: Russia, U.S., UN, and EU. And, maybe we should give instructions to the Russian Foreign Office and Department of State to make a Russian-U.S. statement to Arafat and Israel and if you think it advisable, we could charge our foreign offices with it. Actually, that's all I wanted to tell you. Thank you. (S)

The President: Thanks. I, too, am worried about the Middle East. But, I am getting criticized by people here who think I somehow haven't solved the problem. And, I'll pass your ideas to Colin Powell about a joint statement or joint demarche. I want to thank you for your interest and concern on this issue and your support for finding a peaceful solution. Please give my best to your family. (S)

President Putin: (In English) Thank you. All the best for you and your family. (U)

The President: Okay, talk to you soon. (U)

President Putin: (In English) Bye, bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --