

WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

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September 27, 1994
 To: Secretary Christopher and Tony Lake
 From: Strobe Talbott
 Subject: Handling Yeltsin

The following assessment of Boris Yeltsin's frame of mind and recommendation on how President Clinton should deal with him today and tomorrow is based on a long, private talk last night with Georgi Mamedov. Mamedov is as worried as I've ever seen him about the interaction of Russian and American domestic politics.

Yeltsin comes to Washington with one concern above all others: Is President Clinton still committed to helping Yeltsin and the reformers build a strong, unified, democratic Russia that enjoys respect and exercises influence in the world? Advisers and political manipulators, whom Mamedov calls "Iagos," have been whispering in Yeltsin's ear. They are trying to fan suspicions that there are "forces" in the U.S., including in the Administration, that want to "contain" Russia, exploit its current weakness. They argue that President Clinton is facing huge opposition domestically and therefore may yield to pressures from "anti-Russian elements" in the Congress. Yeltsin still has fundamental confidence in President Clinton, but he needs reassurance.

Mamedov urges that the President avoid being drawn into the weeds on any of the contentious issues; instead, he should concentrate on an overall theme: "working together, building on our common interests, we can continue to accomplish a lot." On the specifics:

- o **COCOM:** This is in the too-hard category for resolution at this summit. Message: "Boris, our experts are doing their best, but so far that's not good enough. What you should know is that -- just as I told you at Vancouver -- I'm determined to work with you to bring Russia into all the major institutions of the post-Cold War world. Let's resolve that we'll try to get this solved once and for all by the CSCE summit in Budapest."

-- The Vice President's telephone call to Chernomyrdin on this subject angered Yeltsin. Some advisers put a mischievous spin on it, saying that it was an attempted end-run on Yeltsin himself (an indication of how raw nerves are in Moscow these days).

- o **Nuclear Posture Review:** The Russians are interpreting the American backgrounding as highly invidious to them: we're keeping our powder dry for another arms race if necessary; we don't believe they're reducing their strategic forces

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fast enough; we're not serious about START III. Defense Minister Grachev beat up on Bill Perry over this yesterday. Again, without getting into substance or backing off in the least on our actual policy, the message can be: "You're simply misinformed on this. The NPR is a dramatic and positive response to what our countries have accomplished. I'm telling my own people that for the first time in 50 years, we don't regard Russia as an enemy, and we're adjusting our military posture accordingly. We're totally committed to arms control beyond START II. I believe Bill Perry was able to clarify our thinking and our intentions with Grachev on Monday. His Deputy, John Deutch, is coming to Moscow in a few weeks, and he'll be prepared to go deep into the details."

- o **NATO:** "Our people have worked out a good statement on European security. It makes clear that we regard Russia as a key participant in the process of building new structures in Europe. I promise you that we're not going to spring any surprises on you. Quite the contrary, we're going to work together on this problem, taking account of the interests of all the emerging democracies, notably including Russia. You and I personally are going to keep in close touch on this. This is one of the most important common tasks in which we're joined. My goal continues to be integration -- resisting the temptation of creating new divisions, or re-creating old ones."
- o **BOSNIA:** "This is a prime example of where we've already done a lot together. We've got to keep the Contact Group together -- not just for the sake of peace in the former Yugoslavia, but for the sake of Russian-American cooperation. Just in the last few days, I think the Bosnian government has given us a way to defer the issue of lifting the arms embargo. By the way, I know how hard Andrei Kozyrev has worked on this issue, and he's made a very important contribution. Tell him I said so. Secretary Christopher values him immensely. You and I have to do everything we can to make it possible for Andrei and Chris to stay together on this issue."

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