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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

31 MAR 1993

SUBJECT: Thickening Our Defense Relationship With The Russian Armed Forces

At our meeting earlier today, you asked for more information on our effort to intensify defense cooperation with Russia. As you observed, the Russian military is the single most important hinge on which the future of Russian reform will swing. If the military leadership there had supported the 1991 coup attempt, we would be dealing now with a very different Russia, with all that would mean for your efforts to concentrate on our domestic economy, reduce the defense budget, and bring down the deficit. As I said in my budget presentation to the Congress, the future of Russia represents the dominant variable in defining US defense requirements for the this decade and beyond. Russia's military is the institution whose acquiescence in reform is a necessary condition for continuation, whose skepticism about alternatives is the most powerful deterrent.

This memorandum begins by trying to give you a sense of the state of mind of the senior leadership of the Russian Armed Forces. It then describes the general strategy we at DOD are pursuing to engage this critical constituency; outlines the specific activities we now have underway in this regard; and suggests further steps we might take. I have attached talking points on this subject that you might use with President Yeltsin.

1. Where is the Russian Army today? Russian officers are very unhappy campers. They spent nearly all of their professional lives in the communist system which in their eyes gave them the noble mission of defending the motherland; offered them prestige within the society; and provided a comfortable standard of living for them and their families. That world has collapsed. Their empire was lost. Their country was dismembered. Their old political and economic systems were condemned and transformed. Their military profession became reviled. And now they are forced to struggle to keep their families fed, clothed, and housed.

At the same time, it has become a major challenge for them to practice their military craft. Massive downsizing is occurring with little planning and less thought. Political support for the Armed Forces is low. Conscription is failing. Readiness has disintegrated. Tens of thousands of Russian officers are without housing. Many local commanders have trouble feeding the troops. Discipline in the ranks is breaking down. Command and control is weakening. Corruption within the military is endemic. Inflation has made their pensions worthless. (At the official exchange rate, a US Colonel's salary exceeds that of the cumulative salaries of a Russian motorized rifle battalion). Ukraine threatens to become a nuclear weapons state. Civil wars rage on Russia's borders. And America crows that it won

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the Cold War. Little wonder that Yeltsin worries that these officers will become so fed up that they will put an end to Russia's fledgling democratic experiment.

2. What is our strategy? Engaging senior Russian military leadership in ways that create for them real stakes in a cooperative US-Russian relationship is a principal strategic objective of your Pentagon. We seek to build on the military-to-military contacts of recent years towards a real partnership between our two defense establishments at all levels. We want to win their hearts, minds, and guts. Central truths we want them to feel in their bones: (1) the US recognizes and respects Russia as a great nation and great power (we are anti-Communist but pro-Russian); (2) we do not regard them as our enemy and don't want them to think of us as an enemy; (3) we genuinely want them to succeed and are eager to cooperate with them to that end; and (4) cooperation with the US offers their best/only hope for reconstruction of a Russia of which they can be proud patriots.

As you would expect, the Cold War habits of the Russian Armed Services are not easy to break and the process will be a long one. On January 21, I sent a letter to Grachev reiterating an invitation for him to visit the US. His Commander in Chief, Russian Ground Forces, spent a week with Army Chief of Staff Sullivan in February. At the end of his visit General Semynov summarized his impressions in a phrase: "We want to be like you." At the professional-to-professional level Russia's military see their American counterparts as the model of success. These are examples of a strategy of "bonding." We want a thick substantive relationship in which we really get to know the top two dozen Russian general officers, then the top hundred, then the top thousand up and comers. We want to extend from intense personal engagement to ongoing joint activity like joint exercises in peacekeeping and other "new-world missions" as Chairman Powell says. This activity can both help them define rewarding roles for themselves and create continuing equities in cooperation. And we want to complement high-level relationships with much larger numbers of mid-level officers of all Russian services, who represent the future of the Russian military and whose orientations are also of great importance to our future defense relationship.

We had hoped to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that you and President Yeltsin could announce at Vancouver authorizing more than a dozen areas of cooperation between our two Defense Departments and militaries. On Monday in Brussels Grachev told Bill Perry he would not be attending the Summit because he and Yeltsin could not be out of the country at the same time. He proposed that the MOU should therefore be signed when Grachev makes an official visit to the United States in June. Nevertheless, we are pressing ahead with attempts to arrange joint peacekeeping exercises, search and rescue exercises, visits here by senior Russian generals, joint staff talks, staff talks between the respective services, and a variety of officer exchanges, including young cadets from the service academies. And I am trying to arrange an informal meeting with Grachev in the next six weeks to see if I can forge a personal relationship with him in order to

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make all these steps easier on the Russian side.

As for the future, we need to do more -- a lot more. We have \$9 million this fiscal year in Nunn-Lugar funds to use for this purpose and plan to send two or three times that much next year in order to thicken the defense-defense relationship between the US and Russia. In addition to increasing the frequency and intensity of the initiatives listed above, subjects we need to pursue with the Russian military leadership in a systematic way include problems in force structure downsizing; trade-offs between procurement and readiness; military doctrine; defense conversion; nuclear dismantlement and the future of nuclear weapons; dealing with violent ethnic disputes; UN peacekeeping; the future of European security institutions and especially NATO; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and the dangers of Islamic extremism. The vehicles for this would be regular and frequent conversations between the Defense Ministers, Chairmen, Service Chiefs, senior OSD officials, as well as the staff talks mentioned above.

In addition, we could help much more substantially than is now planned for the Vancouver summit to assist with construction of housing for Russian officers; take part in training their personnel who are leaving the military including those who wish to become farmers; and provide loans especially directed at Russian officers who seek to get a start in the private sector. Finally, we need to get more US non-governmental organizations such as universities and think tanks to mount their own programs to increase interaction with the Russian military.

One caution concerns how we package our efforts at cooperation. The Russian military is a proud organization with a long history. They will not accept charity -- or what they perceive as charity -- from the United States. We need to present our proposals in ways that do not insult or damage the tenuous ego and self-esteem of the Russian officer corps. We want to emphasize joint programs, joint activities, and a true cooperative partnership.

None of this will be easy. The Russian military leadership is living through Hurricane Andrew every day. It is very hard to get their attention and keep it long enough to accomplish anything. They have many misperceptions about the United States that have to be overcome. But we must try to engage them with purpose, focus, energy and stamina. For if we do not, we will increase the chances that one day, they will go over to the other side in the ongoing Russian revolution.

Attachment
as stated

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