

THE WHITE HOUSE
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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Discussion with Yeltsin on
Reform, Chechnya, START II and NATO (S)PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Yeltsin of RussiaInterpreter: Peter Afanassenko
Notetakers: Katherine O'Loughlin,
Kevin Wooton, Deuce Martinez,
Steve PiferDATE, TIME January 26, 1996, 10:46-11:27 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval OfficeThe President: Hello, Boris? (U)President Yeltsin: Hello, Bill. (U)The President: Hello, Boris. I'm delighted to see you back in the office on a normal schedule. You looked good on television. I just wanted to call and discuss a few things with you. (U)President Yeltsin: Well Bill, I'm in good shape right now. My intention on February 15 is to announce my desire to campaign and get on with running a campaign. But this is off-the-record. It will be after the conference of the Communist party is over in mid-February; then I will make my announcement. I was pleased with your statement on the Hill. I'm a little envious you could make such a statement. The fact of that matter is that I'm going to make my statement in February to the Federal Assembly. Perhaps in mine there won't be as much optimism as in yours. (S)The President: Thank you. I've received a positive response from the American public. Also, thanks for telling me of your reelection intention. I will keep that quiet. You ought to make that announcement, not me. (S)President Yeltsin: True, I ask you to do that. (S)The President: There has been a lot of commentary here on the results of the Duma election and personnel changes in your government. But I'm encouraged by your comments that Russia will not turn away from the path of reform and that there will be no~~SECRET~~Classified by: Andrew Sens
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big shifts in Russian foreign policy. We will continue to offer support. (S)

President Yeltsin: Bill, it's true rumors are going around that we're making a change in our course. But bear in mind that I will not let that happen. The Communists in the Duma do not have a majority vote. To override my veto, they need a two-thirds majority; the Communists are not in a position to do that. (S)

Well, the fact of the matter is that I had to remove Chubays. He was a reformer and a strong personality, but he committed several mistakes in organizational matters and particularly in securities trade. I was not in a good position to keep him in my campaign. I had to switch him with two others -- good democrats, very reliable people -- Kazakov and Kadannikov. You may have heard of Kadannikov. He was director general of an auto factory in Moscow. He is very good. (S)

At this point, I guarantee to you the course of reform and democracy will stand. (S)

Incidentally, you may have heard that even the IMF has bought this rubbish on a change in our reform course, that we are not staying on course. They say we have to make a case, to show this is not true. They have delayed their payments to us and obligation of credits of \$9 billion. I hope you might help and push them a little to make the payment that is already overdue. (S)

The President: I am encouraged by what you are saying and appreciate that. You know I support your participation with the IMF and will work with them to see what we can do. (S)

President Yeltsin: Thank you. (U)

The President: If you are staying on the course of reform, they have no reason not to continue their support, as they promised they would. (S)

President Yeltsin: No doubt about that. (U)

The President: Vice President Gore will meet with Chernomyrdin next week, and we will talk with him. I will also see him. (S)

President Yeltsin: That is good. I'll tell Chernomyrdin. (S)

The President: I was very sympathetic to the hostage-taking situation in Dagestan. It was a terribly difficult situation. It was a terrorist action, and we condemned it as such. I know it has been tough for you. What are your thoughts? Do you think you can find a way to bring this conflict to a peaceful end? (S)

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President Yeltsin: Bill, my planning is as follows. We need to start an inter-Chechen dialogue now that a head of the Chechen government, Zavgayev, has been elected. He is very reliable. That lays a good basis for an internal dialogue. Negotiations are already underway that will involve opposition groups, including Dudayevites, and will make it possible for talks. (Ø)

As for parliamentary elections, it is premature now. It may be possible by March-April, but first we have to deal with armed bandit formations. But negotiations are underway, and Dudayev's group is involved. (Ø)

I only have three months to solve this, or I shouldn't run again. We must do this; we need to resolve this problem. A meeting with representatives of republics is underway to get the peace process moving to achieve an agreement, which will happen unless we have to face terrorist attacks on their end again. (Ø)

I'm also thinking of making a trip to the Caucasus in April and perhaps getting everyone involved from the Transcaucasus region. I want to speak with Shevardnadze, Aliyev, Ter-Petrosian, Chechens and other leaders in the region, including on how to help remove problems like Abkhazia and South Ossetia. I've had good results with initial discussions with several republics. I believe it will be possible to solve everything at once, to achieve this in the end. (Ø)

The President: I know you have to do what you can to get it behind you. It's been painful. Whatever you can do would be a good thing. (Ø)

President Yeltsin: True story. (Ø)

The President: I think our troops have been working well together in Bosnia, but we need to pay attention there. It's a good demonstration that our partnership is working well. But we'll have to resolve problems in Bosnia. Our generals ... (Ø)

President Yeltsin: I agree. I would like to see the Serbs excluded in the process. In other words, I don't like the insinuation that the Serbs are the only guilty party. As for contacts between our forces, my defense minister has briefed me on this accordingly. (Ø)

The President: Our generals are very impressed with your troops. On another issue, I wanted to mention that I am looking forward to our meeting in April in Moscow. The nuclear summit will give a real boost to nuclear safety and security. (Ø)

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I would like to mention a few other things. The Senate is close to ratifying START II, maybe even today. If there is any way to get the Duma to approve it, and we could get some progress on the CTBT, that would add global significance to our summit. It would be a big plus and helpful to you in your election. I wanted to tell you where we are. We can perhaps have ratification today in the Senate. (C)

President Yeltsin: Well, that is good news. You've encouraged me. I was aware that you had sent the Treaty to the Senate. This will be good to invigorate the process here. We launched the Treaty in the Duma, but the old group in the Duma failed to work this out, and I will need time with the new Duma. I believe it will be possible to agree on ratification. It's a must that we have it done prior to April. It will be an election issue for both of us. We must render help to each other; it will be important to demonstrate that our relationship is going forward. (C)

The President: I agree with that. We will do whatever we can to help your government and the course of peace, including to push the process in the Transcaucasus. We need to keep things moving forward. I look forward to seeing you in April. (C)

President Yeltsin: Yes, Bill, thanks for your support. As regards our relations, my position remains that we should pursue the course we did at Hyde Park. There is no way we are going to change that spirit or line. I'll also support the state interests of my country. Remember that Russia is a great power to be reckoned with and that no problem can be addressed without Russia. (C)

NATO is another issue. Today I signed a message about this, after thorough consideration of the Russian vision of the problem, to share my thoughts with you. The whole issue of enlargement will affect many aspects, including our election process. The media could widely use that. (C)

In this regard, your Ambassador has not been tactful, and I have not been happy with his behavior. And Bill, could you please, when you receive this message today, provide me a reaction, whether over the phone or in writing? I ask you to do that. (C)

The other thing I'd like to share: we had a CIS summit in Moscow, and the main outcome we reached is a mutual understanding that there will be no progress on reforms and no chance of upgrading the standard of living without reinforcing the trend towards reintegration. There is an upbeat mood about this, and it is gaining strength. We will pursue this line with Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries. I'm sorry that some U.S. representatives will speculate that, since I've been

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reelected to a third term as CIS chairman, Russia is showing imperialistic trends. That is not serious. I find this insulting, in view of the good relationship we have developed. It's a sign that some still want to make a split between us. (S)

The President: We cannot allow a split to happen. On CIS integration, we talked about it in May, and I'm in favor of integration not only regionally but globally. Secretary Christopher will meet with Primakov in Finland. That is an opportunity for them to get off to a good start. (S)

With regard to your letter on NATO, I want to handle this the way we did in May and at Hyde Park. We have been trying to demilitarize NATO, as you know. We are continuing to reduce troop levels and weapons. I will continue to work on this with you. (S)

President Yeltsin: Understood, Bill, that's very clear. At the same time, at the recent December NATO meeting, they talked about a possible deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of the new NATO countries. I don't agree with that. (S)

The President: I agree. I will respond to your letter. The Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission meetings will be Monday and Tuesday. I look forward to meeting with Chernomyrdin and will get back to you on your letter. (S)

President Yeltsin: Good. Thank you, Bill. (U)

The President: Thank you, Boris. Good-bye. (U)

President Yeltsin: Good-bye, and one more thing: I think it would be a good idea to talk more often on the phone as the election campaign heats up. That way, if we have problems, we can get more positive facts -- that would be good for the election and for the public at large. And concerning the April summit at eight, we're working closely with others to do the preparation work and hope to get a serious final document. Good-bye, Bill. I would like to embrace you on this. (S)

The President: Thank you. Good-bye, Boris. (U)

President Yeltsin: Give my best to Hillary. (U)

The President: I will, and give my best to Naina. (U)

President Yeltsin: Bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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