

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telecon with President-elect Putin of Russia
(C)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Russian President-elect Vladimir Putin

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

Notetakers: Roger Merletti, Don Gentile,
Joel Ehrendreich, Miguel Aguilo, Jenny McGee,
Andrew Weiss

DATE, TIME March 27, 2000, 11:13 - 11:29 a.m. EST,
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello Vladimir, can you hear me? Congratulations on your victory on Sunday. (U)

President-elect Putin: Thank you. (U)

The President: I think this is a really historic milestone for Russia, and it's very important that the people have put their trust in you. You have a big responsibility now. The hardest part for you will be taking those expectations and turning them into concrete results that improve people's lives. I'm sure you can do it. (C)

I'm very interested in building our relationship and the relationship between the U.S. and Russia. I hope we can find an opportunity to meet soon. I hope we can use this year to full advantage. We can accomplish a lot together if we can agree on priority areas of our relationship, and I am confident that we can do that as well. (C)

President-elect Putin: First of all, I would like to thank you, Bill, for this phone call. I also want to say that the statement that you made about my modest personality was not unacknowledged here, and it is clear to the whole world that I am a person you can work with. This statement by the U.S. President was not unnoticed by people in Russia and throughout the world. (C)

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I think we have a good basis for U.S.-Russian relations, which was established by you and the first Russian President, Mr. Yeltsin, and we have all the grounds to develop relations on this basis. But, of course, the most difficult task will be to justify the expectations of the population within the country. I expect that we'll manage to achieve a lot in our cooperation together, and this will help us a lot in our country, too. (C)

Our staffs are preparing different options for our soonest possible meeting, and I think this kind of meeting can take place even before Okinawa. You would be a most welcome guest here, and we can coordinate our contacts at any time for you. Thank you for this phone call very much. (C)

The President: You're welcome. First, let me say that I'll have our people get in touch, and I hope we can meet before Okinawa. That would be good. I'd like to mention a few other points if you have a moment. (C)

President-elect Putin: Yes, I am listening. (U)

The President: Let me say, first of all, I had a good talk with Jim Wolfensohn about his meeting with you, and he cares very much about the success of Russia. I know you have an ambitious market reform agenda, but I wanted to make clear that I am convinced the international community wants you to succeed and wants Russia to succeed. I think that there will be a real reward if you achieve these objectives. (C)

The second thing I wanted to say is that I read your recent letter on Chechnya. I think Chechnya is still an obstacle to your economic and global agenda. I hope you will launch credible investigations into the alleged abuses by the military and move into a civil and political phase in your dealings with Chechnya. I think nothing would help Russia more or help you more than accountability on these human rights issues and progress on an OSCE permanent presence. (C)

Finally, on the arms issues, I hope we can keep Sandy Berger and Sergey Ivanov making progress on the Iran issue. I'm hopeful we can move ahead on a common arms control agenda and hope we can conclude by this summer agreements on further reductions in START III, adapting the ABM treaty, as well as the other issues on our agenda. I think this is very, very important, and I hope, of course, you will be able to ratify START II. (C)

President-elect Putin: As for the Berger-Ivanov channel, I give it the same positive evaluation. This relates to both the Iran issue and the ABM Treaty. I think that there are grounds for continuing consultations here, and we have a common basis for a

common approach here. As for the START II treaty, we're starting active negotiations with the Duma now. This is being done both through channels of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and I have reasons to believe we'll have positive movement in that direction. (C)

As for Chechnya, I have appointed a representative to deal with the issue of human rights, and he's now in the middle of negotiations with the Council of Europe and the OSCE on having these organizations join his work in Chechnya. All crimes committed by everyone have to be investigated there. The crimes related to hostages, including foreigners, still are not investigated. I spoke to Tony Blair this morning. I didn't have enough time to tell him that, in accordance with our data, one of the field commanders was killed, and it was this person who ordered the beheading of the English hostages. (C)

Now, about Wolfensohn, we had very good contacts with him. He brought an excellent team with him. I have to say that the people who met with them on our side spoke the same language, and it was very impressive. We have all the grounds to believe that this program is going to be a joint one, and, to a great extent, focused on the field you mentioned, which is structural reform. (C)

As far as I know, he had his daughter's wedding yesterday. I sent him my best regards, but if you see him in person, could you relay my best regards to him? (U)

The President: I will do that. Let's have our people work together. I want to meet as soon as we can, and I'd like to see Russia in the springtime once more. (C)

President-elect Putin: Bill, I do remember our meetings in Oslo and New Zealand, and I recall those with great warmth. I hope to see you again in the spring. (C)

The President: Thank you, have a wonderful day. You've earned it. (U)

President-elect Putin: Thank you so much, Bill. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --