
Clinton Presidential Records Mandatory Declassification Review

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Clinton-Yeltsin Meeting
June 17, 1995, 2:45-3:55pm
Citadel Inn, Halifax, Nova Scotia

WJC: There are a number of items to discuss. On Chechnya, I've tried to be more supportive than many others because I understand how difficult a problem this is. But breaking the cycle of violence is the right thing. [Yeltsin had, in the press availability just before the meeting, said Dudayev had asked for and been given asylum in Turkey.] I hope that Dudayev's leaving will help bring this to a close and be an opening to shutting down the military phase of this episode.

BNY: Yes, it'll be better now.

WJC: The second issue is reactor sales. We don't need to discuss this in detail. I am satisfied by the statement made by our group [the P-8], and hope we can keep working to a resolution.

BNY: Yes, just as I promised.

WJC: You know what our view is, and Vice President Gore and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin will work this on the 29th and 30th of June. I hope you'll support their efforts.

BNY: Absolutely.

WJC: There's a matter related to Chechnya that I must bring up. We still haven't found any trace of Fred Cuny. It's been 10 weeks and we still don't know what happened. Your people are helping -- thanks for that -- but we need to step up our efforts.

BNY: I personally have taken responsibility for that. I personally directed the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Security and the Minister of Defense to find out what happened to him. We will stop at nothing until we find out what happened.

WJC: On European Security, consistent with our agreement in Moscow, I believe you need to make clear to Kozyrev and the MFA that they should pursue the Russia-NATO dialogue. That way we can make it clear to the world that we've turned a new page in history and we're not going to permit any new divisions.

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BNY: Bill we agreed in Moscow that a day or two prior to the NAC, we would join PFP, and we did so. But at the same time, you and I also agreed that our relations with NATO and our attitude on expansion should be discussed further in Halifax and again in October at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the UN. We've passed through the first stage. There are still contradictions and disagreements in our domestic politics on this.

Today we are considering a second step to advance this issue. The main thing is that Russia agrees to work out an alliance or treaty between Russia and NATO and on certain forms of interaction between us. If we can achieve these understandings -- that formula for our relations -- that will help deal with people who are afraid about NATO getting closer to our borders. Then we'll both be winners.

WJC: One way to make people less frightened would be for the U.S. and Russian militaries to cooperate in PFP. I know you have other concerns, but I still feel that U.S.-Russian military cooperation will help people see that there's nothing to be afraid of here. That is what PFP is supposed to do. You can send your soldiers to other places -- that will send the right signal. Think about that.

BNY: That's a new idea. We should think about it carefully.

WJC: I think it will help people see what the words like partnership and cooperation actually mean. Our soldiers and yours can do things together. It will send a good signal.

BNY: I understand. It would be helpful if that happened. I'll instruct my military to take action without delay.

But I'd also like to say, Bill, that it's very important for you to take account of the attitude and feelings of our people who still have a long way to go in getting over the Cold War. They are still somewhat afraid of NATO and afraid of the U.S. I myself and the Russian leadership have no doubt about our partnership. We'll build the partnership on the basis of our friendship, yours and mine, and we'll do so for the sake of world peace. But we need the support of our peoples. For the time being, we must stick to our position, which is that there should be no rapid expansion of NATO. We need to go carefully,

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step by step, in stages. We need to explain to our people -- to assure them that they're not threatened. Everything has to be done with precision and with care.

WJC: That's fine, but I'm just saying that military-to-military cooperation now will serve this goal. It will make people understand that the Cold War is over, whether we're cooperating in third countries or in the U.S. or in Russia.

BNY: Okay, that's good.

WJC: On CFE, we've talked about this before, but we've got to both stay engaged in order to keep this from becoming a big problem. I've said you need some relief on the limits.

BNY: On the overall limits?

WJC: On the flank limit.

BNY: Right, the flank limits.

WJC: We don't need to get into details today, but we should be agreed on our general approach. When our experts meet next week in London, ours will propose a new map.

BNY: Very good. That's terrific.

WJC: But, Boris, it's important that we understand each other here. As you know, the review conference comes up in '96, while the flank limits come into effect in November of this year. So while our experts will propose a fix in the map for next year, they will also make clear that there are things you must commit yourself to this year. We've got to have something that we can sell to our Allies as a good faith effort on your part to be in compliance, something that will not completely erode your force structure.

BNY: I agree. Very good.

WJC: But, Boris, let me say it again: we can't just leave this to others, or it will bog down. We've got to stay on top of this thing; we've got to stay engaged, you and I.

BNY: The only real problem is the North Caucasus.

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WJC: I know that, but it's a very real problem, and we've got to solve it. Here's a preview of the position our experts will be bringing to Moscow.

[He hands over the nonpaper plus map -- Yeltsin scans the Russian-language text, then starts to study the map with furrowed brow.]

We don't need to get into the details now, Boris; this will just help speed up the work of our experts.

[Yeltsin hands the material to Ryurikov.]

Let me go into another subject. You did a good thing proposing a conference on nuclear smuggling and safety -- and I think I did a good thing by proposing that other countries be involved. I don't think it would have helped you very much if Russia had ended up being the focus of everyone's worries about this problem.

BNY: I agree. Thank you.

WJC: [Hands over nonpaper on nuclear smuggling, etc.] Let's have the Gore-Chernomyrdin work this problem further.

The last thing I believe we need to talk about is Theater Ballistic Missiles. I believe that what we've done together on this in Moscow makes it possible for us to get START II ratified. I hope that if our Senate ratifies it, your parliament will ratify it too. If that happens, when we get together next time, we can say that you've done more than any leader in history to reduce the nuclear weapons threat to the world.

BNY: I'll talk the Parliament into it.

WJC: Great. That's it -- that's all my list. Now you can either go home or you can look at your cards and see if you've got anything else you want to raise.

BNY: In my view, the U.S.-Russian partnership is a great asset to both of us in our domestic politics. I think it will certainly help you. Our next visit will take place in the Fall of '95, and we'll be together again next spring. I want those meetings to be a plus for you.

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WJC: Well, your visit this fall will be on the occasion of the anniversary of the UN. You can make the point that the Cold War kept the UN from fulfilling its promise during all those years, and you can say you'll help lead the world in fulfilling that promise.

BNY: I certainly hope that our next joint meeting will have a positive effect on your re-election. We need to have our teams work out initiatives and measures so that you, Bill, earn loud cheers for what we've done together.

But for that to happen, it's important that the OSCE be the principal mechanism for developing a new security order in Europe. NATO is a factor, too, of course, but NATO should evolve into a political organization. It's not excluded that over time we can work out and sign a partnership treaty between Russia and NATO, just as we discussed in Moscow. Today there are deliberations going on about the role of OSCE and NATO in the realm of arms control and that kind of thing. We have our concerns about that. We don't want to see NATO loom too large in that respect. The expansion of NATO is an issue here; it could aggravate the problem.

We are aware that NATO is thinking about its own transformation, and that's a good thing. But we want to see what happens in the political area, not in the military area.

Regarding PFP, as you asked and I promised, we have now signed up, and we'll stay the course in that respect.

As for the ABM treaty, after our discussions in Moscow, there's only one outstanding issue, and that's the delineation of strategic and tactical systems. Do you agree.

WJC: Our experts are working on that.

BNY: On START, it would be very good if we could ratify START II by mid '95 [sic]; we're ready to do that, and we have a personal interest in it.

On nuclear testing, I don't know who has more leverage on Jacques Chirac, you or me; we've got good relations with him. But without consulting us, he's announced that he's going to test this fall. You and I have to talk him out of that before September, by one means or another.

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I propose that we find an alternative that will allow the necessary experiments that the French want to conduct to be done in our laboratories -- U.S. and Russian. Your experts and ours understand all these things, and they can work out an initiative to invite the French Academy to do what it needs to do using our technology and equipment. I think Chirac will have to buy that.

WJC: We've essentially made the same proposal. Maybe we should make a joint proposal.

Last year France canceled its tests, and that infuriated Chirac's party and set off all his Gaullist passions. Also, Chirac clearly believes that the political opposition to testing in France has diminished. What's more, he has a seven-year term. I wish we did.

[Big belly laugh from Yeltsin.]

We should both be so lucky!

Anyway, the real point is that France wants to upgrade its weapons, not just maintain them. That's what this is all about -- not the safety of French nuclear weapons, but getting a new generation of weapons.

BNY: Well, we're willing to provide them off -the-shelf nuclear technology so that they don't have to do these tests.

WJC: Whatever we do, we've got to turn the political tide. I can't tell you how glad I am that you raised this. I've felt all alone on this one, as though my only allies were the editorial writers. But now I see you're an ally too. Here again is a subject on which we can work together. Now that I see how committed you are on this, I'll ask Strobe here to have Secretary Christopher, when they get home, come up with a joint initiative.

BNY: We've got a deal [reaches over and pats the President's knee.]

Now, I know you're concerned about fissile material.

WJC: Yes, and we should deal with that at the Summit next year in Russia.

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BNY: Absolutely.

Let me come back to the question of the reactor sale. I can't quite figure out why American public opinion and your experts don't understand my position on this. I'll repeat what I said to you in Moscow. We have this treaty with Iran on light water reactors for peaceful purposes. We also had a protocol for centrifuges and two uranium mines, but after our meeting in Moscow, I declared the protocol null and void. We'll never sell anything other than the LWRs to Iran.

WJC: I understand that's your position, but you also said to me in Moscow that you'd give me an opportunity to present you with information backing up our strong belief that even the LWRs are dangerous, and we're doing that through Gore-Chernomyrdin.

BNY: Yes, that's exactly what it says right here in my cards -- "to be resolved through Gore-Chernomyrdin."

Now, speaking of LWRs, I also want to raise a question about the DPRK. We believe that this so-called KEDO is being put together too hastily, in a way that doesn't take account of Russian interests.

WJC: Of course I'm concerned about Russian interests, Boris, but I've got to give priority to addressing the urgent problem at hand here. I'm trying to resolve the conflict between South and North Korea, which is very dangerous. If we can resolve all those differences, we'll eliminate one big headache for all of us.

BNY: We agree with South Korea providing the financing for the reactors. Please don't think we're looking for political or economic gains here. We want to see North Korea as a non-nuclear state in the NPT. But we think there's more that can be done to take account of our interests.

Let me see what else is on my list -- COCOM, MTCR, the Australian Group, START II, commercial space launch.

Oh yes, [reminded by one of his cards] ... On CFE: we have only a temporary interest in the North Caucasus as an exclusion zone.

Well, we've covered 105 issues!

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WJC: I'm sure glad you came. It took a lot of political courage for you to do so; given what you're up against at home. Let's hope that Dudayev's move gives you a chance to work this thing in Chechnya out.

[Getting up to leave, Yeltsin gave the President a bear hug; there was some small talk about the circus the night before and what a great performance it was, especially a young female gymnast, whom President Clinton said was a Russian, and two twins who did a high-wire act.]