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November 13, 2001

**Press Conference by President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin**

**The East Room<sup>6</sup>**

It's a great honor for me to welcome President Vladimir Putin to the White House, and to welcome his wife as well. This is a new day in the long history of Russian-American relations, a day of progress and a day of hope.

The United States and Russia are in the midst of a transformation of a relationship that will yield peace and progress. We're transforming our relationship from one of hostility and suspicion to one based on cooperation and trust, that will enhance opportunities for peace and progress for our citizens and for people all around the world.

The challenge of terrorism makes our close cooperation on all issues even more urgent. Russia and America share the same threat and the same resolve. We will fight and defeat terrorist networks wherever they exist. Our highest priority is to keep terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Today, we agreed that Russian and American experts will work together to share information and expertise to counter the threat from bioterrorism. We agreed that it is urgent that we improve the physical protection and accounting of nuclear materials and prevent illicit nuclear trafficking.

And we will strengthen our efforts to cut off every possible source of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, materials and expertise. Today, we also agreed to work more closely to combat organized crime and drug-trafficking, a leading source of terrorist financing.

Both nations are committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, once hostilities there have ceased and the Taliban are no longer in control. We support the UN's efforts to fashion a post-Taliban government that is broadly based and multi-ethnic. The new government must export neither terror nor drugs, and it must respect fundamental human rights.

And Russia and the United States -- as Russia and the United States work more closely to meet new 21st century threats, we're also working hard to put the threats of the 20th century behind us once and for all. And we can report great progress.

The current levels of our nuclear forces do not reflect today's strategic realities. I have informed President Putin that the United States will reduce our operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to a level between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade, a level fully consistent with American security.

Russia and the United States have also had vast discussions about our defensive capabilities, the ability to defend ourselves as we head into the 21st century. We have different points of view about the ABM Treaty, and we will continue dialogue and discussions about the ABM Treaty, so that we may be able to develop a new strategic framework that enables both of us to meet the true threats of the 21st century as partners and friends, not as adversaries.

The spirit of partnership that now runs through our relationship is allowing the United States and Russia to form common approaches to important regional issues. In the Middle East, we agree that all parties must take practical actions to ease tensions so that peace talks can resume. We urge the parties to move without delay to implement the Tenet work plan and the Mitchell Report recommendations.

In Europe, we share a vision of a European Atlantic community whole, free and at peace; one that includes all of Europe's democracies, and where the independence and sovereignty of all nations are respected. Russia should be a part of this Europe.

We will work together with NATO and NATO members to build new avenues of cooperation and consultation between Russia and NATO. NATO members and Russia are increasingly allied against terrorism, regional instability, and other threats of our age. And NATO must reflect this alliance.

We're encouraged by President Putin's commitment to a political dialogue in Chechnya. Russia has also made important strides on immigration and the protection of religious and ethnic minorities, including Russia's Jewish community. On this issue, Russia is in a fundamentally different place than it was during the Soviet era. President Putin told me that these gains for freedom will be protected and expanded.

Our Foreign Ministers have sealed this understanding in an exchange of letters. Because of this progress, my administration will work with Congress to end the application of Jackson-Vanik Amendment to Russia.

Russia has set out to strengthen free market institutions and the rule of law. On this basis, our economic relationship is developing quickly, and we will look for further ways to expand it.

A strong, independent media is a vital part of a new Russia. We've agreed to launch a dialogue on media entrepreneurship, so that American and Russian media representatives can meet and make practical recommendations to both our governments, in order to advance our goal of free media, and free exchange of ideas.

Russia and the United States will continue to face complex and difficult issues. Yet, we've made great progress in a very short period of time. Today, because we are working together, both our countries and the world are more secure and safe.

I want to thank President Putin for the spirit of our meetings. Together, we're making history, as we make progress. Laura and I are looking forward to welcoming the Putins to our ranch in Crawford, Texas. I can't wait to show you my state, and where I live. In the meantime, I hope you have a fine stay here in Washington, D.C. And it's my honor to welcome you to the White House, sir, and welcome you to the podium.

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<sup>6</sup>For clarity, only the transcript of President Bush's statement is included here. The official U.S. translation of President Putin's statement is provided on page 18. A question and answer session has been omitted.