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November 13, 2001

Speech by RF President V.V. Putin in Response to Questions by Journalists at the Joint Press Conference with U.S. President George Bush ⁷

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I don't know if I will have another opportunity to appear before such an impressive gathering of the press. Therefore, I would like to start by thanking the President of the United States not only for his kind invitation to visit the United States and Washington, but also for the informal way in which our negotiations have begun today.

Both I and my colleagues are gratified to be at the White House. This is a historic place. And President Bush most graciously gave me a tour not only of the formal reception areas but also the quarters where he lives. He showed and told me everything. We stopped in front of almost picture *[sic]*. This not only interested me but also changed the quality of our relationship for the better, as it were.

I would like to express my condolences to the U.S. President and all the American people in connection with the disaster in New York as a result of the airplane crash *[sic]*. You know, there is a Russian proverb that says "Misfortunes never come alone, but strike one after the other." We commiserate with you in this tragedy and are certain that the inhabitants of New York and all the American people will face these adversities with fortitude.

Now let me tell you directly about the progress of our work. The Washington phase of the talks is coming to an end, and I must note that our conversations already have been very substantive, interesting, and useful, but they will be continued at Crawford as well. However, we view the preliminary results as being very positive. This is my fourth meeting with President Bush in the last several months. I believe that this graphically demonstrates the current dynamic nature of Russian-U.S. relations. We have come to understand each other better, moving step by step to bring our positions closer together on key issues of bilateral and international relations. Today we are already prepared to seek solutions in all areas of our joint activities. We are willing to dismantle, once and for all, the legacy of the Cold War and begin fashioning a strategic partnership for the long term.

Naturally, we discussed in detail the fight against international terrorism. The tragic events of September 11 vividly demonstrated the need to join forces to counter this global threat decisively. And we do indeed regard it as a global threat. Terrorists and those who abet them must know that just retribution is inescapable and will overtake them wherever they try to hide.

The question of the post-crisis political structure of Afghanistan was also addressed. Right now the most important thing is that peace and a decent life be restored in the country, and that there be no threat to other countries, or to international stability, emanating from Afghanistan. Of course, we do not intend to impose our own plans on the Afghan people. They must decide their fates for themselves, with the active participation of the UN.

We also discussed in detail the course of our dialogue on the interrelated issues of strategic offensive and defensive arms. We have succeeded in making some progress in this area, particularly with respect to the prospects for working out a reliable and verifiable agreement on further major reductions in the nuclear potential of Russia and the United States. In this connection, I must say that we deeply appreciate the decision by the U.S. President on reducing strategic offensive arms to a designated threshold and we, for our part, will endeavor to respond in an appropriate manner. On missile defense issues Russia's position remains unchanged, and we agreed that we will continue the dialogue and consultations on this matter. I believe that it is too early to provide a final summary of the results of the discussion of this problem as well. We will have an opportunity to continue our work at President Bush's ranch in Crawford.

We also exchanged opinions on critical international problems. We discussed the situation in the Balkans and the situation surrounding Iraq. In the Joint Statement adopted, we reaffirmed that Russia and the U.S. are determined to facilitate resolution of the crisis in the Middle East and, above all, early resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.

There was also a serious discussion of the development of relations between Russia and NATO. This includes taking into account the changed international situation. I believe that it is possible to establish qualitatively new mechanisms for cooperation, specifically, joint decision-making and coordinated actions in the area of security and strengthening stability.

There was detailed discussion of a number of fundamental issues related to economic interaction. As you know, the Russian-U.S. dialogue in this area has recently become more intensive and substantive. The implementation of such major investment projects as Sakhalin I and the Caspian Pipeline Consortium's oil pipeline is gaining momentum. We are successfully moving ahead with cooperation in the aerospace field, the mining and chemical industries, automobile manufacturing, and other areas. Direct contacts among our countries' entrepreneurs are expanding, specifically, within the framework of the Russian-American Business Dialogue. We are pleased to note that definite progress has been made in resolving issues related to Russia's accession to the WTO and granting Russia market economy status. And we sensed a clear understanding that the question of graduating Russia from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment must finally be resolved-not *de facto*, but *de jure*. In this context, our Foreign Minister and the U.S. Secretary of State, Messrs. Ivanov and Powell, exchanged letters confirming the commitment of Russia and the United States to common values in the area of human rights and religious freedoms.

Of course, the potential for bilateral economic cooperation is still far from being fully realized. Here, as in other areas, a great deal of joint work lies ahead of us. But we strongly believe that success is already, to a large extent, predetermined. It is predetermined by our common willingness to cooperate actively and constructively. I am absolutely certain that this cooperation, which is reflected in today's visit, will benefit both countries.

⁷ Official U.S. translation of the Kremlin's transcript of the Press Conference by President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin, The East Room, November 13, 2001. For clarity, only the transcript of President Putin's statement is included here. The transcript of President Bush's statement is provided on page 16. A question and answer session has been omitted.