

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia
in Moscow, Russia
May 24, 2002

President Putin. Distinguished Mr. President, distinguished colleagues and friends, we are happy to welcome you in the capital of Russia and in the heart of it, in the Kremlin of Moscow.

This is the first visit of the President in office of the United States of America to the Russian Federation, and I'm very pleased to note that this visit is of a different quality than all previous visits of the heads of the U.S. state to our country.

I'd like to underline that if prior to this time virtually all meetings at this level were dedicated to overcoming contradictions or consequences of those contradictions, today we have the right to state the creation of an absolutely new quality to our relationship. This touches upon the issues of security, the issues of limitation of a strategical process, and our participation in the building of the new safe world. And this has a bearing to the quality of trust for the relationship. And all this happened over the past months, past 12 or 18 months, with active participation and support of this process on behalf of the President of the United States, Mr. Bush, and his team.

Therefore, we're especially pleased, distinguished Mr. President, to receive you here in Moscow, in Russia. Myself and my colleagues recall the warmth of the reception we were accorded in the United States, including in your home, in your family, and we would like very much to respond with a similar hospitality. And we hope and we're confident that your visit to our country will be very productive and will serve a powerful thrust to the development of our relationship.

Welcome, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I appreciate your hospitality. It's a magnificent setting for our very important discussions and our signing of a treaty which says—it says that we're friends, that we're going to cast aside old doubts and suspicions and welcome a new era between the relations between your great country and our country.

I'm really looking forward to coming to your home tonight to have dinner. We'll work all day long, and then I look forward to relaxing with you in the setting of your home. I think it's—I think it's an important signal for the world to see that we take our jobs very seriously and we visit in formal settings, we talk about important issues, and then after the working day is over, we will settle down as friends and have dinner together.

This is a day that has required your strong leadership and your vision, and I want to congratulate you and your team on working hard toward a vision of a world that is more peaceful and a world that is more prosperous for all of us.

And so, thank you, sir, for your hospitality and for your friendship.

NOTE: The remarks began at 11:58 a.m. in St. Catherine's Room at the Kremlin. President Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Presidents spoke following their one-on-one meeting and prior to an expanded bilateral meeting.

The President's News Conference With President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in Moscow May 24, 2002

President Bush. President Putin, thank you very much. Laura and I are so grateful for your hospitality and your friendship. It's an historic and hopeful day for Russia and America. It's an historic day for the world as well.

President Putin and I today ended a long chapter of confrontation and opened up an entirely new relationship between our countries. Mr. President, I appreciate your leadership. I appreciate your vision. I appreciate the fact that we've now laid the foundation for not only our governments but future governments to work in a spirit of cooperation and a spirit of trust. That's good. It's good for the people of Russia; it's good for the people of the United States.

President Putin and I have signed a treaty that will substantially reduce our nuclear—strategic nuclear warhead arsenals to the range of 1,700 to 2,200, the lowest level in decades. This treaty liquidates the cold war legacy of nuclear hostility between our countries.

We've also signed a joint declaration of new strategic relationship that charts a course toward greater security, political, and economic cooperation between Russia and the United States. Our nations will continue to cooperate closely in the war against global terror. I understand full well that the people of Russia have suffered at the hands of terrorists, and so have we. And I want to thank President Putin for his understanding of the nature of the new war we face together and his willingness to be determined and steadfast and patient as we pursue this war together.

President Putin and I agree also that the greatest danger in this war is the prospect of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Our nations must spare no effort at preventing all forms of proliferation. And

we discussed Iran in this context today. We'll work closely with each other on this very important issue.

Our nations also agree on the importance of a new NATO-Russia Council that will be launched in a few days in Rome. And Mr. President, this council is also a tribute to your leadership and your vision. For decades, Russia and NATO were adversaries. Those days are gone, and that's good. And that's good for the Russian people; it's good for the people of my country; it's good for the people of Europe; and it's good for the people of the world.

Russia and the United States are also determined to work closely on important regional challenges. Together, we will work to rebuild Afghanistan. Together, we will work to improve security in Georgia. We will work to help end fighting and achieve a political settlement in Chechnya.

Russia and the United States are committed to economic cooperation. We have launched a major new energy partnership. Private firms will take the lead in developing and transforming the vast energy reserves of Russia and the Caspian world to markets through multiple pipelines such as the Caspian Pipeline Consortium and Baku-Jihan. And I want to thank you for the cooperation and the willingness to work together on energy and energy security.

Russia is building its market economy, opening new opportunities for both our countries. I'm impressed by the level of entrepreneurial growth here in Russia. It's a significant achievement. Again, it's a testimony to the leadership of Vladimir Putin.

In a while, we're going to meet with Russian and American business leaders to discuss how we can continue fostering good relations and fostering opportunity. We