



Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Moscow, Russia
March 18, 2008

[View Video](#)

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: (Via interpreter) Good evening, dear colleagues, and thank you for waiting. We have just finished the very fruitful round of consultations in a 2+2 format. We were convinced that our presidents were absolutely right when they instructed us to resume work in this format.

In the center of our meeting today was the subject of how to form the strategic framework of our bilateral dialogue. This subject was mentioned first by President Putin and President Bush when they met at Kennebunkport in July last year. Our strategic dialogue covers all areas of Russia-U.S. relations, and today we have exchanged views on all areas where we cooperate.

We registered steady progress, especially in the implementation of initiatives put forward by the two presidents. This has to do with combating nuclear terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as enhancing the nonproliferation regimes and the use of peaceful nuclear energy on a safe and on a sustainable basis.

We've also discussed further work and further efforts in economic trade and especially investment area. We have exchanged views on how to set up new mechanisms and how to maintain the existing ones.

And we also discussed some contentious issues where we don't -- we haven't reached agreement as of now. I'm talking primarily about missile defense and about the future of strategic arms reduction regime, especially following the lapse of the START I Treaty in December next year.

As far as missile defense is concerned, both Russia and the United States are interested in addressing these problems in cooperative and equal way within the framework, which will unite us, the United States, and Europe.

As you know, we have differences about ways and means to move forward, and today we have discussed this at length. The United States reaffirmed its willingness to pursue works to set up the third positioning site in Europe. Russia, while not agreeing with this intention, put forward an alternative, and this alternative was originally put forward by President Putin at Kennebunkport.

Hopefully, the concerns expressed by us were heard by the United States, and responding, the United States have declared their intention to finalize work on the third site. They actually, in response, provided important and useful proposals which we are to examine. And this was done because the United States is trying to somehow allay our concerns. Following the examination of proposals we got today, we agreed to pursue our consultations.

As far as the future of the START treaty is concerned, we have registered our intent to make this document legally binding, though we realize that much work needs to be done yet to put flesh, to put substance, in this document. And the proposals within the framework of this strategic frame will be reported to the President as soon as we finalize all the details.

On the whole, I'd like to say that this meeting reaffirms, once again, the readiness of the Russian Federation and the United States to follow the line outlined by President Bush and Putin aimed at enhancing the practical and ready cooperation to carry out initiatives and to realize and implement arrangements, and aimed at concrete and specific professional work to bridge the differences on those issues where we really have differences.

And it's important that due to the relations between the two presidents, this work is done on the basis of mutual respect and mutual taking into account of interests. We agreed to that. The work we are doing and we will be doing, we will pursue it, and it's important to assure continuity in the Russia-U.S. relations, especially in the period when we see the constitutional transfer of power.

(In English.) In both countries.

(Interpreter.) In both countries.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you very much, Sergey, for hosting us here. We've indeed had productive discussions today, useful discussions. We have agreed that there should be a joint strategic framework document for the presidents to be able to record all of the elements of the U.S.-Russia relationship as we go forward into the future. We have agreed on the elements that will be included in that document and made some considerable progress on a number of them. We still have work to do, but I, for one, have found the discussions useful. I have found them constructive.

And as to the work that we have yet to do on our strategic relationship, that is, concerning strategic arms reduction as the presidents put forward in the Moscow Treaty, the extension of that treaty and to look at the post-START environment, we had very good discussions, and I'm sure that those will continue.

As to missile defense, the United States has indeed brought, with Secretary Gates taking the lead in describing them, a number of proposals, or I should say, a further elaboration of some of the proposals that we have made before. I think that we had a constructive and useful -- I'm glad that you found those proposals important and useful. I'm glad that you will take the opportunity to look at them more closely. We certainly understand that and I look forward to talking with you when you've had a chance to look more closely at those proposals and when our experts perhaps have had an opportunity to clarify various elements of those proposals.

We look forward to the presidents realizing their vision, a vision that they have been pursuing for the last seven years. And we have work to do, but I think it's fair to say that U.S.-Russian relations, a complex relationship, is proceeding in a way that we are able to go forward in various areas of cooperation. And when we have differences, we can talk about them in an atmosphere of mutual respect. And so we look forward to further discussions as we flesh out this joint strategic framework. Thank you.

Anybody else going to speak?

A PARTICIPANT: (Off-mike.)

SECRETARY RICE: All right -- oh, sorry. I'm sorry, sorry, sorry. I forgot. (In Russian.) (Laughter.)

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: I'll try to (inaudible). (In Russian.) (Laughter.)

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) Dear colleagues and friends, please, questions to our ministers. And by the tradition, the first question goes to our guest from Reuters.

SECRETARY RICE: (In Russian.)

QUESTION: This is actually a question about Kosovo. Did you discuss the latest violence in Kosovo? And Foreign Minister Lavrov, do you think that international recognition of Kosovo's independence has stoked up that violence?

And then on a NATO-related note --

SECRETARY RICE: Sue, one question per side.

QUESTION: Have you cut a deal with NATO to help with logistics in Afghanistan? And Secretary Rice, if you could comment on Kosovo, too.

SECRETARY RICE: All right, Sue.

(Cross-talk.)

SECRETARY RICE: All right. Yes, we have discussed Kosovo, as we have many, many times in the past. It's no surprise that we and Russia have not agreed, not seen eye-to-eye on the implications of the Ahtisaari plan and on the decision of the United States and many other countries to recognize Kosovo's decision to declare its independence.

I think we do agree that all sides should refrain from violence, that all sides should refrain from any provocation, and we're sending messages to all sides appropriately.

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: (Via interpreter) As far as the problem of Kosovo is concerned, it's an open secret that on this issue our positions diverge, and we believe that it's inadmissible and it's a gross violation of international law. I mean the declaration of unilateral independence by Pristina.

We warned -- we had warned that this step would inevitably have negative consequences, and it happened actually. And it's very difficult to drive all those who do not want to live in a legally -- an illegal -- this illegal state within the framework of this state. We know that within one year, following 1999, the rights of minorities, especially of Serbs, were not provided. I'm talking here about their rights, security, and their right of movement. Therefore, we see a very bad scenario when minorities will feel aliens in their own country.

We are against any -- against violent -- any violence and any violent solution of any problems. We stand for political decisions and political settlement in any situation. And we believe that international presence on the ground, which is mandated by the UN Security Council, should carry out its mandate, not selectively but comprehensively, and should avoid any unilateral actions such as the unilateral declaration of independence. International law should be complied comprehensively in all its elements and not selectively, as it's convenient to someone.

As far as NATO is concerned and the logistic supports to ISAF, which is mandated again by the UN Security Council and which operates in Afghanistan, in response to the request from Brussels, the Ministry of Defense together with the Russian Foreign Ministry, are now involved in talks and hopefully the result will soon be known.

And following this subject on NATO, we have (inaudible) proposed to add to this component, to this bilateral component, the cooperation between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which will increase the efficiency of this work in terms of tackling drug threats, terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan, and hopefully, this issue will be addressed in a constructive way soon.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) ITAR-TASS, Alexander Konovalov.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) My question goes to both Defense Minister and Defense Secretary. You know about the negative attitude of the Russian Federation towards plans to deploy missile defense in Europe. How this meeting actually influenced the positions of both countries?

SECRETARY GATES: We had the opportunity today to elaborate on a number of confidence-building measures and measures for transparency to provide assurance to the Russian Republic that our missile sites and radars would not constitute a threat to Russia.

We've leaned very far forward in this in an effort to provide reassurance with a number of measures that obviously would require host country approval and reciprocity. I think both President Putin and our Russian colleagues today found these ideas useful and important, as they've described, and they will be studying them further.

DEFENSE MINISTER SERDYUKOV: (Via interpreter.) I would like to add to what has been said that, in principle, our positions have not changed. We -- today we have heard a number of measures and we hope that they will be presented to us in writing. Our experts then will have an opportunity to discuss them and to understand what stands behind them. And again, we can say that we had a lot of work to do, but we need to see these proposals, to look at them, to understand them. And then, following the work at the expert level, we will take a decision on how to move forward. But in any case, this work should be pursued and -- but as of now, I can say that our positions have not changed.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) Associated Press, Robert Burns.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you mentioned that in regard to the strategic framework that some elements were agreed to in these meetings. Could you identify what those elements are? Could you discuss also the outstanding elements? How long might it take to actually agree on the framework itself, and could you flesh out a little bit how -- what the intention is? Is this to be essentially a list of issues to be discussed in the coming months, or is it to be an enduring sort of agreement, a formal agreement?

And also if I may ask Secretary Gates, you had said going into these meetings that it was time for the Russians to give some ground on missile defense. You mentioned a moment ago that you had been leaning far forward on this issue. Did the Russians, this time, come up with some new ideas? Are you satisfied with their approach to this? Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: As to the strategic framework, I think we -- oh, I'm sorry. I keep forgetting it.

INTERPRETER: (In Russian.)

SECRETARY RICE: As to the strategic framework, we're agreed on -- essentially on what elements would go into this strategic framework, because we've been talking

about these issues for a significant period of time over the last several years. In some cases, this document would reflect agreements that we have already made or that we are trying to further develop; for instance, concerning global nuclear terrorism, concerning the two presidents' interests in developing a way to get assured fuel supply for countries that may wish to have civil nuclear power without the proliferation risk of enriching and reprocessing.

We would also expect to address the desire of both sides to have a post-START framework and to build upon the Moscow Treaty which, after all, expires -- the limits which expire in a couple of years, as well as to talk about the missile defense issue. So the elements are there. Some elements are easier to agree on than others. But I think we have a way forward to put this framework into place.

And the purpose really is, I think, to show the broad nature of the U.S.-Russia relationship, which really is a very broad relationship -- the two presidents have done a lot of work over the last several years -- and to use this document to lay a foundation for the future of U.S.-Russian relations -- not a treaty or anything of that kind, but it's just very important to recognize in some way the breadth of this relationship and some of the progress that has been made and some of the issues that remain to be resolved.

SECRETARY GATES: In terms of the Russians' reactions to the confidence-building measures and transparency measures we've put forward, I would say that they listened very carefully. President Putin took extensive notes last night, and obviously there was a lot done during the day today.

That said, the full range of what we have -- what we are prepared to offer and discuss with the Russians really is just now, after the day's talks, being put down on paper, and so the Russian side will not receive this in writing until this evening. You have already heard the Foreign Minister positively characterize the ideas, but obviously now they feel the need to study them in greater detail. But I would expect and hope that we would hear back reasonably quickly.

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: (Via interpreter.) I would like to say a couple of words so that the journalists realize better where we are in terms of missile defense relating to the question of missile -- concerning missile defense. The United States has a proposal elaborated by the United States. The United States has put forward a plan to set up the third site in Europe. For us, this site creates risk, and President Putin, instead, proposed an alternative, which will bring together the United States, Russia and European countries and which will create no risks at all.

(In English.) To anyone.

Anyway, the United States has made a firm decision to go ahead with their project, but we assessed this and they assessed this. And while not agreeing with us on substantial issues, they recognized that there exists these -- that we have these concerns and they put forward proposals aimed at allaying or aimed at making these concerns milder.

The best way to address our concerns, of course, will be not to set up this third positioning site at all, but the United States are going to proceed and therefore, the proposals which hopefully we will get this evening and will be, as I have already mentioned, important and useful to allay our concerns. Afterwards -- and after we examine them and after we look into them, hopefully we will make a chance to reaffirm this position.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) And the last question goes to -- from Rossiyskaya Gazeta (inaudible).

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) I have two questions, one to Secretary Gates and the other to Secretary Rice.

SECRETARY RICE: (In Russian.) (Laughter.)

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) My first question goes to Secretary Gates. It's an open secret to everyone that the economy of the United States is living through a, well, hard period. And given those big -- those biggest expenses, will there be enough money for these projects in the Czech Republic, Poland and Turkey?

And my second question goes to Secretary Rice. Is it right that the oral arrangements you bring -- or you brought with you last time differed from the -- from what you presented later in writing?

SECRETARY GATES: I can assure you that America's defense needs will be adequately funded by the Congress.

SECRETARY RICE: He's so adequately funded for defense that he's been advocating for adequate funding for the State Department and I fully appreciate it.

As for the question concerning the proposals that we made the last time, the last time we came with a set of conceptual ideas. We went back. Those ideas were indeed forwarded to the Russians in a paper. I do think, frankly, there was some lack of clarity about the relationship between what we had said here and what was in the paper. Perhaps when one moves from a conceptual level to a level of detail, sometimes things get lost in translation. Let me put it that way.

The Secretary -- Secretary Gates this time was able to clarify and enrich the discussion of what we had put forward with the Russians over the last several months since our visit here in October. And what our Russian colleagues have now asked us to do is to write down in a more formal way the full range of measures that the United States is proposing so that they may study them, so that questions can be asked of experts, and we will try to do that this evening and get that paper to our colleagues.

FOREIGN MINISTER LAVROV: (Via interpreter.) Well, I'd like to add a couple of words. What happened in October happened in October. We discussed all that and that's it with it. It's March and it's a more optimistic month, and as the Russian proverb says, who recalls the old thing, his eye will get off. So this -- the major thing is that we get this proposal in the same (inaudible) and, hopefully, that we can work constructively to achieve results.

This time we will -- we haven't been lost in translation.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) Dear colleagues, thank you.

2008/T10-2

Released on March 18, 2008

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.