



## Briefing on U.S.-Russia Expert-Level Talks Via Teleconference

**Daniel Fried, Acting Under Secretary for Political Affairs**  
**John Rood, Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security**  
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**OPERATOR:** Thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the question-and-answer session, please press \*1 on your touchtone phone. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time.

Now I will turn the meeting over to Mr. Gonzo Gallegos. Thank you. You may begin.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Thank you. I appreciate your patience and your participation. Tonight, we have Acting Under Secretary for Political Affairs Daniel Fried and Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security John Rood. They will be speaking on the record about the U.S.-Russia expert-level talks that took place yesterday and today.

As always, this is on the record but not for broadcast. We will be providing a transcript of this, most likely tomorrow morning. With that, I believe John Rood will begin.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes, thank you, Gonzo. And thanks to all of you for calling in. I know that we had planned -- Dan Fried and I -- to speak to you, a number of you, in person earlier today, and I realize that was put off a couple of times. But unfortunately, our discussions ran longer than we expected with the Russian delegation. So I apologize for any inconvenience that caused for people.

I hear a phone ringing. Is this -- okay. In terms of the -- what we did, Dan Fried and I were part of a larger U.S. interagency delegation that met with the Russian delegation yesterday and today at the State Department here in Washington. The Russian delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Kislyak and included senior Ministry of Defense officials like Major General Buszynski and a number of other folks from the Russian interagency.

The purpose of our meeting was to continue discussions that occurred last week in Moscow at the so-called 2+2 meeting led by Secretary of State Rice and Secretary of Defense Gates with their Russian counterparts. And of course, as we mentioned and as has been reported, at the Moscow meeting the United States put forward a draft strategic framework document that was -- is intended to capture the key elements in our relationship and to provide a guide for us to work toward in the future.

So we had very good discussions, as Dan and I and others have described, last week in Moscow. We tried to continue that forward, including negotiating the particular text of the agreement, which is what we spent yesterday and today doing. We also had some experts discussions, or so-called experts discussions, to try to talk about some of the forward-leaning ideas that the United States has put forward to try to address Russian concerns about missile defense. A whole series of transparency and confidence-building measures have been developed that we have put on the table with our Russian colleagues related to their ability to monitor and inspect, and indeed have some greater confidence that this facility -- the facilities, I should say, that we intend to place in Poland and the Czech Republic are, in fact, oriented at the purpose stated by the United States.

And so I think we had a useful set of discussions over the last two days. We made a lot of progress in terms of working out the particular language and resolving some of the issues. We're not finished yet. We still have more work yet to be done. But I think we've settled the bulk of the issues, but there are still some important ones left to be done.

Dan, why don't I turn it over to you.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** John, you walked through pretty accurately. The reason it took us a long time is because we had -- we have a short time between now and the President's trip to Sochi, President Bush's trip to Sochi. And since we had just given the Russians the document last week, we wanted, by design, to go through all of the issues where we thought we could make quick progress. And it was an intense couple of -- pair of days. We made a good deal of progress. There are issues, obviously, to be worked on. But at the end of the two days, the Russian delegation and we agreed we had made some progress. And we will -- we agreed on ways to continue over the next week, even though the President will be leaving -- well, as you know, on Monday.

The purpose of the document, as John and I have described in other contexts, is really to capture some of the areas of cooperation in the U.S.-Russia relationship which has been marked in media accounts and not -- and I'm not -- this is not a complaint of inaccuracy, but has been marked in media accounts by a number of areas of significant disagreement, so much so that some of the strong areas of cooperation were becoming obscured. And it is important as both countries complete a presidential transition, that is Russia, and are continuing in an election year, which is us, we thought it was important to have this document as a positive platform, as it were, in the U.S.-Russia relationship as we go forward.

So we were satisfied with a couple of good days' work. More to be done, to be sure, but it went long because we were making progress and we wanted to keep going.

So there you are, and I think John and I are happy to answer questions.

**OPERATOR:** We will now begin the question-and-answer session. If you would like to ask a question, please press \*1. Please un-mute your phone, and record your name clearly when prompted. Your name is required to introduce your question. To withdraw your request, press \*2. One moment, please, for the first question.

Our first question comes from Sue Pleming with Reuters. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Thanks. You said that you had not finished yet but that you had, you know, tackled the bulk of the issues but still had important ones left to do. Could you be a little bit more specific, please? What have you tackled in terms of missile defense and what are the important issues left to be done?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, I think we -- as we described, Sue, to you when we were in Moscow, there is a lengthy list of issues on which we had made proposals to include in the strategic framework and indeed to identify where we wanted U.S.-Russian relations to go in each of these important elements. And I'd say by number, we were able to reach agreement on the vast majority of those.

Now, some of the most difficult issues, like missile defense, need some more time. But I do think that we had a very useful discussion yesterday and we remain, you know, reasonably optimistic that we are going to be able to resolve our differences in this area as well. Only time will tell whether we will, in fact, be as successful as we think we can be, but we are making progress.

And so I think a number of things that are discussed in the document and in our ongoing cooperation related to combating terrorism, dealing with the spread of weapons of mass destruction and trying to prevent that, means by which we will promote responsible uses of nuclear energy and deal with our proliferation concerns, and there's a whole range of economic and other political measures. And I would say, you know, we were pleased that we were able to advance the discussions, certainly in level of detail and in the breadth of issues discussed, from what we covered in the 2+2 meeting in Moscow.

**QUESTION:** But in terms of progress --

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** And I think we made reasonably good progress.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) progress. But in terms of missile defense, you haven't managed to overcome some of the main kind of stumbling blocks that you had?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, that -- we made a lot -- the two Secretaries made significant progress in Moscow last week, as you know. And you've heard the Russians publicly acknowledge that some of the American ideas on transparency and confidence-building were of interest. And we also discussed those in some detail, and the Russians made clear they were impressed by this -- our words, not theirs.

There are differences in missile defense. I think that we have -- the two Secretaries set the stage for progress, but there are differences that remain. And this is pretty much what we expected. We made progress in a number of areas, and this document, this strategic framework document, has sections on security which go beyond missile defense; it has a section on nonproliferation, which is quite extensive, had a lot of progress there; combating terrorism; economic cooperation. So it is a very substantive document, and so we made progress in all of these areas, including the security area.

**QUESTION:** Just one quick follow-up. Do you think you'll have the strategic document -- framework document ready to sign or initial at the meeting between President Bush and Putin in the first week of May?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, it remains to be seen. We are not yet in a position where we've agreed on the text. I will admit some bias in responding to these questions. I'm frequently asked when will the other party agree to X, whatever X is terms of an agreement. I sit at the table and I often find it difficult to predict when my counterpart will finally, you know, reach a meeting of the minds with me. It's always a difficult challenge. But we're working -- I think as you can see from the schedule, we're working at a very fast clip. We were only in Moscow -- and you were there, of course, too -- last week. We had a quick turnaround and we were prepared for lengthy and extensive negotiations over the last two days. And we're going to stay at this at a pretty intense pace with the hope of reaching agreement soon.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** The talks the last two days were constructive, which is the term of art in this particular case. It means that we all had the impression that the Russian delegation was here to work and to make progress. That is not to -- you know, they weren't going to give away positions where they had disagreements, but they weren't throwing up roadblocks and spinning things up. We were moving at a fast clip and not just talking; we were making progress and finding ways to move ahead.

Now, does that mean we can tell you that this document will be ready? No. I don't know. But I found the discussions to be serious and you had plenty of opportunities, as there always are in these things, to get sidetracked, and nobody was taking any of them. So we just kept moving ahead.

**QUESTION:** Okay, thank you.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Sure.

**OPERATOR:** Our next question comes from Demetri Sevastopulo from *Financial Times*.

**QUESTION:** John, Dan, hi. Back in October when the 2+2 happened in Moscow, Lavrov and the Russians also said they were impressed at the transparency measures, but then their subsequent statements after the visit suggested that they -- really, no progress had been made and they were still as opposed as they had been. So what have you put on the table, not since last week but since October, that is going to satisfy the Russian concerns, or have you satisfied them so far?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We've continued to develop things in our dialogue. I mean, first of all, I do think if you were to read the press transcript or see the video of the leaders together, our ministers, that is to say, together in October and here more recently just last week, I think it was a substantial movement in terms of the Russian characterizations of the American position on missile defense and the degree to which their concerns were being addressed. Foreign Minister Lavrov said the ideas put in the table by the United States were useful and important.

**QUESTION:** But he said that in October, John.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, I think you'll see the language is different, and that would be an interesting comparison. You might want to go back and check those transcripts.

But also, just I think in the characterization, the way it was done, clearly, a lot of progress has been made in the interim. And we've had dozens and dozens of hours of experts discussions in the interim, but we have developed additional ideas. We've developed additional ideas with respect to how personnel could operate and monitor and inspect facilities. We've had additional ideas in the areas of technical monitoring and transparency and communicating what our intentions are, and making that more predictable to our Russian colleagues. So we have put on the table quite forward-leaning proposals and they're quite extensive.

**QUESTION:** Have you considered or have you said to the Russians you might consider not actually putting the interceptor missiles on the ground in Poland until you both agree that Iran is a threat?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** No.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes, that's the short answer.

**QUESTION:** And you're not considering that?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** We've told them -- we've told them that we were willing to work with them along the lines we've discussed, but we've not made that kind of a promise. Of course, we still are working with the Poles and the Czechs, so there's a lot of negotiating going on.

**QUESTION:** But is that conceivable, though, as something you might do to alleviate their concerns?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** As Dan said, that's not something we've put on the table so far.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Yeah, we don't -- we think that it is perfectly legitimate to address Russian concerns, which we think are misplaced, but they are genuine, genuinely felt, or at least they appear to be genuine. It's perfectly legitimate to address these concerns through transparency and confidence-building measures, and we've done that. And the Russians -- Minister Lavrov has said publicly that he's found these constructive.

It's quite another thing to, in advance, appear to give the Russians a veto over our defense cooperation with a NATO ally, and we have no intention of doing so.

**QUESTION:** Just a quickie and then I'll get off and let other people ask questions. In October, you talked about a framework which both sides would then evaluate or work out a way to jointly evaluate whether Iran was a threat. So, presumably, that's something you have to factor in in terms of reaching a compromise.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We have had extensive discussions along those lines that have involved very detailed exchanges of intelligence information. So we have pursued that further. I think some of the thinking in those exchanges is certainly being carried forward in the transparency and confidence-building measures.

**QUESTION:** Okay, thank you.

**OPERATOR:** Our next question comes from Desmond Butler with the Associated Press. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hi. Can -- how would you describe this document? And other than correcting whatever sins we've committed in describing the relationship with Russia, what is the purpose of it?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Dan, do you want to --

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** How would we describe it? Well, it is -- we've drafted documents like this before. It is in the form of a highly substantive joint statement, many pages. It is not a treaty, but it is not just a -- it's not simply a list of principles. It is quite specific in areas where we've outlined cooperation. Where does it fit in the overall relationship? Well, I talked about that a little bit earlier.

These documents can be very useful in both codifying and guiding governments ahead. And in this case, we have the political fact that the Russians have gone -- are going through, now coming out of, a political -- well, I still suppose going through -- a political transition. We're going through an election process ourselves. And there have been a lot of difficult issues in the relationship with Russia, so much so that, as I said, it tends to obscure very substantive, meaty areas where we're making progress and working together quite well. And it is important to record that. It is important also to outline areas of further work. And this document will be important if we can use it to make progress on some of the tougher issues, like post-START agreement and missile defense.

So it's -- the document, as Secretary Rice said in Moscow last week, has that broad character. It includes things where we have already agreed, things where we're close to agreeing and things that are tough, which is -- and it's a -- there are a lot of issues, which is why we were at it for many, many hours yesterday and today.

**QUESTION:** Does that mean that it's intended, in part, to help bridge the political transitions that are going on?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, I wouldn't say bridge it, but when you have new leaderships and new presidents in both countries within a year, it's good to have a document that gives some positive momentum to the relationship. And when there are difficult issues, it's good to remind both countries and the world at large of the many areas of cooperation. So there are many things that this document can do, and we'll see if we can succeed.

**OPERATOR:** Nina Donaghy with Fox News, your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hi, just firstly in terms of timing, are you concerned that you want to reach some kind of deal before Putin leaves office?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, we'll see how far we get and when we get it. John put it very well, in kind of a practical way, it is very difficult to make predictions about when you'll close on a text when there are two sides. And there are serious issues out there. Certainly, the talks were very -- were constructive and serious. People were not finding -- weren't circling or treading water. But there are -- until it's done, it's not done. So you know, time is short, on the other hand. If you have lots of time, you work at one pace; and if you have less time, it tends to compress the decision-making cycle. So we'll see.

**QUESTION:** Can I just ask you -- you just said that the document has a very broad character. You may not be able to answer this, but can I at least ask --

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** You can always ask.

**QUESTION:** Would this broad character include Russian concerns about new NATO members? I'm thinking particularly of Georgia and the Ukraine. There's been a lot of controversy about this, where the U.S. stands on this. Can you say, was this on the table?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, no, to answer your question about whether it's on the table, no, that is -- we don't -- NATO decisions are not negotiated with Russia, so that is not on the table. It's --

**QUESTION:** But did you address Russia's concern?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, not in a substantive way. But you know, it may be that we decide to simply note areas of disagreement. That's possible. And NATO enlargement has certainly been an area of disagreement. But --

**QUESTION:** So can I -- (inaudible) would that be fair to say that was part of the discussion?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** You know, not really. There was not a substantive discussion of NATO enlargement, and the Russians didn't make long speeches against it. They know -- they have a position, they know we know what it is. There are lots of opportunities for making long speeches about things where we disagree, but that was not the purpose of this session. I think that's a pretty fair characterization.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Yes.

**OPERATOR:** Our next question comes from Viola Gienger from Bloomberg News. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hello, can you tell us anything more specifically -- you mentioned the progress at the beginning in your opening statements and that you felt like you had made some headway. But did you make headway specifically on the missile defense elements of this overall agreement?

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Well, headway can be measured in a couple of ways. And I think, you know, it's a subtle point, but some of what we have been doing and I think we're benefitting from is that when you have these exchanges and you talk clearly about what is motivating the United States to proceed in this direction, what are Russia's concerns, and in specific what are the details of how we will go about that, what are the capabilities our system, what do we think the threat environment looks like and what are we prepared to do with respect to transparency and confidence-building measures to try to address Russian concerns, I do think at the end of that process there is a much greater level of understanding which has been built up. We know in some far greater level of detail what Russian concerns are and why, and I think they understand in much greater detail why we are pursuing various activities, what the capabilities of the systems are, and so on. There is a real benefit to that because what that will hopefully bring is a willingness to work out then transparency and confidence-building measures such that we can -- we can move

on from this issue. And while the Russians have clearly stated they disagree with the U.S. intention to deploy missile defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic, they have said, nonetheless, that they would be prepared to have these discussions about transparency and confidence-building measures that the U.S. has put forward that they think are useful and constructive and important and could, I think if created properly, address their concerns. And so that's where we're headed.

Now, another way of measuring progress, of course, is the degree to which you are able to work out specific language in the document. And I think on both scores we made a lot of headway. I don't want to be -- I don't want to lead you to believe it's all finished, there aren't additional major issues. That would be wrong. There are significant issues that still need to be resolved, missile defense being one of them. We still need to have some serious conversations about those things. But we've moved quite a distance and been productive over the last two days, in closing on a number of areas in the document.

**OPERATOR:** Our next question comes from Lachlan Carmichael with AFP news agency. Your line is open.

**QUESTION:** Hi. Yeah, I wanted to ask you, is one of the biggest Russian concerns that after the Bush presidency is over, the next president may be free to build a massive missile defense system in Eastern Europe that really could be a threat to them. Even if you're arguing now it's against Iran, they may not be reassured that you cannot guarantee that in the future.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Wow, usually when we get questions like the next administration, it's usually won't they cancel the program. This is an interesting one. Not terribly -- look, that's in the category of exceedingly unlikely and the Russians have never brought it up in that way. They know very well that, you know, they have a pretty clear understanding of the debate here and they've never suggested that the next administration will build a massive facility. Sometimes they raise issues like breakout and confidence -- how can we be sure that this very limited system won't grow in the future, and they usually say, you know, many years down the road. And then our answer to that is, well, let's discuss transparency and confidence-building measures; and if you really want to be ambitious, let's discuss combining our efforts so that we're doing this jointly and with NATO.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** We've stressed we think that's the greatest long-term confidence-building measure. We've offered a partnership in a joint regional missile defense architecture in which the objective would be to defend the United States, Russia and European nations from missile attack. And if you're a partner and you have insight and influence into the direction of the program over the long run, we think that provides the greatest degree of confidence.

I would say there is a predictability and a lead time that we are trying to emphasize. As an example, the facilities that the United States has proposed for Poland and the Czech Republic, we hope to complete the construction by around 2013, roughly about six years after when we began these latest round of serious discussions with the Russians. That's about six years of warning; if we were to do something in the future, there's a long lead time as well. And so it's that kind of commitment to providing some kind of transparency and predictability, and enhancing that over time (inaudible) give some greater reassurance should there be some fear that -- unfounded fear that some -- how the U.S. system would be turned against Russia at a later date.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Okay, you all, we're heading into the evening here. I think we have time for another one or two questions, at most.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Headed into the evening. That's great. (Laughter.)

**OPERATOR:** Okay, our last question comes from Dmitry Kirsanov with TASS news organization.

**QUESTION:** Hi, this is Dmitry Kirsanov from TASS. Gentlemen, I was wondering if you could specify some of those transparency and confidence-building measures in terms of, you know, giving Russians some ability to inspect the facilities in Czech Republic and Poland.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, I'd rather not go into detail until, you know, we've reached agreement on all of these things. And working out the details of transparency and confidence-building measures will take time. That's a sort of separate, parallel track. But I think we had a very long session yesterday going through some of the details and asking -- answering a lot of the questions that the Russian delegation had. And I think they were -- well, you can ask them, but this was a good session. They knew that we're serious about it.

**QUESTION:** I see. Thank you.

**OPERATOR:** And I do not show any further questions at this time.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Dan and John, I appreciate it.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FRIED:** Our pleasure.

**ACTING UNDER SECRETARY ROOD:** Appreciate it.

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