



Remarks at EastWest Institute 2007 Annual Awards Dinner

John D. Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Washington, DC

April 25, 2007

Thank you for your very kind introduction, Mr. Mroz.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues, it's a privilege to be with you tonight. We are here to honor two great men and to celebrate the 200 year U.S.-Russian relationship to which they have contributed so much.

I'd be remiss, however, if I did not first say a few words about the passing of Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin. As Secretary Rice said yesterday: "I extend my condolences to the Yeltsin family and the Russian people. As Russia's first democratically elected post-Soviet president, President Yeltsin will be remembered for his significant contribution to ending the Cold War and his efforts to expand political and economic freedom at home and abroad. He ushered in a new era for his country in which ordinary Russians were able to speak and worship without fear, to own property, and to choose their leaders freely. In doing so, he inspired a generation of young Russians to build a bright new future for their country and to choose peaceful relations with their new neighbors. President Yeltsin will also be remembered fondly by the American people for establishing good relations between our nations after many years of conflict."

There are few others who personify the U.S.-Russia partnership like Boris Yeltsin did, but two of them are being honored this evening. I have known both Yevgeniy Velikhov and James Billington for many years, so I can personally testify to their engagement in U.S.-Russian relations across a wide spectrum of critically important endeavors.

I was Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans Environment and Science in the 1980s when I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Velikhov. He was then, and remains, a civic leader of great stature. Dr. Velikhov is Secretary of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, President of the Russian Research Center Kurchatov Institute, and Russia's representative to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project. In his various roles, Dr. Velikhov has fostered invaluable cooperation with the United States in the areas of nuclear energy and technology, and currently serves as an advisor to the EastWest Institute's U.S.-Russia Constructive Agenda Initiative.

I must also mention that for many years, Dr. Velikhov has been active on children's initiatives. He established the first U.S.-Soviet children's e-mail network in 1988 and brought Junior Achievement to Russia in 1991. By 2002, that program had facilitated the education of over 2 million young Russians in the principles and practices of business management and free market economics.

In all these activities, Dr. Velikhov has found a splendid counterpart in James Billington, our Librarian of Congress. I met Jim Billington when I was Deputy National Security Advisor to President Reagan. Who in the scholarly world could have been better qualified than Dr. Billington to brief and assist the president on U.S.-Russian affairs? He's the author of many scholarly works, including *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism*; *The Icon and the Axe*; *Fire in the Minds of Men*; *Russia Transformed: Breakthrough to Hope*; and *The Face of Russia*. From 1973 to 1987 Jim was director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars where he founded the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies.

Now, as Librarian of Congress, Jim is the founder of the Open World Program and originator of the Meeting of Frontiers Project. The Open World Program enables emerging leaders from Russia and other Eurasian countries to experience American democracy and civil society.

So Yevgeniy Velikhov and James Billington have dedicated their lives to bringing our emerging leaders, our scientists, our historians, and our national institutions closer together. I think they deserve a round of applause, don't you? (Pause for applause)

For 200 years now, Russia and the United States have shared a multi-faceted diplomatic relationship, at one point even sharing a land border when Russia had a settlement at Fort Ross, California. The first U.S. Ambassador to Russia (in St. Petersburg) was none other than John Quincy Adams. The first Russian Ambassador to the U.S. (in Philadelphia) was the distinguished Andrei Yakovlevich Dashkov. The list of their successors comprises the most adept, experienced, and wise emissaries our two countries could possibly dispatch to what became our settled capitals, Moscow and Washington. These ambassadors were charged with guiding bilateral affairs that long have been of global significance. And our bilateral relationship is in no way less critical today, not just for Russians and Americans, but for the many other peoples and nations who look to us for far-sighted leadership and constructive international cooperation.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of the Cold War, contacts between our citizens expanded rapidly in number and diversity. That's a splendid development to which the EastWest Institute has contributed a great deal. Russians and Americans work together on a daily basis in business, industry, and education. At the same time, our governments cooperate intensively to combat the threats of terrorism, nuclear arms proliferation, infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, and other global challenges.

The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program (also known as the Nunn-Lugar) is certainly one of the most important bilateral initiatives. The purpose of the CTR Program is to secure and dismantle weapons of mass destruction and their associated infrastructure in former Soviet Union states, to consolidate and secure these weapons, to increase transparency and encourage higher levels of conduct in handling these weapons, and to support cooperation with the objective of preventing proliferation.

CTR has provided funding and expertise for states in the former Soviet Union (including Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) to decommission nuclear, biological, and chemical weapon stockpiles, as agreed to by the Soviet Union under disarmament treaties such as START. And in recent years, the CTR program has expanded its mission by enhancing land and maritime border security in the some Former Soviet countries.

Even during the Cold War, NASA and the Russian Space Agency (Roskomos) cooperated through data exchanges. This led to the first joint human space mission, the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, and engagement on a wide array of other cooperative programs, including the International Space Station. Today, we work closely with Russia on the International Space Station – so closely, in fact, that NASA has an office at Roskosmos. You may recall that our partnership with Russia paid huge dividends when the space shuttle fleet was grounded after the Columbia accident in early 2003. The Russian Soyuz spacecraft was the only remaining means of reaching the space station, rescuing our stranded American and Russian astronauts.

Given both countries' expertise in space, we also have very successful joint commercial ventures. One of them is called "Sea Launch," a commercial launch vehicle that is actually a four-way venture between American, Russian, Norwegian, and Ukrainian companies.

U.S.-Russian commercial cooperation, in fact, is one of the most dynamic dimensions of our multi-faceted relationship. Last year, the United States and Russia reached a

bilateral WTO market access agreement. This was an important step forward that will benefit us both. Now Russia is working to fulfill all of the multilateral requirements for membership in the WTO. We view this as a positive step towards Russia's integration into the world economy.

On the two greatest challenges that we face globally—our ability to defend ourselves against terrorists and our ability to restrain countries from becoming nuclear weapons states—Russia is one of our strongest partners worldwide. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program helps us jointly counter these threats. So does U.S.-Russian bilateral cooperation within the framework of the Six Party Talks with North Korea, and Russia's partnership in our successful passage of Security Council resolutions in December 2006 and March 2007 to impose Chapter VII sanctions on Iran. These two critical challenges—the nuclear weapons programs and aspirations of North Korea and Iran—require a united U.S.-Russian response.

So in the areas of scientific research, space exploration, commerce, countering terrorism and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the world looks to Russia and the United States for leadership. And in many ways, Dr. James Billington and Dr. Yevgeniy Velikhov personify that leadership. They have seen U.S.-Russian relations evolve, grow deeper and stronger over the length of their distinguished careers, and they have helped make that happen. I therefore commend the EastWest Institute for honoring them.

200 years of U.S.-Russian diplomatic relations have taught us that Americans and Russians are essential partners in promoting peace and prosperity around the world. Every effort we can make to strengthen that partnership is a wise investment in our common future.

Thank you very much.

Released on April 26, 2007

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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