



## Upcoming Moscow 2+2 Meeting

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**MR. CASEY:** Good morning, everybody. Before we go on over to our regular daily briefing at 12:30 just wanted to give you all an opportunity to hear a little bit from Assistant Secretary of European and Eurasian Affairs Dan Fried about the Secretary's upcoming meetings to Moscow. As you know, she'll be traveling there with Secretary Gates for our first-ever 2+2 format meetings with the Russians, got a very important agenda with the Government of Russia. It continues to be a critical relationship for us. So I thought we'd allow Dan to have an opportunity to talk to you a little bit about what the Secretary will do there and otherwise cover some of those issues in our bilateral relationship.

Dan.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Thank you. Good morning, everyone. The -- well, to start with a slight correction. There was actually a 2+2 ministerial several years ago -- Igor Ivanov, Sergei Ivanov on the Russian side, Colin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld on the American side. But this 2+2 came out of the Kennenbunkport meetings of the two presidents, where they agreed to task their experts to work on some of the tough strategic issues: missile defense, CFE among them, and then report back to ministers. This is the first 2+2 ministers meeting following Kennenbunkport. So my colleague, Mr. Casey, was in essence correct, and I apologize for being picky.

Experts have met on missile defense, twice on CFE, two times for a full session, one time for a shorter session. In addition and somewhat parallel tracks, experts have been meeting on post-START regime, and those issues plus others will be on the agenda for the foreign ministers when they meet. The senior officials, Assistant Secretary Rood, Under Secretary of Defense Edelman and I, will be going out to Moscow in advance. We'll be leaving Tuesday night. We'll have talks Wednesday, Thursday, the Secretaries of State and Defense arrive Friday morning. They will have intense plenary sessions plus side meetings Friday and Saturday. Schedules are being finalized. But the agenda will be about the strategic issues on which the United States and Russia can and, in our view, should make progress.

We have differences, that is, missile defense is one area of known differences. CFE, the Russians have said that if they're not satisfied they will suspend their obligations under the treaty on December 12th. But we have also worked with them on a way forward. We, the United States, have come up with ideas in this and all of the issues to try to make progress, develop common ground and work out arrangements for agreements and understandings on all of these issues.

The strategic basket of issues is one on which the United States and Russia have, as used to be said, objective interests that pull us together, whether it is strategic stability at very much reduced levels of arms, strong verification and confidence-building measures, which is the essence of the START and Treaty of Moscow regimes, whether it is elaborate limitations on conventional forces in Europe, the CFE Treaty, whether it is new prospects for cooperation on missile defense against common threats. These are all areas where we have issues in common. We want to work on these areas, regardless of areas of differences that we have with the Russians in other areas.

We do have differences with the Russians, issues like Kosovo, for example. On the other hand, on North Korea we are working well together. On Iran, we have some differences about tactics, but we're on the same side on this issue.

So the relationship with Russia, to step back, is a complicated one. It's a mixed one. There are areas where we work together extremely well, areas where we have strong differences. That is a fact of life and it's our -- in America's interest to develop and build on the areas where we can work together and deal with the areas where we disagree on their merits and in as cooperative a spirit as we can.

Finally, and in light of some recent press articles, ultimately, U.S.-Russian relations rests on issues of common values and our assessment of Russia; that is, in the American point of view. We are a values-based country and we have a values-based foreign policy. That is true certainly of the Bush Administration. I believe it is generally true of other administrations in our history. We don't do realpolitik very well. We do values-based foreign policy. And the -- our views and concerns about the direction of Russia's political evolution have been well laid out by President Bush and recently by Secretary Rice. I commend to you the -- her *New York Post* interview where she talked about this quite frankly.

We do look at these things. They do affect our relations. It is not an issue of lecturing Russia, it's an issue of our belief that a strong Russia is apt to be a better partner for us in the world and a strong Russia means a Russia of strong institutions. And Secretary Rice pointed out that our problems with the development of Russian democracy are precisely because we don't see strong independent institutions developing either in or out of government. We see a strong -- obviously a strong presidency. These were her words. She said it better than I just have. But we believe that a strong Russia with strong independent institutions with their version of checks and balances will be a better partner for us and a better player in the world in the 21st century and it's that kind of partner and that kind of Russia we wish to see. So let me stop there and answer questions on this or any other issue.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Andrei Sitov from TASS. Building up on what you just said, is it true as *The Washington Post* reported this morning, that the Administration has basically decided not to try to influence Russia's internal politics from now on?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I would not put it that way. I do not think it is true. It was interesting. Secretary Rice devoted a lot of her interview to the *New York Post* about Russian democratic developments. But it's a complicated question beyond a simple answer of no. Russia's fate is in the hands of Russians. Foreigners do not dictate Russia. We do not -- the notion of America pushing Russia in certain directions or being responsible for Russia is not the right question. I'd put it this way, though. America does stand for democracy and values. It does have an impact on our relations. We do speak out and we do meet with both the Russian opposition and independent civil society, and we do express ourselves when we have problems and when we have concerns. And other countries talk about American politics. You know, this is a global world; everybody talks about everybody else.

Russia's fate is going to be decided by Russians, but it is -- the United States has a great interest in Russia's future. We do speak out about this. We make our views known. We do, as Secretary Rice says, our best to nurture and support independent civil society in Russia. We don't hide that. We're proud of our efforts and we will continue to do so.

**QUESTION:** If I may go to the trip now, are you bringing anything new in the U.S. positions? Rather, not you, but the U.S. delegations, primarily the secretaries themselves? Will there be any new elements in the U.S. positions that are pretty well known? If not, how do you intend to move the process forward?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, I was -- we have offered very creative -- what I think are very creative ideas and I even will reveal that the Russian counterparts have acknowledged that our ideas offered some interesting openings. So I look forward to a discussion. We don't have -- our proposals, our ideas, are not take it or leave it on missile defense and CFE. We are quite open to hearing Russian suggestions for positive ways forward. So we look forward to good discussions.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** So much of the coverage in advance has been on missile defense. I wanted to ask about the other issues.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Will post-START, post-Moscow Treaty be on the agenda? Can you describe to us what the thinking is about the way ahead, and will some kind of post-START/post-Moscow architecture be ready by the time those two treaties expire?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Yes, it will be on the agenda. That is, the post-START regime is on the agenda. We hope to be able to take a lot of the confidence-building and verification measures from START and then apply it to the regime that of the Treaty of Moscow, which is now in effect. Now, I am not an expert on the details of the discussions, but we think that it is important to take the best of START and have a robust regime so that when the START Treaty expires we're able to move forward and there isn't a gap, which would be unfortunate. So we look forward to being able to work with the Russians on this basis.

**QUESTION:** Well, if I could follow up, does this represent a shift in Administration position that's been kind of anti-treaties with big negotiations? Is this an acknowledgement that you do need some sort of treaty regime to move into the future?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I didn't say -- you know, the form this takes is up for discussion. We're focused right now on the substance. I wouldn't say it's a shift. All this year, all of 2007, we've been working with the Russians on a good post-START regime. The form of that regime is something to be discussed. It's both -- there are issues of the form of the regime and then how -- the details of what's covered and how. But we're working with the Russians and we want to be able to move ahead.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** I just wanted to get a sense of your sense of achievables to this particular trip and the timeline beyond. I mean, you know, with a December the 12th deadline coming ever closer --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** On CFE.

**QUESTION:** On CFE. Are you looking for a statement from the Russians at this meeting that they're willing to delay that a little bit further, to rethink it more fundamentally because you haven't got anything?

And on START, clearly there's an awful lot of negotiating to be done. Can you give us a sense of when you feel that it might be realistic to conclude that upgraded Treaty of Moscow?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I would not expect to have these issues wrapped up at the end of the meetings, you know, ten days from now. This is, as Tom Casey and I have pointed out, the first 2+2 discussion in this format. So for the first time, I think it's important to frame up the issues and give direction, guidance, instructions to the experts, the negotiators, and then we'll proceed.

Now, you did mention, though, that December 12th is a date that the Russians have set. You know, until they set it, we had no idea that this -- you know, that this was a deadline. They created this. We want to work as fast as possible so that the Russians don't suspend their obligations. Obviously anything that weakens this wonderfully successful arms control regime is something that would cause us concern and has caused many of our allies very great concern. So we hope to be able to work -- but as far -- work with the Russians on a solution. As far as I know, however, the Russians have said and not changed their position that December 10th as the deadline stands.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Speaking of deadlines, December 10th is the Kosovo deadline and the 12th is the CFE, right? I just wonder, you had some talks up at -- in New York about Kosovo. Do you think you're heading for a train wreck with the Russians in December on this issue?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, we very much hope that the international community can support a resolution of Kosovo's final status in a way that is practical and serious and takes the region forward. Secretary Rice has talked about that. Right now our emphasis is on having -- is supporting the troika of U.S./EU Russian negotiators who were trying to work with the Serbs and Kosovars. Their mandate expires on the tenth. They are working flat-out. And last Thursday, the Contact Group ministers, including Minister Lavrov and Secretary Rice, authorized the negotiating troika to push ahead and offer ideas, be active, get out there and see what they could do to build on common ground. We support them and that's where I'd like to leave it for now. But we are well aware of the calendar and well aware that there are some tough issues coming up in December.

**QUESTION:** What's the current state of negotiations between the United States and Poland and Czech Republic on missile defense? And what is the impact of the upcoming elections in Poland on these negotiations? And when do you expect the agreement may be signed? Polish officials said a few months ago that it may happen in September, October. It did not.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Assistant Secretary Rood just returned from talks with the Poles. He said they made progress on many of the issues, sort of -- a lot of serious sitting down, going through things line by line, made some progress. Now, the Polish elections are coming up. We're going to have to see the result of those elections and how long it takes to form a new government. I should also add that obviously on an issue like this that requires a Polish Parliamentary vote, we are discussing these issues with the opposition. They have experts, so we're in contact with them. The elections will take place in Poland. We will see about the calendar. Obviously, we're working at a good pace with Poland, but given the elections, we have to be -- you know, we have to be mindful. Today's opposition could be tomorrow's opposition or it could be tomorrow's government. So we'll see.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Will the talks touch the issue of Russian arms sales to Syria -- missiles?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I imagine that this is one of the issues that could easily come up. We've expressed our concerns before about conventional arms sales. I can't predict what will happen, but that is something that could easily come up, yes.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** There's a vote planned, as you know, for next week in the Congress on the Armenian genocide resolution. All indications are that that will make it through committee. What will the U.S. -- what will the Administration be saying to Turkey in the aftermath?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** The Administration opposes House Resolution 106. And we think it would do grave harm, both to U.S.-Turkish relations and to U.S. interests, including damage to -- it would hurt our forces deployed in Iraq, which rely on passage through Turkey. It would do far greater harm than good. It would do nothing to advance Turkish-Armenian reconciliation.

But more to the point, it is not simply this Administration which opposes this bill, but all former living Secretaries of State have written to Speaker Pelosi in opposition, including: Madeleine Albright, Warren Christopher, Colin Powell, Henry Kissinger, James Baker, Alexander Haig, George Shultz, Larry Eagleburger. They have all expressed the view that this resolution could, and I quote, "endanger our national security interests in the region, including the safety of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Now, no one, neither the former secretaries nor the Administration denies that a terrible and inexcusable tragedy of mass killings and forced exile befell innocent Armenians in the last years of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and after. Those are historical facts. Up to a million and a half people were killed or forced into exile. The United States has recognized this. President Bush, like President Clinton before him, has formally recognized it in annual statements on Armenian Remembrance Day on April 24th. So the Administration does not deny anything. We do not deny anything. But we do not believe that this bill would advance either the cause of historical truth or Turkish-Armenian reconciliation or the interests of the United States and we oppose it.

**QUESTION:** That statement seems to presume that Turkey will retaliate by restricting some sort of access to Iraq by saying that this would harm U.S. troops. Do you presume that?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I don't want to discuss a possible Turkish reaction to a bill that I hope doesn't pass, but it is true that the Turkish reaction would be extremely strong. It has been strong when such resolutions have passed before and we have to be mindful of how much we depend and how much our troops and the Iraqi economy depends on shipments from and through Turkey.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Getting back to Russia, you spoke a moment ago about the Kosovo disagreement and how you hope --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Right.

**QUESTION:** -- to try to handle that. If that effort is unsuccessful in containing that disagreement, do you foresee a possibility of getting into a tit-for-tat, whereby the Russians might retaliate for some action on Kosovo by putting pressure on something in the caucuses, putting pressure on Georgia, perhaps?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** That's a very fair question. I would like to think that this won't come about. I hope that the negotiations can succeed. These are serious issues and not the sort of thing where countries should consider actions that would be destabilizing. But for now, let's concentrate on making the negotiations themselves a success, building on common ground and solving the problem in the only way it can be solved.

**QUESTION:** Would it be destabilizing if the Russians retaliated by, for example, attempting to do it with annexing --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- certain territories?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I'm -- well, happily, since you put the question in the form of a conditional, I can then say that I don't have to respond to hypotheticals, but --

**QUESTION:** Well -- but you raised the question of destabilizing the --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** No, no, the -- no, as I said, it is a fair question. I hope we're not faced with that eventuality. If we do, there will be more to say on it, so -- fair question, yes.

**QUESTION:** Since you were in Moscow with Secretary Gates in April, there doesn't seem to be very much movement on missile defense at all. The Russians have made proposals, several proposals which don't seem to satisfy the Pentagon or the Missile Defense Agency. Is there anything that you're going to bring to the table, any compromise or proposal from the U.S. side that might ally or assuage the Russian concerns?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, in fact, we find the Russian proposals quite interesting, forward-looking, and open the possibility of serious strategic cooperation on missile defense. We appreciated them very much and we have told the Russians that their proposal to offer up a radar site in Azerbaijan, a Gabala radar site and perhaps a radar site in southern Russia itself, opened up a possibility of having genuinely collaborative efforts on missile defense directed at common problems.

And we would like to see the whole question opened up, as it were, with everything on the table: what NATO is doing, what the United States, Poles, and Czechs may be doing, what Russia is prepared to offer. So this is a very far-reaching proposal by the Russians which opens up some very good potential areas of cooperation.

**QUESTION:** But the condition is that you don't proceed with the X-band radar in the Czech Republic for the time being?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, we --

**QUESTION:** They're not saying they'll give this to you and continue with the (inaudible) radar, so --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Right. I'm aware of the Russian position. In fact, missile defense experts who understand it will -- can explain better than I can that in fact, the Gabala radar and the Czech radar are sort of made for each other, that if combined, they would provide far more of a reliable coverage of Iranian ballistic missiles than either would on its own. So it's really -- if it isn't a perfect fit, it's an awfully good one. And our experts visiting the Gabala radar determined that it did have some serious capabilities.

**QUESTION:** I know, but the Russians aren't going to give you that because they're saying --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, I'm --

**QUESTION:** My question is -- are you going to come up with any kind of a compromise proposal?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** You know, the notion that we have to -- you know, that there's a precondition, it doesn't make a lot of sense. If the Russians are concerned that somehow ten unarmed missiles in Poland are a threat, let's discuss it. If they're concerned that the initial missile deployment in Poland could be followed by something else, we can discuss ways to address that concern. I mean, we're certainly open to those kinds of discussions.

I'd rather not -- you know, I'd rather not have the exchange here. But -- well, you'd rather have it here. But then again, that's you do your work and I do mine. We want -- we want to be able to work with Russia. The answer to the problem that you've posed, seriously, is to redefine the problem so that the answer is we and the Russians and perhaps NATO or NATO-Russia Council work together to produce a common system or a common network of systems, which will benefit everyone's security and also address Russian security concerns. If they're part of the system, they can be much more confident that it is not directed against them.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak pointed recently that the radar in Gabala can not be an additional measure to the one in Poland and Czech Republic. Do you have a -- do you have an answer on that?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, I have sat down for many hours with Minister Kislyak. He's a skilled, capable, very serious diplomat. I respect him. We think that, in fact, we ought to try to find ways of combining our systems so that Russian security concerns are answered and not ignored. So we hope to be able to discuss some of these things.

**QUESTION:** May I just follow-up on that? In your opinion, are the Russians more concerned about the missiles that you keep referring to, the ten missiles in Poland, or are they more concerned about the radar itself, the radar that will see through the Russian territory up to the Urals?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, you know, the -- we've been able to look at each other's territory ever since we've had satellites, so I don't understand what that's about. But I've heard both, I've heard both. And obviously, we want to address all the Russian concerns that we can. But the placement of the radar and the missiles is dictated not by any political consideration, but by issues of geographic coverage. If you place them in other places, you get less coverage of Europe. Poland and the Czech Republic are ideal given the geography and the geometry.

**QUESTION:** But a lot of experts have taken issue with that, that those would be much better placed closer to Iran if that's --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** No, not the -- the missile defense experts who actually understand this can explain that if you place the missiles too close to Iran, they actually can never catch the missiles because they're launched, there's a lag time; you never catch up. So it doesn't work. You need it further back. That's the -- you know, the missile defense experts who know their business say that this is the best. You know, that's -- I'm not one, but they're quite serious; there's no point in putting them where they won't do any good.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** Yes, just to follow up on your previous comments about democracy and values. Are you saying that Secretary Rice will address those issues when she meets with her Russian counterparts? And are you -- do you think that she will raise Mr. Putin's political future in those kinds of conversations?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I never try to predict what my boss is going to say in meetings that haven't happened yet. I will say that she has raised these issues before and she has both raised them with Russian leaders but also discussed issues like that with representatives of civil society. I remember when she met the editors of the newspaper of Ms. Politkovskaya after her murder. So she has done some very high-profile, very important things to demonstrate our support for a free media and independent society and democracy in Russia. That's the record. I can't predict what will happen, but it's -- we have done things like this in the past.

**QUESTION:** And does she think it's a good idea that Mr. Putin would become prime minister?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** I'm not going to talk about that. But the issue -- look, the -- as she said in -- to the *New York Post*, a strong country -- and these are my words, not hers. But a strong country has strong independent institutions. And it's -- in Russia in the 1990s, there was a feeling that the center had collapsed and there was anarchy. That's the Russian -- the current Russian narrative of the '90s. Well, to build a strong center is all well and good, but a center has to have strong institutions across the board. And that's just an observation of development, I suppose.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** I want to address this issue in a different way because you may have an impression also in Washington, D.C., that it's really hard to get things done because the election year is just ahead of us. And is it realistic to expect any change in Russian position on missile defense before the elections, before the presidential elections in Russia? Because it's hard -- maybe it's hard to judge what part of Russian statement is just election rhetoric and where's the real line that Russians are not going to cross?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** You know, I think Russia and President Putin seem to be pretty confident of victory in elections, however they define it. But look, we can -- you've asked a reasonable question, but all we can do is work -- is to work as best we can given the calendar we've got, put forward proposals; and then, after the Russian transition is done, we shall see. But we're not going to artificially slow our engagement with Russia because of politics. Missile defense, happily, has become a more bipartisan issue in this country as some important Democrats on Capitol Hill have been working with us and as our policy has -- our own policy on missile defense has developed. And that's also a good thing.

**QUESTION:** Is it possible that you trade missile defense system for something else that Russia can give you?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** No, those sorts of tradeoffs never really work out. And in history, as a Polish journalist, you're probably aware that tradeoffs have not been such a success in the past. We are going to work on the issues on their merits.

**QUESTION:** You preferred this precept twice now that a strong Russia involves strong, independent institutions.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** How do President Putin's latest political moves square with that precept?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** This is something partly to ask the Russians, but it is true, as Secretary Rice said, that the -- a strong Russia would also have a strong independent parliament and strong, genuinely competing political parties. Now, we have an election, a complicated election process in Ukraine. Now, we don't know what kind of a coalition will emerge -- Orange, Orange/Blue, but it is an open political process. That is there was an election, which everybody judged to be free and fair. They're looking at the votes that count. And when a government emerges, in -- in the Ukraine there will be a government that emerges and we hope it has a stable support. I mean, you go to the electorate and you're tested. So we're interested in working with a Russia which is moving in a democratic direction, and I hope it does. I think democracy is more than just votes. It's also strong institutions, the rule of law, which are a natural check and balance. I mean, that's what democracies do. They all do it differently, but they all do it.

**QUESTION:** Do President Putin's latest moves strengthen or weaken that underlying principle that you just --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, we're going to -- we're looking at this whole process and we'll see what happens. There's been a lot of commentary in the U.S. and European press about that and we're obviously looking at this. We've obviously had concerns about the overall direction. But the -- we'll see how this turns out.

**QUESTION:** On Kosovo, if I may? I just wanted to know what, "without undue delay" means. It's a phrase that's in, I think, Contact.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Undue delay.

**QUESTION:** Undue delay.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Ah?

**QUESTION:** In Contact Group statements and particularly in the one that came out in New York not so long ago.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Right.

**QUESTION:** A few weeks ago or a few months ago, people in this Department were saying without undue delay, in terms of resolving Kosovo without undue delay after the troika finishes its work means the end of this year, by the beginning of next year. Is that a reasonable assumption?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** It's reasonable that we will have to move very quickly; that after December 10th, the negotiating mandate runs out and we will have decisions one way or another at hand. But let's not get into the speculation about that. Let's support the negotiations, hope they develop common ground. But yes, I mean, that timeframe, clearly, if you've moved past the negotiating mandate, there's no point in more negotiations after all the issues are known. So it'll become -- it'll be time for decisions certainly.

**QUESTION:** I have a specific question on Russia again. What are the chances for the 123 nuclear agreement to be completed and moved through the Congress before the end of the year?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** We hope to resolve all the issues and be able to do that. There are a couple of issues and we'll -- that may be discussed. We are hopeful, this is a good idea and we hope it can work out.

**QUESTION:** And then the -- including moving it through the Congress, given the --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Yeah. Like I said, there are some issues, but we are hopeful we can resolve these.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador Fried, recently there've been reports that the Russians have been re-arming. They have developed some new technology, a vacuum bomb. You've seen reports where they've suddenly taken their nuclear and long-range bombers, put them back in the skies. And they've also -- some months ago, planted their flag down in the North Pole under the water. Is some of their aggressiveness worrisome and is Secretary Rice about to talk to them concerning that? And how did they enter into the Middle East talks? They're part of the Quartet and is there a worry that they still may be backing Syria and maybe also more of the Iranians? It's they that developed the reactor there.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Well, there are a lot of -- your question raises -- actually, your questions raise a whole host of issues. Let's -- let me divide them up and go through them quickly.

On the question of arms sales, this is -- you know, we have had concerns. We share our concerns with the Russians and will continue to do so.

With respect to various Russian gestures, whether it's highly visible and televised expeditions under the Arctic icecap or bomber flights, you know, we're looking at that. There's no legal significance to planting the flag. It did have -- it sort of had an anachronistic feel about it.

There are other issues that are -- other issues of concern, whether it's Russian support for separatist regimes that we just don't understand. We don't understand how it supports stability in the South Caucasus to overfly Georgia or militarily support breakaway regimes. We far prefer peaceful diplomatic settlements of these problems than any party's adventurism, and there's more than enough adventurism homegrown that it doesn't have to be imported from outside, and we don't like any adventurism.

We look at these issues one by one. And certainly, there's a -- you know, you can ask the Russians about their own sense of where they are and how they want to present themselves in the world. We want to have as cooperative of a relationship as possible with Russia, but we also work with and support our friends and our principles.

But this is -- you opened up questions that we could spend a long time in discussing, and at some future date, I hope we can.

Thank you very much.

**QUESTION:** On Georgia, since you just mentioned it.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Did the Georgians -- did Georgian President Saakashvili clear with the American side his moving in against the opposition recently?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Clear with the American side?

**QUESTION:** Well, because that's --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** No, that's not actually the way the American Government works. That's -- you must be referring to some other government in another historical era. The answer is no, of course not.

**QUESTION:** There were reports by the Georgian press that he was here in the U.S. in New York.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** No, no, complete surprise. If you're referring to the arrest of former Defense Minister Okruashvili, no, I can tell you absolutely it came as a complete surprise.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Was it an unpleasant surprise?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED:** We have -- any kind of an arrest like this raises some serious questions and we have spoken to the Georgians about it. Yes, thank you very much.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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