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PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials on the President's Trip to the G-8 Summit in Saint Petersburg, Russia

James S. Brady Briefing Room

 [G-8 Summit 2006](#)

3:04 P.M. EDT

MR. JONES: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to welcome you to the briefing on the G8 summit that will be held here next weekend in St. Petersburg. We have two National Security Council officials here to speak to you on background.

Q Why is this on background?

MR. JONES: Because directors from the National Security Council do not speak on the record except while traveling.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good afternoon. I'm here -- I'll be Person One. Good afternoon. I'm here to brief you on the upcoming G8 summit and to give you a brief overview of the President's schedule while he's in Russia. I'll go through some of the specifics of the summit itself, while my colleague will elaborate on other plans that the President has while in St. Petersburg. And afterwards, we'll answer any of your questions.

As you know, the President will travel next week to St. Petersburg to participate in the G8 summit. These summits occur each year, with a different member of the G8 having responsibility for hosting the event. This year, the Russians occupy the presidency of the G8 and have selected St. Petersburg as the site of their summit.

There will also be a bilateral component of the visit where the President will meet separately with President Putin and participate in some events on his own, outside of the formal summit program. My colleague will tell you more about that element of the visit.

In terms of the specifics of the schedule, the President and Mrs. Bush will arrive in St. Petersburg on the afternoon of Friday, July 14th. That evening, the President and Mrs. Bush will attend a social dinner, hosted by President and Mrs. Putin, in Strelina, Russia.

On Saturday, July 15th, the President will meet with President Putin and the two leaders will also have a working lunch. That evening, the President and Mrs. Bush will attend a social dinner with the other G8 leaders and spouses. This will be the beginning of the summit agenda, itself, although, as tradition dictates, the first evening's dinner is purely a social event, and no work is done over the course of that first dinner.

The work of the summit actually begins on Sunday, July 16th, when there will be several meetings among the G8 leaders. The first working session will occur in the morning, followed by a meeting by the G8 leaders with representatives from the Junior 8 or J8 program. This is a program where each G8 country has been asked to send eight student delegates to participate in an alternative summit that occurs in parallel to the leaders' meeting. And then the students are then brought in to meet with the G8 leaders and present the findings of their independent program. The leaders will then have a working lunch, and then they'll participate in the official G8 photograph. And then that evening, there will be a working dinner among the G8 leaders.

Over the course of that first day, on Sunday, that first working day of July 16th, the meetings will cover a wide range of issues, including the priority topics that the Russians have selected of energy security, infectious disease, and education, as well as other areas, such a trade, security, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, Africa, intellectual property rights, as well as other regional challenges.

On Monday, July 17th, the meetings continue, but at this time, the G8 leaders will be participating in meetings in conjunction with and together with leaders that Russia has invited from Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, as well as the President of the Republic of Congo, on behalf of the African Union, and the President of Kazakhstan, representing the Commonwealth of Independent States. They'll also be leaders of a number of international organizations represented by the heads of these organizations, including the U.N.; the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency; the WHO, the World Health Organization; and UNESCO.

As with the meetings on Sunday, the meetings on Monday with the outreach countries -- these are the additional countries I mentioned -- the topics will include a wide range of issues, including security, regional issues, trade, and Africa. Once the lunch is concluded with the outreach countries, the formal summit agenda will end, and the President will depart to return home.

In terms of our objectives for the summit, we look forward to the summit, and I know the President does, as an opportunity to discuss regional -- global challenges with other leaders. We also see the summit as an opportunity to advance our priorities in a number of areas, including the ones that the Russians have selected as their focus areas. These are, as I mentioned before: energy security; infectious disease, and education. But we also look forward to the meetings, as well as the work we're doing in terms of the statements that the leaders will issue to advance our policy objectives in a number of other priority areas, such as counterterrorism, nonproliferation, the fight against corruption, trade, and other topics.

The leaders are also likely to devote considerable attention in their discussions to regional security issues. These include Iran, North Korea, Iraq, Darfur, and others. And as is tradition with these summits, at the end of the discussions, the leaders will issue a series of statements reflecting a series

of initiatives or outcomes that the leaders have signed on to together as the formal part of the G8 exercise.

So on that final day, on that Monday, you'll see a series of statements that the leaders will issue that will reflect the work that's been done over the past six months in preparing for the summit, and as we get closer to the final agreement on the summit text. And then, of course, by the time the text is issued, we will give you a little bit more briefing in terms of the specifics of what's in there, and what's of particular note for people to pay attention to.

And with that, I'll turn it to my colleague.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you very much. As already has been said, the President will have a separate program in St. Petersburg, in addition to the bilateral meetings with President Putin. We are still working on the details of this. I can tell you that there will be two to three additional events. Exactly what they will be will become clear over the next few days. I can assure you that one of those events will highlight our support for civil society in Russia, civil society as an essential element to the democratic development of any country, including Russia.

As for the bilateral meetings with President Putin, there is no formal agenda. The President will be prepared to discuss the full range of issues in U.S.-Russian relations from counterterrorism, counterproliferation, energy, World Trade Organization, economic relations, to our concerns about the state of democracy in Russia, and to some of Russia's policies towards countries in its region.

Given what is happening in the world today, it's a safe bet that Iran and North Korea will be on the agenda. It's a safe bet that our concerns about backsliding of democracy in Russia -- as I said, Russia's policy towards some of its -- the countries in its region will also be on the agenda. The President has already said that one of the reasons that he's traveling to St. Petersburg is so that he can have a frank and candid discussion with President Putin about these issues.

As far as any documents coming out of the bilateral meetings, all I can tell you at this point is that we are discussing with the Russians ways that we can highlight cooperative efforts in some areas that we think are important to security and economic development. We're also looking at ways to highlight our efforts to deal with areas of disagreements between the two countries. All of this will become clearer over the next several days, and we will have an opportunity, I think, to get back to you before then.

MR. JONES: With that, we're ready to take your questions.

Q President Putin's sherpa, who did allow himself to be quoted, said today he has high hopes that a WTO agreement can be sealed at the bilateral before the summit. Are those expectations justified?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As you probably know, we have been engaged in very intense consultations and negotiations with the Russians on the full range of issues connected with concluding a bilateral market access agreement between the United States and Russia. We're working very hard on this. As we've said for the past several weeks, we are close. That said, there are a number of tough issues out there that need to be resolved, both in the area of agriculture and intellectual property rights.

The President had also made it clear that we will only sign an agreement that is based on commercially sound principles that gets us the type of access to Russian markets that we're looking for. So that if we, in fact, can reach a commercially sound agreement before the G8 summit, I think we will welcome that. But if that does not happen, we will continue the negotiations until we achieve that result.

Q If it doesn't come right before the summit, does that suggest that it won't come until somewhat later, rather than while you're in St. Petersburg?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As I said, we are engaged in intense consultations, and we have been over the past several weeks. I'm not going to make a prediction on when we might conclude this. The point that I will make is that we will only conclude an agreement on a commercially sound basis. If we have that before or during St. Petersburg, we will welcome that. If not, we will continue the discussion.

Q Is there -- is part of the agenda something to do with a civilian nuclear program agreement, and might that include Iran's nuclear program agreement?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As you know, there have been discussions, and very intense discussions, with the EU3, Russia, China, on how to deal with Iran. That issue is on the table. We're awaiting the Iranian response to the package that was offered to them several weeks ago.

As far as civil nuclear cooperation is concerned, this is something that the United States and Russia have been discussing for some time. We are looking at details. What that might be I think it's still somewhat premature to say, but we'll have a better idea as we get closer to St. Petersburg.

Q A question and a very quick follow-up. You said "civil society" in referring to some of the things you'll speak about in Russia. Would you characterize that for me just a bit? And the follow would be: You expressed concerns about backsliding democracy; if you would follow up on that, as well? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Certainly. On civil society, we are talking about such things as non-governmental organizations that are active in human rights, democracy promotion, civic education, environment, public health, issue like that -- youth, for example. Again, what the event might look like I can't tell you at this point. It's something that we're looking at very closely at this point.

The second question, over the past several months, as you know the President, among others, has raised concerns about the state of democracy in Russia. We understand that Russia has made tremendous progress over the past 15 years, that consolidating democracy is a very difficult challenge, particularly after the break-up of the Soviet Union and 70 years of communist totalitarian rule in Russia. Russians clearly have greater freedoms, greater choice now than they did 15 years ago. But over the past couple of years, we have been concerned about the concentration of power in the Kremlin, about the diminishing of the space for public debate, a narrowing of the debate in the press, the recent legislation on NGOs, which raises concerns about your ability to operate freely in Russia.

All these things we have talked about with our Russian colleagues in private. We have mentioned

some of this in public, as well. We want to gain reassurances that Russia is, indeed, committed to democracy, to a democratic future for Russia, and we would hope that they would take some actions that would demonstrate that they are moving in that direction.

Q Sorry, a follow-up on that. These issues will be raised directly one-on-one between Putin and Bush? Or are we talking about being brought up in the overall G8 forum?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'll let my colleague talk about the G8 forum as a whole. The issue of democracy is one that has been a topic of discussion between the two Presidents from the first time they met in Slovenia five years ago. As I said, I don't know precisely what the agenda is going to look like for the bilateral meeting.

That said, the President has already said that he is going to St. Petersburg, in part, to talk to President Putin about our concerns about what is happening domestically in Russia, as well as areas in which the United States and Russia are cooperating. So as I said, it is probably a good bet that this issue will be raised in the one-on-one conversation between the two Presidents.

Q The other issues you're talking about which are of concern to the United States, are they going to happen? What is the time line? Will they come after the G8, or within the context of the G8? The bilateral meeting, I assume, will happen during the period that the G8 is ongoing.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, no, no, the way the schedule will work, as my colleague has already said, is that the formal G8 festivities or summit will begin in the evening on July 15th. The bilateral meetings with President Putin will occur before that. They will probably begin with a social dinner on July 14th, then spill over into the next day with a bilateral session between the Presidents and their advisors. So all that will occur before the formal opening of the G8 summit. That is where a number of these issues will be raised. Whether they come up in the G8 context or not, I will turn to my colleague for an answer.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: One of the unique things about the G8 summit is that there's an extensive period of -- an opportunity for the leaders to talk about a wide range of issues. There are broad agenda items set forth for each of the sessions that they participate in. But within the broad topics that are designated for each event, there's an open and active discussion that occurs in a very small setting with only the leaders -- either only with the leaders, or the leaders and the sherpa. So there's a very, very open and candid discussion that the leaders have about issues of concern, whether they're of external concern, or sometimes issues that they raise about each other.

And so as my colleague said, I fully expect some of the things that you talked about, both the issues regarding democracy, but also the issues regarding global and security challenges of one variety or another to come up at some point over the course of the summit itself, and then potentially when the leaders meet bilaterally.

Q You talked about the President raising these issues of democracy with President Putin. He's done that, of course, before. He met with him a couple of times last year in which this was a prominent part of the conversation. And President Bush said he took President Putin at his word when he said he was

committed to democracy. I'm wondering what you've seen since those meetings. Have you seen anything that's been a positive indicator on these very topics? Or has President Bush's advice gone unheeded, do you think?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: This whole issue, as you know, is a very complicated one, and there are pluses and minuses. Certainly, if you look on the positive side, there have been developments in Russian society over the past 15 years, and I would argue over the past four or five years, that have given Russians themselves greater confidence in their ability to interact with their government, to press their interest, and so forth. Much of this is encouraged in one way or other by government policies. We have seen Russians use the court system to sue the Russian government more frequently over the past few years. And the information we have suggests that the Russians win about 70 percent of these cases.

That said, there are obviously areas of concern -- ones that we've talked about, ones that we have raised both in public and private with our Russian colleagues -- as I said, a narrowing of the political debate, some concerns about how this new NGO legislation will be implemented, other such things, the concentration of power in the Kremlin.

As I said, we understand that this is a long-term problem -- consolidation of democracy. We raise these issues. We do what we can to encourage our Russian colleagues to take steps in the immediate future. But we also try through our discussions and our policies to lay the foundation of what we hope will be a more open and democratic Russian society 10, 15 years down the road.

Q I guess, what I'm trying to get at is the efficacy of the advice that President Bush has given him in the last -- say, focused in the last year or two on this, and whether you can trace anything you think that has occurred as a result of that? Does it have any impact?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, look, it does have some impact. If you look at the NGO law, for example, look at the first draft that was presented to the state Duma, the one that was discussed in public initially. Clearly, the Russian society, Russian NGOs themselves played the lead in raising criticisms about that. But we also supported some of their concerns. We talked very extensively with our Russian colleagues at all levels. And the law that has resulted is a somewhat better law than the one that was originally introduced.

We've also made it clear that implementation of this law is critical and something that we are watching very, very closely. And so far we haven't seen I think what many people feared as a very, sort of tough restriction of the space for NGOs. Quite the contrary. President Putin and other senior Russian officials have made an effort to reach out to elements of the NGO community in the run-up to the St. Petersburg summit. We would like to encourage that, and we would like to encourage him to deal with the broader range of NGOs, including those that at times are critical of government policies, particularly in the areas of media freedoms, human rights and so forth.

Q Back to WTO for a moment. Have the Russians shown any -- or made any concessions on the protection of intellectual property rights?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We're not looking for concessions on intellectual property rights. What we're looking for is a firm Russian commitment to enforce intellectual property rights. This has two aspects to it, at least. One is to bring their own legislation into conformity with World Trade Organization norms and obligations. And they have done some of that over the past years. The second and perhaps critical part of this is enforcement of those laws, to crack down on piracy, to crack down on enterprises that produce for example, counterfeit optical discs and so forth. That's what we're looking for.

The Russians have done somewhat more of this over the past year. President Putin has talked more publicly about the importance of intellectual property rights. But I think it's clear from the conversations that we've had with our industry, with the Hill, and also observing the situation on the ground, that there's a lot more that Russia needs to do in order to put itself on what we would see as a dependable, reliable path towards providing the types of protections for intellectual property rights that we would like to see.

Q So we're not there yet?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We are not there yet, but this is something that we are negotiating very intensely with the Russians right now.

Q A question to Official Number Two. The Russian President recently called for a new arms control, for a new round of arms control negotiations with the Americans about the START I treaty that expires in 2009. Do you expect that issue to be on the nonexistent agenda for the bilateral? And may there be any results of the discussions?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Both governments, in fact, are looking at what to do in 2009. We're both aware of the expiration of the START treaty at that point. These are very preliminary discussions. Will it be on the agenda? I can't tell you at that point. That will depend on what the two Presidents decide to raise.

Q And question to Official Number One. This morning at the IMF, they told us that the managing director is not going to St. Petersburg, which was a surprise to me. What is the significance of the absence of the heads of the IMF and the World Bank in your opinion?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The host country has always the prerogative in deciding who to invite outside of the core G8 participation. And this year the Russians have decided to invite a number of countries, but then the heads of a number of international organization that have a direct linkage to the three priority topics that they've selected for their summit. So I think the IAEA and IEA are there because of the energy issues; the WHO there because of the health issues; and UNESCO there because of the education issues; and I think the U.N. because of its cross-country interests. But the heads of the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, for example, that participated in last year's summit were not invited. But that's ultimately the decision for the host country to make.

Q Are you comfortable with that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we're comfortable with the fact that it's for the host country to select who they invite to their summit, and that they have made that decision and we're willing to participate.

Q Does it also mean that the financial issues are a little bit downgraded in the discussion?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I wouldn't say the financial issues are downgraded. You'll see if you've watched these summits over the last several years that they've focused very much on a broader set of challenges where policy coordination is sort of a more typical part of what we do on the financial side. The degree of coordination that occurs there is more limited, and that's something that, for example, we primarily do through other mechanisms, including through the G7 process, but not -- so I don't see the financial issues being downgraded in any sense this year. I think it's -- what will likely happen at the summit is par for the course for these summits.

Q Are you going to talk about -- (inaudible) -- in regard to the Iranian regime, but stop working for terrorism, as well as WMD in your official statement in G8?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As with many of the statements, they're still being negotiated, and they won't be issued until the summit -- until the leaders have blessed them formally, at the meeting, and they're ready for release on the last day of the summit meeting.

But our administration, this President has been very active in trying to use the G8, as well as a number of other summits that he participates in, to make sure that we use those as effectively as possible to gain cooperation on our security priorities. And those include counterterrorism and nonproliferation. And I think you'll see, come Monday of the week following next, when the leaders' statements are issued, that they'll be what we anticipate to be very good and strong statements of cooperation and common purpose on both those topics.

Q If we could go back to that point for a moment. Would you have liked to have seen counterterrorism and nonproliferation made a more central priority for the G8 summit than being relegated to sort of this amorphous other business category where it's not -- I mean if you have the effect of disease, special education, et cetera, as the top three, but not have counterterrorism and nonproliferation -- was that a disappointment?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. And I think the way you've characterized it is probably not quite fair. What happens with these summits is that the host country will pick a few issues to feature as their signature issues. For example, at our summit two years ago, we picked democracy and Middle-Eastern reform as our priority. Last year, the U.K. selected climate change in Africa as their priority. And the Russians have picked the three topics that I mentioned as their priorities.

But all along the way, there is an ongoing work plan of the G8 that continues from summit to summit. And I think, in large part because of the President's leadership, counter-terror and nonproliferation remain very core parts of the agenda, both in terms of what the leaders do, but also there's a formal work structure that occurs below the leader level to tee the issues up for the -- through the sherpas and ultimately for the leaders, and then to follow up in terms of implementing whatever decisions the

leaders make after the summit.

And so I wouldn't say that they're relegated in any sort of second-class status. The actual degree of cooperation we've gotten on these issues through the G8 has been very good, and we're very pleased with it. And I think our expectations are that the outcome for the summit itself in those areas will be very strong.

Q I'd like to ask a quick question to your colleague on the WTO stuff. Russian officials have in the past linked their accession into the WTO to opening some of the oil fields to American investment. Are those concerns that -- do you have substantive concerns that's the case, that there's a link that the Russians are making there?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You'll have to talk to the Russians about that. We're negotiating the World Trade Organization access agreement on the basis of our interests, based on very close consultation with our industry, the business community. Whether this is linked directly to something else that is happening inside Russia is really something for the Russians to decide. But, certainly, it's not something that's going to affect the way we negotiate this agreement with the Russians.

Q Two questions: One, since you're not going to tell us, perhaps, what you really would hope for in terms of something out of this summit that would advance both the negotiations with Iran and the efforts to deal with North Korea's missile launches and nuclear program, what would be the bottom that you would expect in terms of the summit statement on both of those issues? The least you would expect, what you surely hope to get?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, remember what happens at these leaders summits is essentially on two tracks. One is there is the discussions that the leaders have, and that's always a good opportunity for the leaders to talk about common challenges. And because of what's happened in North Korea and Iran, our expectations are that there will be a very active and intensive discussion both among the G8 and then when they meet with the broader set of countries on those topics.

The other track is what happens in terms of formal statements that are issued. I think to see what the leaders will issue on the foreign policy topics that you're talking about, a good guide is to look at what the foreign ministers came up with when they met just, I guess, last week in St. Petersburg, at the foreign ministers -- the G8 foreign ministers meeting that the Russians hosted. And there, they put out a very strong statement that we were very pleased with on a wide range of topics that Secretary Rice and her team negotiated. And normally, what you expect to see for the leaders on those issues is very much reflective of what the foreign ministers put out when they met -- when they meet. So that will give you kind of a sense of where it's coming from.

Q So a mention, in other words?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Let me just jump in here for a minute. Remember that both of these issues are evolving. The Iranians are going to talk to Solana. We need -- and that conversation may have taken place already. I don't know what the results of that are, at this point. Obviously, this is

a statement that is going to be drafted up to the moment the leaders meet, and a lot will depend on what the Iranians actually do and say.

The same thing, I think, is quite true of the North Korean issue, where, as you know, there is a lot of diplomatic activity. At this point, the President, as you may know, raised this issue with both President Hu and President Putin this morning. There will be further conversations, and a lot will depend on what the response of the North Koreans is.

So we will look for strong statements, but exactly what the content is going to be is going to depend on what happens in the days preceding the summit.

Q And on the top of the agenda, energy security, what would you look for to make you comfortable that Vladimir Putin accepts Western concern with him using energy as a strategic tool?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The concerns we have regarding how the Russians have been using energy are well-known. The Secretary of State, the Vice President and others have talked about it. What we do at the G8, though, is produce a statement of the 8, so it's a common position that we all take.

Again, the specifics of it we'll have to see in terms of what actually comes out once our negotiations are finalized and the leaders have endorsed the texts. But there's essentially two things we're looking for in the energy statement. One is to get the G8 to agree to a set of core energy security principles that address the fundamentals about how the G8 see the challenge of energy security. And for us, in terms of how we go into those negotiations there's certain core principles that are important that reflect our orientation about the importance of transparency, open and competitive markets, and open investment environments, things of that sort that to us are essential elements -- a dependable and predictable regulatory environment. These are all things that for us are important elements of how any nation should address the energy security issue. And we're hopeful that we'll have a statement of principles that will be reflective of those themes that are important to us.

The second track is there will be essentially a work plan, or an action plan that the leaders will issue. And there you'll have more concrete specific initiatives that the leaders will commit themselves to on a range of issues that advance the goal of energy security.

For example, they could be cooperation on protecting energy infrastructure, or promoting the use of alternative energy resources, developing new energy technologies, environmental issues, climate-related issues. And so what you should look for there is more sort of specific -- more concrete, specific initiatives that the leaders have signed on to, many of which will reflect the kinds of things that the President has talked about through the advanced energy initiative and through other domestic priorities that he's identified domestically.

Q Neither of you have talked about our first stop which is Germany, and Chancellor Merkel's constituency. Might we see or hear there the President talk about democracy and Russia's backsliding prior to the summit?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We didn't bring our German expert here and I'd hate to say something that is not consistent with what we know is going to happen. There are some other people that are much more intimately involved in this. The one thing I can say is the freedom agenda is central to the President's foreign policy. He has made that clear. This issue figures in all conversations he has with his counterparts around the globe.

Given Germany's relationship with Russia, given Chancellor Merkel's relationship or developing relationship with President Putin, they will find an opportunity to discuss these issues in some way, and how that would be reflected in public is something that will be decided later.

Q And on the issue of Russian backsliding, you mentioned the President will bring this up with President Putin. Will it be in a way that's as forceful as the Vice President's speech was in Lithuania? And also, how forceful can the President be on the issue of democracy and backsliding given the issue involving North Korea and Iran and Russia's role in solving those issues?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I would hesitate to characterize exactly how the President will raise this in private with President Putin. That's a decision he will make. As I said, he's done this repeatedly with President Putin. It is a constant element in discussions between the two men. The President will phrase this in the way he thinks best to encourage the type of positive movement in Russia that we think is needed to advance the consolidation of democracy in Russia and also produce the type of Russia that will have the strength, the flexibility, and the reliability to be a good partner for the United States -- not only over the next two years, but into the next decade, as well.

The President will raise these issues in his way, understanding that Russia plays an important role on a whole range of issues that are important to our national security. But that has never led him to back away from discussing some very sensitive issues with President Putin.

Q Does President Bush's schedule in St. Petersburg include a formal speech, or anything approaching a formal speech?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No.

Q And in meetings with civil society, though, he'll be making remarks?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As I said, we are still working out the details of that. I wouldn't want to mislead you on that. I don't know exactly how it's going to be organized, but obviously any meeting you have would involve some sort of conversation.

Q If he chooses to speak publicly about the problems with the progress of democracy in Russia, where is it likely to be?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I would hesitate to say where that might happen. There are opportunities when the President will be speaking with the press, or before the press, and he will decide what he wants to raise and how he wants --

Q Are you also hesitant to say whether he will bring that up publicly, or it's just a topic for private discussion, or is that to be determined?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As I said there will be one event at least that deals with civil society. The idea behind this event is to highlight our support for civil society, highlight our support for some young activists who we believe are playing an important role in advancing democratic values inside Russia.

Q There are no more bilats with the other leaders? Just Putin? Will there be any bilaterals with any of the other leaders?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: At this point there's only one bilat that's been scheduled, and that's with President Putin. There are none others that have been scheduled as of now.

Q Is that a possibility?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: If there are any, we will let you know. But at this point, there's only one that we know that has been scheduled, and that's the one --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think I should add at this point that there will be formal, on-the-record, on-camera briefing by the National Security Advisor on Monday.

Q What time?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No time at this point. But the schedule will be much more firm. He'll be able to add more at that point.

Q Question to Official Number Two, you mentioned the principles -- the principles of the energy policies that are acceptable to you. And you did not mention the one that to my understanding is core to the Russians, where they keep talking about the security of supply and security of demand. Is this principle acceptable to you? Or if not, why not?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: First of all, I'm Official Number One, so -- (laughter.) So I wasn't paying attention; you have to repeat the entire question. (Laughter.) What the actual statement will say and what the principals will say, obviously, we'll all see when the negotiations are complete and the document comes out. What will come out is a document that you will be very comfortable with, and it will be a document that will be a consensus, reflect the consensus of the group.

Q I will be comfortable? (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The G8 leaders will be very comfortable with in terms of what it says, and how it addresses the issues you talked about you'll see on the document.

Q Also for the other official, a clarification: Given the importance of the Korean situation at this point, is there a reason that it will overshadow everything else; it will be just Korea and Iran and nothing else, in terms of subjects of the bilateral discussion?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think that's a question for you. The way these normally occur is that there may be an event that clearly requires detailed discussions by the two Presidents, and they will focus on that. But it's also clear that there are a lot of items on the agenda of U.S.-Russian relations that need to be discussed. The President will be prepared to discuss them. I presume that President Putin will be, as well, and the discussion will evolve from there. But I -- it's hard to imagine this focusing solely on one issue. There will be a range of things that will be discussed.

Q The chief Iranian negotiator just said a few minutes ago in Brussels that he will be willing to give a preliminary answer next week. How important for you to get an answer, a final answer, before the G8 summit? And for this issue not to be resolved before the meeting, how will it affect discussions, bilateral or in the meetings, in St. Petersburg?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We have said that we expect a response to the offer in a matter of weeks and not months. What we want is a final response, where are the Iranians going to come out in terms of the offer that was made to them. Again, not knowing what the response is going to be, I don't want to speculate as to what might happen in St. Petersburg --

Q -- preliminary --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we have to wait to see exactly what that response is, and then we will react to that.

Q As one of my colleagues, reporter number three, I think -- Vice President Cheney gave a very forceful speech in Vilnius about Russian democracy. And then he went to Kazakhstan, and was very complimentary of Nazerbajev and didn't mention the human rights issue there. The Russians saw that as a double standard -- this morning complained about that and said, why should we take seriously what he said -- I mean, is there a problem with that mixed message there? Do you have any regrets about the way that played out?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I actually think that was reporter number four who asked that question. (Laughter.) No, look, as I said, the freedom agenda is central to the President's foreign policy. This is an issue he discusses with all his counterparts. It is something that the Vice President discusses as he travels, as well.

We have very complicated relations with a lot of countries, Russia among them. Kazakhstan is another one. And we try to move the entire agenda whenever we have an opportunity. So the President, in Vilnius, raised some very real concerns about what was happening inside Russia and in Russia's policies towards countries in its region. In Kazakhstan, there was also discussions about some of our concerns about what was happening inside Kazakhstan. Obviously, energy is also an important element in the relationship, and you saw some public discussion of that, as well. So we try to shape this to individual countries, but the freedom agenda always remains at the center of our policy.

Q Saakashvili was here yesterday. What will President Bush convey to President Putin about that meeting, about Georgia?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Our policy on Georgia is pretty straightforward, and that is defense of the territorial integrity independence and Georgia. We support moves to consolidate democracy in Georgia, market reform. President Saakashvili has taken a number of important steps in that direction since the Rose Revolution.

Again, I don't know whether this issue will be raised specifically or how, but the policy will be the same, no matter how it is raised.

Q I just want to go back to this one more time, to the backsliding of democracy. Now, you said it would be on the agenda, and you said it's probably a good bet. Can we just -- will this be on the agenda between Bush and Putin?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As I said, I can't tell you what the two Presidents will discuss in particular. There is not a formal agenda where it's laid out like the G8 summit where it's issue after issue, and then there's miscellaneous or something else. What we do for these events is -- we all, I think, have a sense of what needs to be discussed. The President will be prepared to discuss that. He will have numerous opportunities, both one-on-one in smaller sessions and larger sessions with President Putin. And as I said, I expect the issue of the status of democracy in Russia to be raised at some point during the bilateral meetings.

Q This sort of came up last year and nothing happened. According to the World Bank, India, Spain, Brazil, South Korea, and Mexico all have stronger economies than Russia. Spain is ahead of Canada, according the World Bank. China is not a democracy, obviously, but it's the fourth largest economy now in the world. Do you expect any conversation among the G8 partners about changing the makeup of the G8 itself?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Every year, there's a lot of discussion, as your question alluded to, about the makeup of these various international organizations or international summits that the President participates in. When we go to them, our focus is very much on advancing a substantive agenda, in this instance, both the areas that the Russians have identified, as well as specific topics that are of special interest to us. And we're willing to do it through the G8, through the involvement of the outreach countries, or using any other mechanism.

We're less focused on the participants at any individual summit as much as how to achieve the outcomes that we think advance our objectives and the global objectives. So I don't expect there to be an active discussion among the leaders about who's in and who's out. Although, as my colleague said, and as I think I've tried to suggest is that when the G8 leaders get together, they are together for an extraordinarily long period of time, given who is in the room. And there's all sorts of issues that come up. And a topic like this may come up, although I don't necessarily expect it to. I think people will be most -- the leaders will be mostly focused on the substance of how to advance specific policy objectives.

Q Last year, I understand that the President didn't give a press briefing, the last year of the G8. You both mentioned there will be opportunity to be speaking with the press. Does he intend to give a press briefing the last day of the G8?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think we'll be able to get you more in the final schedule, Monday, when we have the on-camera, on-the-record briefing.

Thank you very much.

END 3:49 p.m. EDT

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