

Federal Assembly – Parliament of the Russian Federation
State Duma
Committee on Foreign Affairs
April 25, 1995

To the Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly
of the Russian Federation, I.P. Rybkin

Dear Ivan Petrovich,

We are sending you the Information [Memorandum] prepared based on the State Duma's Committee on International Affairs parliamentary hearing on the subject of "Russian-American relations."

The attachment is on 4 pages.

Chairman of the Committee,

Vladimir Lukin

Information Memorandum
on the results of the parliamentary hearing on the subject:
“Russian-American relations”

On April 18, 1995, the International Affairs Committee of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation held a parliamentary hearing on the subject: “Russian-American relations.” The hearing was attended by Deputies – members of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Russian Federation, the Russian Security Council, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, Ministry of Nuclear Energy of the Russian Federation, the State Committee of the Russian Federation on the Defense Industry, the Committee on Conventional Problems of Chemical and Biological Weapons under the President of the Russian Federation, Ministry of Science of the Russian Federation, the Russian Space Agency, as well as experts from the Russian Academy of Sciences and research think tanks.

1. Participants of the hearing stated that Russia is interested in building a constructive relationship with the United States. The Russian Federation and the United States have common fundamental strategic interests primarily in the areas of maintaining international stability; deterrence of new regional centers of power seeking hegemony; disarmament and arms control; non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missile technology and fissile materials; ensuring nuclear safety; the resolution of regional conflicts and peacekeeping; and countering different forms of terrorism. On this basis it is possible to set up mutually beneficial cooperation that would include elements of strategic partnership between the two countries.

However, there is another trend that is expressed in the desire of some political circles in the U.S. to take advantage of the sharp change in the balance of power between Russia and the United States (in 1994 the GDP of Russia was 8-10 percent of the U.S. GDP) to weaken Russia, first and foremost its military-strategic and scientific-technical potential; to degrade Russia to the position of a junior partner; to make sure that in the future Russia would not be a major factor in world politics, would not be a force for the U.S. to reckon with. Lately the symptoms of this approach have increasingly manifested in Washington’s practical actions, its attempts to dictate and resolve a number of international issues at Russia’s expense.

As noted during the hearing, the difficulties in Russian-American relations are primarily caused by the differing important national priorities in the sphere of foreign relations policies and the objective differences between the two sides’ interests on some issues. A number of other circumstances play a negative role as well, including the start of the electoral campaigns in both countries and the events in Chechnya, which considerably weakened Russia’s standing in the

world. Unfortunately, there is still no clearly thought-out concept of the development of relations between Russia and the United States.

The two countries, according to the participants of the hearing, have not yet completely defined the goals and models of their behavior towards each other. Despite the two countries' constructive engagement in a number of important areas, there remain elements of the model of mutual deterrence in the strategic nuclear sphere and in military construction in general. Relations between Russia and the United States remain complex and contradictory, sometimes even assuming an unstable nature, though superficially they seem friendly.

Judging by the assessments made during the hearing, in the short-term Russian-American relations will maintain both elements of cooperation and disagreement on a number of issues. In these conditions, the optimal course for Russia would be to combine the continuation of efforts to create mechanisms to coordinate, jointly make decisions, and implement its common interests with the United States, with a strict assertion of its principal positions on the issues that affect Russia's vital interests.

2. Participants of the hearing expressed the view that the key areas that could serve as a gauge of Washington's sincerity in their stated intent to form partner relations with Russia would be: taking into consideration Russia's interests in the sphere of security and disarmament, including the future of the European security system; the United States' attitude toward the integration processes in the CIS; and the U.S. approach to the problems of conversion and preserving the potential of high-technology production facilities in Russia.

In the sphere of strategic arms reductions it was stated that the realization of the agreement to accelerate implementation of START-I will pose a number of serious practical problems for Russia. There is a substantial lack of the required number of specialized storage facilities to accommodate the dismantled nuclear warheads; industrial capacity to process the released uranium and plutonium; transport tanks for the components of rocket fuel, etc. Department representatives expressed that the United States did not fully meet its obligations to assist Russia in this field.

It was noted that the U.S. push for an early ratification of START-II is not compatible with delaying the negotiations on missile defense. According to the participants, the ratification of the START-II Treaty should be resolved alongside the adoption of criteria for delimitation of strategic and tactical missile defense that would meet Russia's security interests.

Serious questions are raised by the United States' attempts to maintain the potential for building up its nuclear forces if necessary, and its simultaneous reduction of similar potential in Russia, as well as its attempts to shift the focus to the development of qualitatively new weapons systems. In this Russia is clearly lagging behind due to obvious financial difficulties.

In the sphere of European security, U.S. actions to expand NATO, in the opinion of the hearing participants, directly contradict Russia's national interests and are not in the interest of strengthening security and stability in Europe. This issue is of fundamental strategic importance to Russia and ignoring Russia's opinion cannot be seen as anything but the desire to isolate Russia and prevent its integration into the European space. In connection with this, it was noted that Russia should take into account the prospect of NATO expansion during consultations with the American side on the future of the CFE treaty and other negotiations on disarmament.

The hearing participants noted the concurrence of Russian and U.S. interests on the unconditional and indefinite extension of NPT and the implementation of the Convention on Chemical and Bacteriological Weapons. At the same time the insufficient rate of development of practical Russian-American cooperation in the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles was noted.

3. A serious concern was expressed at the hearing about the U.S. desire to slow down the integration processes in the CIS and link the development of cooperation with Russia to the nature of relations with the newly independent states.

It was noted that Washington has made attempts to directly and indirectly weaken Russia's influence in the CIS, and to prevent the military integration on the basis of the Collective Security Treaty of the Commonwealth. Also, in its policies towards the post-Soviet states, the United States often departs from its declared priority for the principles of democracy and respect for human rights and openly puts its geopolitical goals first. To a large extent there is a double standard in the American approach to the problem of the rights of the Russian-speaking population of the CIS and Baltic countries. All of this affects the efficiency of the Russian-American cooperation in the settlement of regional conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

4. Participants of the hearing stated that the U.S. follows a fairly hard line in terms of restricting the export of Russia's high-technology goods to the U.S. as well as to third countries. The question of lifting the existing restrictions on the sale to the United States of Russian uranium has not been resolved. There is concern over the implementation of the intergovernmental Russian-American agreement on the use of highly enriched uranium produced as the result of the destruction of nuclear weapons in Russia.

The United States' attempts to pressure Russia regarding Russia's participation in the construction of a nuclear power plant in Iran are totally unjustified. It was stressed at the hearing that Russia has to take a principled stand on this issue and primarily follow the norms of international law, without succumbing to U.S. attempts to interfere in Russia's cooperation with other countries based on American political and ideological preferences.

At the same time, it was confirmed at the hearing that Russia is interested in developing the scientific-technical and conversion cooperation with the United States. In connection with this, there was a generally positive assessment of the work of the Russian-American Commission

on Economic-Technological Cooperation (Chernomyrdin-Gore), as well as the achievements in joint space exploration.

In general, it was concluded in the course of the hearing that there needs to be a concerted effort on the Russian side to form a mutually equal relationship with the United States. [This relationship] would ensure foreign political and economic coordination; agreed upon implementation of activities in the international arena; the recognition of the priority of Russian interests in the CIS; Russia's participation with the U.S. in the establishment of a new system of European security; and mutual respect for regional interests in terms of maintaining defense capabilities and economic development.

[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), Fond 10100, Opis 2, Delo 122.
Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive.]