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FROM AMBASSADOR JOHN BEYRLE

Dear Friends,

I have lived in Washington D.C. for most of my adult life, but never had I attended a Presidential Inauguration before January 20, 2009. Thanks to Senator Carl Levin, I obtained tickets for the lawn of the West Front of the U.S. Capitol, joining a mass of humanity more than a million strong who came together in the cold morning sunshine to observe one of the oldest and most revered of America's democratic rituals. As I watched

President Obama prepare to take the oath of office, I could easily visualize the many hundreds of Russians and other friends who I knew had crowded into the ballroom of my residence in Moscow, Spaso House, to watch the Inauguration and join us in our celebration. Many of you have since offered your congratulations to the new president, and to the American people he represents, and I thank you for your warm wishes. But just as important, many of you have expressed the hope and optimism that you share with us at this moment of promise in a time of unprecedented global challenge. I'd like to take just a moment to offer my thoughts on the role of the U.S.-Russian relationship at the start of the Obama Administration.

During the electoral campaign, President Obama said that we must reject the Cold-War mind-set of the past, resolve to work with Russia when we can, to stand up for our values when we must, and to seek a partnership that stretches across the entire European continent. Vice President Biden amplified that thought recently, when he spoke about pushing the reset button on the U.S.-Russia relationship. All of this shows the priority that the new administration attaches to a constructive, productive relationship with Russia. From my perspective, we have already moved from the "reset" button to "fast forward." We have seen substantive letters exchanged by the Presidents, and by Secretary of State Clinton and Foreign Minister Lavrov. Under Secretary of State Bill Burns held a productive day of high-level talks in Moscow on February 11, and expert-level delegations from Washington have visited to discuss expanding our cooperation on Afghanistan and North Korea. We have scheduled the first Clinton-Lavrov meeting for March 6 in Geneva. And we expect President Medvedev and President Obama to meet for the first time in London during the G-20 summit in early April.

We want to build this reinvigorated relationship on an existing foundation – on those areas where we are already cooperating successfully. Here are three areas where we can begin:

A new START Treaty

The most pressing issue we will deal with is replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, START, which was signed in 1991, and expires at the end of this year. The United States and Russia possess about 95% of the world's nuclear weapons and we share a unique responsibility -- to our citizens and to the world -- to responsibly safeguard and reduce these stockpiles. We will make every effort to reach a new, legally binding agreement with Russia by December 2009, maintaining or strengthening the existing verification measures and aiming for deeper cuts in our arsenals.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

A second area where our interests have long coincided is nuclear non-proliferation. Our countries have been working together to secure storage facilities for nuclear materials and to protect our borders against the transfer of fissile material, to make sure it remains in responsible hands. The U.S. and Russia pioneered a program in the 1990's to downgrade the highly enriched uranium that's used in nuclear weapons so that it can be used as fuel in nuclear power stations, and recently reached agreement on a funding mechanism to allow this innovative program to continue for another four years. Our joint work in this area receives too little attention from our own public and

the world community. It is a U.S.-Russia legacy to a safer world, and we intend to expand this cooperation.

Fighting Terrorism in Afghanistan

A third area where our interests coincide is the fight against extremism and terrorism – in particular, bringing stability and security to Afghanistan. Both our countries have a direct stake in the success of NATO and American operations there. Russia recently agreed on the transit through Russia of non-lethal military supplies to NATO and U.S. forces in Afghanistan. That’s a very positive step, in addition to already significant Russian support with fuel and heavy cargo flights. We will continue looking for additional areas where the U.S. and Russia can make a difference by working together.

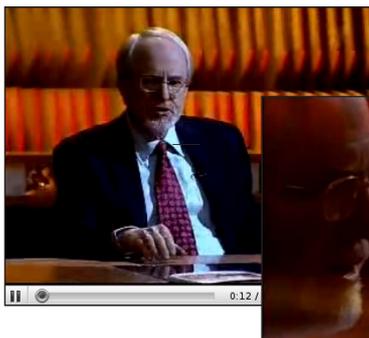
A Multidimensional Relationship

These are three key areas of convergence, but of course we also continue to have differences with Russia, on issues ranging from missile defense to NATO enlargement to the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Obama Administration approaches these differences realistically, but pragmatically: as Vice President Biden said in Munich, “we’ll engage, we’ll listen, we’ll consult.” And nowhere is that spirit of readiness for a consensus-based approach to pressing problems more evident than our efforts to overcome the global economic crisis that President Obama sees as the single greatest challenge facing his administration. We need to work with Russia and other leading economic powers in the months ahead to forge a multilateral solution to the world’s first truly global economic crisis.

When I arrived in Moscow last summer as Ambassador, I found the level of mutual trust that is essential for a productive U.S.-Russian relationship to be the lowest it has been in decades. In the months ahead, we will be working with the Russian government to restore that trust that is the foundation of the stable, predictable, cooperative relationship that the Russian and American people want to see between us. As always, I welcome your comments on how we can do this most successfully. You can write me at: askambrussia@state.gov

Best regards, JOHN BEYRLE

Ambassador Beyrle on “Pozner” show



On January 26, Ambassador John Beyrle appeared on “Pozner,” a highly respected news interview and talk show.



“I do think that the coming of a new Administration, of a new president is always a cause for new beginnings, new ideas, and new approaches. But indeed, as for President Obama, I see vast prospects for improving our relations.” (see excerpts from the interview)

Under Secretary William Burns Visits Moscow



On February 12, Under Secretary of State William Burns visited Moscow and met with Russian officials. U/S Burns gave his views about the prospects for better Russian-American relations under the new Obama administration to the Interfax News Agency.

“It will be important for our two leaderships to look at ways in which we can structure our relationship and ensure that we are working together more systematically.” (read the interview)

Ambassador Beyrle Addresses Law Students at St.Petersburg State University



On February 20, Ambassador Beyrle spoke to over 250 students and faculty at St. Petersburg State University’s Law Faculty.

“The areas where our interests coincide are greater than the areas where we differ.” (see the speech)

Cleaning the Russian Arctic

Since 2006, over 4,000 tons of obsolete pesticides in ten Russian regions have been inventoried and placed in safe storage under the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP), a multilateral program of the Arctic Council, in which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is the American partner.

In another ACAP project, the Indigenous Peoples Community Action Initiative, American experts and indigenous communities in the Russian Arctic have cooperated to remove and safely dispose of over 2,000 abandoned drums which contain toxic substances. Drums like these, previously used for fuel, paint, lubricants, and other hazardous materials, have

been scattered across the Arctic landscape over the course of decades in such places as Chukotka's Lorino Bay. These drums leach contaminants into the Arctic environment and pose health risks for local inhabitants.



Major American Art Exhibit Opens in St. Petersburg Russian Museum



A major American art exhibit called American Artists from the Russian Empire opened at the Russian Museum on February 19. The exhibit – organized by the Foundation for International Arts & Education and funded by Morgan Stanley, Severstal, and several others – focuses attention on U.S. artists who remain largely unknown in their original homeland. Mark Rothko (born Marcus Rothkowitz in present day Latvia) and John Graham (born Ivan Dombrowsky in present day Ukraine) are just two of the many artists featured. The exhibit will move to Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery later this year. After the opening ceremony, Ambassador Beyrle gave interviews to both Pervyi Kanal (Russian State TV) and TV5 in which he praised Russian-American cultural cooperation and repeated his message that

“there is much more that unites us than divides us.” (Picture: D. Burlyuk, “Hudson” 1924, canvas, oil, ABA gallery, New York, courtesy of www.museum.ru) (more)

America Helping to Fight Tuberculosis in the Russian Far East

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is partnering with Russian and international groups to fight tuberculosis. With TB mortality rates in some areas of Russia as high as 28 per 100,000 (compared with the national average of 22), the problem is a serious one. One of the highlights of this program is a TB dispensary clinic in Kharbarovsk, which Deputy Chief of Mission Eric Rubin got to see firsthand (see picture.) Since 2004, over 7,000 TB patients have received treatment and 250 health and Red Cross staff members, including staff in the prison system, were trained in various TB-related topics thanks in part to this Russian-American partnership. (Picture: Deputy Chief of Mission Eric Rubin's visit to a TB Dispensary in Khabarovsk)



FBI and Russian Prosecutors Work Together Against Organized Crime



Russian and American law enforcement agencies cooperate and share information regularly in the fight against organized crime, cyber crime, drug smuggling, and human trafficking.

(Picture: Department of Justice Antitrust prosecutor Karen Sharp and FBI agent Eric Schwethelm at a seminar with the Anti-Monopoly Service on the investigation and prosecution of criminal cartels, January 2009)

PepsiCo Helps Russian Farmers Increase Yields and Quality



PepsiCo is not only a soft drink company. Their subsidiary, Lays, is one of the biggest consumers of potatoes in Russia and in the world. To help Russian farmers improve the yield and quality of their potato crops, PepsiCo recently awarded annual grants to agricultural students and faculty at polytechnical institutes in Rostov, Krasnodar and Stavropol. The approximately \$750,000.00 grants are being used to equip the schools with the latest technology in agricultural research and education.

(Picture: A student at the Rostov State Academy of Agricultural Machinery, working with a melting stove funded by PepsiCo, as part of its agricultural education support program.)

America's Classic Cookie



Accidentally invented by Ms. Ruth Wakefield of Whitman, Massachusetts in 1934, the chocolate chip cookie remains America's most popular cookie. With some butter, flour, sugar, and chocolate, this tasty morsel has made a name for itself around the world. St. Petersburg Public Affairs Officer Eric Johnson has been kind enough to share his delightful recipe so that you too can taste a little piece of Americana. Enjoy! (Picture: courtesy Wikipedia) (see the article)

Recipe:

- Bring all ingredients to room temperature
- Preheat oven to 200 degrees

Cream together:

300 g butter
200 g white cane sugar
200 g brown cane sugar

Add & blend until mixed thoroughly:

2 tablespoons vanilla extract (or vanilla sugar mixed with a bit of rum)
375 g flour (sifted)
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon soda

Add & blend until just mixed in:

2 eggs

Mix in:

100 g nuts (walnuts usually work best)
200 g dark chocolate pieces or chunks

- Drop cookies with a spoon onto a baking tray
- Bake for about 8 minutes or until cookies flatten and start to turn brown
- Let them sit on the baking tray outside of the oven
- Remove and cool on a rack until they reach room temperature
- Eat & Enjoy!

Contact Information and Useful Links

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USEFUL LINKS

United States Embassy Moscow
U.S. Visa Information
United States Agency for International Development
Law Enforcement Section of the U.S. Embassy
Environment, Science & Technology Section of the U.S Embassy

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

We welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas on this newsletter and about what the Embassy is doing. Please send them to askambrussia@state.gov