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FROM AMBASSADOR JOHN BEYRLE

Dear Friends,

On April 1, Presidents Medvedev and Obama met in London, and announced that it was time for a fresh start in Russian-American relations. The two Presidents agreed that our two countries have important common goals, and we can best accomplish these goals if we work together. They laid out an ambitious agenda for the months ahead.

- First and foremost, we committed to begin negotiations on a new treaty to limit strategic offensive arms with the goal of reaching an agreement before the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expires in December. The two presidents set a target for reductions beyond those specified in the 2002 Moscow Treaty. Because Russia and the United States possess 95 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal, we have a special obligation to the rest of the world to exhibit leadership in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. Our actions and our decisions send strong messages and signals well beyond our national boundaries. Our negotiating teams are already beginning to meet so we can start making progress toward an agreement this year.

We reemphasized our commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and both sides expressed a commitment to its further strengthening. One of the gravest dangers we face is that reckless nations or terrorist organizations might gain access to nuclear technologies and materials.

We agreed that the interests and security of both Russia and the U.S. are threatened by instability in Afghanistan. We can't allow Afghanistan to become again a sanctuary for terrorists, as it was before September 11. We agreed to work together to stop the flow of heroin and drugs from Afghanistan, which is causing such harm in Russia.

We agreed, along with other members of the G-20, to work together on a coordinated strategy to fight the global financial and economic crisis, to get the global economy moving again.

Both Presidents also made it clear that speeding up Russia's WTO accession is a priority. Russia is the largest economy still outside the WTO. Of course, such a situation is not normal. It is bad for Russia and for the global economy.

Of course we still have differences on some important issues, but we agreed that we can manage these differences, try to narrow them, and not let our differences block our broader agenda.

The problems of the 21st century require trans-national solutions. Today Russia and America are cooperating in reforming the global financial system, in combating cyber crime, in looking for solutions to global warming, in building the world's most advanced passenger aircraft, and in exploring space. There's no limit to what we can achieve if we combine our resources, our talent and our imagination.

We have a lot of work ahead. We are looking forward to the visit of President Obama to Moscow in July, which will help us build the productive, cooperative relationship that we need for the interests of both Russia and the United States.

You can write me at: askambrussia@state.gov

Best regards, JOHN BEYRLE

[Joint Statement by President Medvedev and President Obama Regarding Negotiations on Further Reductions in Strategic Offensive Arms.](#)
[START Treaty and Fact Sheets.](#)
[Latest START Facts from State Department.](#)

U.S. Program Helping to Keep Russian Borders Safe

EXBS, the Export Control and Related Border Security Program, is an American government program designed to provide expertise, training, and equipment to foreign customs officials. In Russia, the EXBS program has sent Russian customs officers to New York to learn the latest techniques on how to stop smuggling and intercept contraband. Russian customs officers share experience with their American counterparts and see how to keep up to date in the fight against drugs, arms smuggling, and other dangers which affect us all. (Picture: A US Customs and Border Protection officer explains to his Russian counterparts the procedure for checking documents during a rifle shipment inspection at JFK International Airport as part of IACIT field training) ([more information](#))



U.S. Consulate General Yekaterinburg celebrates 15th Anniversary



On March 31st, Consul General Tim Sandusky hosted a reception for guests from the Urals region, Moscow, and beyond to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the founding of the first foreign diplomatic mission in Western Siberia. In addition to the Mayors of Yekaterinburg and Perm, Deputy Chief of Mission Eric Rubin, and former Yekaterinburg Consul General Jim Bigus attended the gala event. The highlight came when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sent a video message on behalf of herself and President Barack Obama. She warmly reminisced over her visit to Yekaterinburg in 1997 as First Lady and congratulated the Consulate on its important work facilitating stronger ties between the United States and the Urals.

(Picture: Consul General Tim Sandusky and Public Affairs Officer Chris Istrati greet Chief Mufti of the URFO Rinat Rayev) ([more information](#))

Evolution in the Arctic



On March 23, Dr. Julie Brigham-Grette of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst led a discussion on her paleoclimatology work in the Russian Far East. Working at Lake El'gygytyn in Chukotka, Dr. Brigham-Grette drilled through 420 meters of ice and sediment in order to learn more about the Earth's climate 3.6 million years ago. Her groundbreaking work will give scientists around the world a new look at the history of climate change. Learn more about her research at Lake El'gygytyn [here](#). (Picture: Ice road construction. The scientist marks the ice road to the drilling site)

Ambassador Beyrle celebrates opening of new Washington DC flight

On March 30, *Ambassador Beyrle* joined Domodedovo Airport Director Sergey Rudakov and *United Airlines* Vice President Michael Whitaker in celebrating the opening of nonstop service between Moscow's Domodedovo Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport. U.S. carriers now offer direct nonstop air service between Moscow and Washington DC, New York, Chicago, and Atlanta. (Picture: United aircraft at Domodedovo airport after its first flight from Washington, D.C. *Picture courtesy of Moscow International Airport Domodedovo.*)



Baseball's Opening Day

On April 6, America celebrated Opening Day, the beginning of the season of professional baseball. Cities and towns across America celebrated Opening Day with parades, and unofficial days off from work and school. By tradition, the President of the United States attends the opening game in Washington D.C., and throws the first pitch to start the season. Eleven U.S. Presidents have followed this tradition since the first pitch was thrown by President William Howard Taft in 1910.



While baseball as we know it today was first played and invented in the United States, it has a distant Russian cousin – the sport of *lapta*, an old Russian folk game played with a bat and ball. (Picture: Awaiting a pitch: batter, catcher, and umpire.) ([more information](#))



On April 10, St. Petersburg Consular Assistant Pete Sweeney joined St. Petersburg Baseball Federation staff (<http://spbbaseball.com>) to give a joint presentation about baseball in both the U.S. and Russia to approximately 20 guests at the American Corner in St. Petersburg. The Consular Assistant spoke about the history of baseball and the rules of the game.

(Picture: Consular Assistant Pete Sweeney explains the audience how to make the correct pitch and how to catch the ball. Photo by Vera Sevastyanova, PA St. Petersburg.)

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USEFUL LINKS

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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