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January 6, 1995

Dear Boris:

I have read your letter of December 29 with considerable care. The question of the future evolution of European security structures is one of the most important issues facing us. As I have mentioned, Russia's interests and your views on how the process should go forward are an important factor in my thinking and planning. I can assure you that this will continue to be the case.

Your meeting with Vice President Gore in Moscow underscored the importance that you and I attach to staying in close touch on this critical issue. Let me stress that what I told you in Washington regarding NATO expansion -- and what the Vice President reiterated in your meeting last month -- still stands. NATO will not expand in 1995 and there will be no negotiations in 1995 on admitting new states to NATO. As the Vice President told you, there is no difference between what my government and I have told you and what NATO decided in Brussels on December 1.

You raised paragraph 6 of the NAC Communique in your letter. That paragraph calls for a study that will clarify within NATO the rationale and the process for expansion. The study will also focus on the important role of the Partnership for Peace. NATO has decided to present the results of these deliberations to interested partners, including Russia, before the December meeting of Foreign Ministers in Brussels. For my part, I hope that Russia will decide to be among the first to hear this briefing.

You are correct in recalling that, at our meeting in September, we also agreed that the processes for expanding NATO and building a stronger relationship between NATO and Russia should proceed in parallel. These are both essential elements of our mutual efforts to build a stable new security architecture for Europe. It is clear to me that the process of NATO expansion and the process of clarifying Russia's relationship to NATO needs to take place in parallel, not sequentially. However, the decision on expansion must be taken by the Alliance alone.

His Excellency

Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin
President of the Russian Federation,
Moscow.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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I appreciate the opportunity to address your concerns on this matter. Your letter correctly warns against the danger of miscommunication. I firmly believe that a prompt and candid exchange on the future of NATO -- or, for that matter, on any item on our bilateral agenda -- is the surest way to avoid misunderstanding.

Warren Christopher will come to Geneva prepared to explore these issues in considerable detail. I hope that Andrei Kozyrev will likewise be ready for a frank give and take on Russia's views on future European security structures, including on Russia's relationship with NATO, as the process of expansion unfolds. I share your view that the Geneva meeting can form part of what you have called "efficient, regular contacts" on this and other critical subjects.

Boris, I also wanted to communicate to you my views about the on-going tragedy on Chechnya. You have heard numerous reports about the official American position. I wanted you to hear directly from me where I stand with regard to this tragic situation.

I understand the dilemma that you face. We have stated on many occasions, and will continue to state, our support for the territorial integrity of Russia. We have said that Chechnya is part of Russia and that we oppose any attempt to change international borders by force, whether by means of aggression on the part of one state against another or by means of armed secessionism.

At the same time, we are deeply distressed over the growing cost in human life, including among civilians, incurred by the attempt at a military solution. While there is no ambiguity in our view that Chechnya is an internal Russian matter, there is also no contradiction between that view and our hope that your government will resolve the matter in a fashion consistent with international standards, notably those enshrined in the OSCE document that we agreed to in Budapest a little over a month ago. In this sense, I hope very much that you will be able to find a way to resolve the Chechnya crisis through negotiations.

In this connection, I know that the European Union has proposed to you use of the mechanisms of the OSCE as a possible means to resolve this conflict. This seems to me to be a reasonable and constructive suggestion and I hope Russia will choose to work with the OSCE on this basis. In general, Boris, I just wanted you to know that we will encourage any effort to find a lasting end to the bloodshed and a negotiated settlement to the dispute. I know that these must be difficult days for you and I thus stand ready to discuss this in more detail if you wish.

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Thank you for your invitation to Moscow in May. I will be getting back to you shortly on this.

Sincerely,

/s/

Bill

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Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, nsarchiv@gwu.edu