

July 13, 1995

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on a matter that I believe is of the utmost security importance as we address our mid- and long-term future. Briefly stated, it is that the high goals shared by you and President Yeltsin and reflected in your meeting in May are running into serious trouble. The key problem is the proposed expansion of NATO membership.

My concern has been building for a year or more, and was sharply confirmed in meetings held late last month in Brussels, Kiev and Moscow by a blue-ribbon Atlantic Council panel. The prospect of early NATO expansion is having a deeply damaging impact on Russian thinking about its future security posture and about its relations with the West. They see it as extending our nuclear umbrella to the borders of Russia, and doing so before Russia is brought constructively into Europe, through the Partnership for Peace, association with the European Union, or other means. Talk about "cold peace" or "losing the peace" is taking root, and the prospective opening of NATO-Russian discussions, although a move in the right direction, fails to allay the concern. They do not see this move as measuring up to the attention being given to expansion of NATO membership.

The kinds of goals set by you and President Yeltsin in May, it seems increasingly clear, can best be achieved -- perhaps can only be achieved -- by strong action to articulate in explicit and emphatic terms, and then sustain, an "overarching framework" of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. The policy relationships thus established would allow the flow of day-to-day, month-to-month issues and problems to be dealt with in ways that build mutual confidence and prevent mutual misunderstanding and mistrust. We are now falling short of this goal; early course correction is needed.

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The building of precisely such a framework is in my view the most historically decisive challenge now facing our country as we look to our future security. It deserves clear and decisive priority.

Under such a priority and within such a framework it should certainly be possible to achieve early Russian ratification of the START II treaty, continue to strengthen Russian democratic reform and European unity, and resolve on the basis of common interests current specific issues such as those involved with the Iranian reactor, the CFE flank forces problem, and others that will surely arise in the future. The Gore/Chernomyrdin Commission is providing a needed mechanism. Others may also be required.

A problem much larger and more divisive is the proposed expansion of NATO membership, embracing the commitments under Article V of the Treaty. This as you know is causing contention and confusion here and abroad. It is seen in Moscow as directed against Russia, amounting to a new form of containment that blocks the inclusive participation of Russia in the new Euro-Atlantic relationship. It is alienating Russian political leadership, feeding suspicions and an undercurrent of disillusionment, and can prevent achievement of the overarching relationship of friendship and cooperation that I believe represents our true security interest. It is a burden we do not need to bear.

Also, there seems some real question whether the U.S. will actually be prepared to extend its defense obligation so far into Central and Eastern Europe when decision is required.

The Partnership for Peace, which Russia has now joined, will -- if made the future centerpiece of NATO -- provide a much superior alternative. It responds to today's real security needs for Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, rather than bowing to vague fears and historical enmities that would perpetuate past divisions. Just as those were overcome in the case of Germany by the Western allies after World War II, the West should take advantage of the same opportunities now with Russia. The Partnership needs to be developed much more energetically and with greater dialogue than has been the case to date. All members should participate in a common forum on the basis of full unity and equality rather than the hub-and-spoke concept which puts each nation at a disadvantage in relation to the NATO Sixteen. The Partnership can allow Russia to be a full participant with a role appropriate to its situation and size. Formed on the basis of commitments to democracy, respect for existing borders and for minorities,


peaceful resolution of disputes and free market economies, it can constitute the basic security structure for the era we are entering. Should the Partnership as it actually develops fail to meet the needs of the Visegrad countries, greater emphasis can be given to OSCE as the vehicle for European security unity, and full NATO membership for these countries can be reconsidered, but only after Russia firmly anchors itself to the West, or definitely fails to do so. The Partnership will give Russia the opportunity, and the responsibility, to show itself different from the Soviet Union -- or the old Russia -- to the Central and Eastern Europeans and the Baltics.

The Partnership can thus be the "how" of NATO enlargement, as well as the appropriate adaptation of NATO's role to this new era. I recommend that you and your administration give it wholehearted support.

I have taken the liberty of writing directly to you because of the urgency and importance of this issue, and because I believe that only the U. S. President can give the leadership our people now need, both within our government and internationally. This fact was demonstrated by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower at a similar turn of history during and after World War II, when the security structure was put in place that has served us so well for the last 50 years, in the process bringing in rather than excluding Germany and Japan as participating members.

I sincerely hope you will find these views helpful.

Respectfully,

  
Andrew J. Goodpaster  
General, U.S. Army (Ret.)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 31, 1995

Dear General Goodpaster:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter on the issue of NATO enlargement and relations with Russia. I share your view that we must strive to manage the evolution of European security institutions -- including NATO enlargement -- in a manner that does not undercut the U.S.-Russia relationship or our efforts to integrate a democratizing Russia with the West.

The end of the Cold War offers a unique opportunity to forge a durable, cooperative relationship with Moscow. It has already yielded important security, political and economic benefits for the U.S. and its Allies -- and promises much more. That is why I have made engagement with Russia one of my top foreign policy priorities.

At the same time, I also believe that NATO enlargement will play an important role in enhancing stability and security in all of Europe. The Alliance has taken in new members in the past -- Greece and Turkey in 1952, the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. In each case, enlargement served to buttress democracy, to assist integration and to strengthen the peace. We fully expect that the next phase of enlargement will produce equally positive results.

President Yeltsin and I discussed the issue of NATO enlargement in some detail during my May visit to Moscow. I underscored that expansion would proceed in a deliberate, gradual and transparent manner, and that we should work to develop the NATO-Russia relationship in parallel. This means active Russian participation in the Partnership for Peace and the development of a NATO-Russia relationship that goes beyond PFP. While the Russians, to be sure, have concerns about the Alliance's enlargement, they have agreed to begin work on constructing a relationship with NATO. The development of the NATO-Russia dialogue should go a long way toward breaking down Russian suspicions and baseless stereotypes.

We are working with our Allies toward a comprehensive, new framework of European security for the next century in which taking new members into NATO will be one important element. Managing the parallel tracks of NATO enlargement, building a NATO-Russia relationship, and deepening our own bilateral relations with Moscow will require care and skill. But I believe it can be done -- to the benefit of the United States, Russia and Europe as a whole.

I appreciate your taking the time to share your views on this, which is a critical question as we work to advance American interests and strengthen peace and security.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

General Andrew J. Goodpaster  
U.S. Army (Ret.)  
The Atlantic Council of  
the United States  
Suite 1000, 910 17th St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Agree with you that  
we need to keep working to  
define the structure of US/Russia  
relations in a way that relies  
on a strong PFP and reflects today's  
int-growth realities and the  
real possibility of a united Europe