

President Putin: Talks Were ‘Very Meaningful’

Here are excerpts from President Vladimir Putin’s remarks on July 2, following the Kennebunkport talks. Where he referred to “our hosts,” he meant former President George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush.

President Putin’s opening remarks: I would like to congratulate us on our good work. But, first of all, I would like to thank our hosts for their invitation, and of course President Bush for his invitation. We really did do well fishing this morning. We caught one fish, but that was a team effort. And the leader of the team was the captain of our fishing schooner, the 42nd President of the United States.

As far as negotiations are concerned, they really were very meaningful. We discussed basically the entire range of both bilateral issues and current international concerns. George has mentioned virtually all the issues that we touched on. I was pleased to note that we are looking for points of contact in our positions and we often discovered them. And of course, I’m very grateful to the Bush family for the very warm atmosphere that characterized this meeting and our exchange of views.

I believe that we can all learn something from the older generation, because the attitude shown both to me, and to the members of our delegation, went far beyond the limits of an official exchange. And, besides, we have had an opportunity to see this part of the United States. It is a fantastic place, and we’ve felt the warmth and the very positive attitude of the people here. I want to take this opportunity to convey to them

our gratitude and very best wishes.

By the way, we did throw back the fish we caught.

From his answers to questions: [About his proposal for strategic stability and anti-ballistic missile cooperation between Russia and the United States.] As President Bush has already said, we do support the idea of continuing consultations on this point. At the same time, we believe that the number of participants in this consultation could be expanded, by including the European countries who are interested in resolving the issue. This could be done by using the forum of the Russia-NATO Council.

But our proposal does not stop there. We are proposing the creation of an information exchange center in Moscow. We agreed on that a few years ago and the time has come to put this decision into practice. And there’s more: A comparable center could be established in one of the European capitals, in Brussels, for example. This would be a self-contained system that would work in real time. We believe that there would then be no need to install any more facilities in Europe. I mean those facilities proposed for the Czech Republic and the missile base in Poland.

And we are prepared to include in this project the Gabala radar station we rent in Azerbaijan. And if necessary, we are prepared to modernize it. And if that is not enough, we would be prepared to commit a new radar installation in the south of Russia for this common early warning system. Such cooperation I believe would bring about a major change in Russian-American relations regarding security. In fact, this would lead to the gradual development of a strategic partnership in the area of security.

[About the state of Russian-American relations overall.] I do believe that relations between us are developing normally, quite well, and that they are getting stronger. . . .

As for the future, as I already mentioned, we are now discussing the possibility of strengthening our relations, of raising them to an entirely new level of trust. This would involve discussing very sensitive issues related to international security, including, of course, the missile defense issue. If this happens, then I want to draw your attention to what would amount to a watershed in the relations between our countries. They would gradually take on a strategic character, because this would mean a completely new sort of relationship in the area of international security. This would mean an increase in our political cooperation and, in the end, would affect our economic cooperation. In effect, we can now say that the cards have been dealt and that the game can now begin. I very much hope that we are playing the same game.



Russian Presidential Press & Information Office

Putin (center) caught the only fish on this trip, but shared the credit with his hosts, George W. (right) and George H.W. Bush (far left). The Russian President also described the Kennebunkport summit as “very meaningful.”