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IN THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

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PRESS RELEASE

**Transcript of Response to Russian Media Questions by Minister of Foreign
Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov, Lima, November 23, 2008**

Question: How can you comment upon the incident on the Georgian-South Ossetian border that occurred with the Polish and Georgian presidents?

Answer: This is a provocation of the first water. When a president is invited to a holiday celebration and then put in a car and driven into another state, this is an utter provocation.

There was no gunfire from our positions or the positions of Ossetian troops. Recall Mikhail Nikolayevich Saakashvili visiting Gori with foreign journalists, and in a bullet proof vest, falling to escape an imaginary shooting attack and imaginary planes. This is all from the same series of lies. Simply now there'll be something to be occupied with at the next round of Geneva discussions where security issues are the focus of agenda. Security is undermined by just this kind of provocations. If Saakashvili wants the Geneva discussions to really end with agreements on how stability can be ensured in this region, then it would obviously be best to avoid such provocations. If, however, he wants to wreck these discussions, then, by following this line, he's sure to achieve this.

Question: What does Bush's nonappearance at the announcement of the final declaration mean?

Answer: It means absolutely nothing. Several leaders were absent from the final lunch.

Yesterday President Bush met with President Medvedev and actively supported the final declaration, and approved the work the experts and ministers had done to prepare it. The United States is totally committed to everything that is written there.

Question: Was the SOA problem discussed at the Medvedev-Bush meeting?

Answer: As I've said, we had discussed this with Condoleezza Rice even before the meeting between Presidents Medvedev and Bush and had agreed that the negotiators would get together in December once more. The venue of the meeting has to be arranged. We're preparing our reaction to the materials handed over to us by the American side beforehand. They, regrettably, had little that was new, and we honestly said about that. I once again reiterated our position on the necessity to extend the regime of limitation of strategic offensive arms in all their components, not only in respect of the operational deployment of warheads as the American side suggests. We once again made the point that in respect of plans to deploy a third GMD site it would be best to give up these plans. If, however, the American side, despite everything, including the public opinion of Eastern Europe and not only Eastern, is planning to start realization of these plans, it must carry out the appropriate confidence-building measures which we have not seen in the promised amount so far.

Question: This was perhaps what Russian President Medvedev meant when in his last remarks he said that we stood ready to consider the conditions of the existing plans if the appropriate solutions are proposed?

Answer: This is written down in the Sochi Declaration, which states that we do not agree with each other on this issue. We are advocating for a missile defense system, for a missile risks tracking control system which would be a joint Russian, American and European scheme from the outset; and where the third site is concerned, we fundamentally disagree with the Americans. The same Sochi Declaration states that the American side takes note of these concerns and that it will strive to take transparency and confidence-building measures that will help alleviate these concerns. So far this isn't happening, but the conversation is continuing. These concerns can be removed only in one case – if the plans for unilateral deployment of this system are scrapped, and agreement is reached to work jointly from scratch, beginning with analysis of missile risks.

Question: May I inquire what you think about whether Hillary Clinton will be a good Secretary of State if she is appointed to this post?

Answer: I am certain that our American partners should first answer this question. Personally I have no preferences in respect of the personnel decisions to be made by Barack Obama after he assumes office as US president.

Question: At the meeting between Medvedev and Australian Prime Minister Rudd – was the further fate of the agreement on cooperation in the field of atomic energy discussed?

Answer: The Australian premier gave an assurance that they would take action to secure its successful ratification; maybe through more complex parliamentary procedures.

Question: Did APEC discuss the issue of marine cargo traffic as part of the debate on the Russian joint critical energy infrastructure protection initiative?

Answer: The most important aspect that is connected with marine transportation consists in ensuring cargo traffic security. A while ago we indeed came up with the initiative to develop general principles for a mechanism for the joint protection of critical infrastructure, primarily energy, although transport infrastructure as well.

On the eve of this summit, at the meeting of coordinators and then also of ministers our document was circulated that is called “Best Practices in the Counter-Terrorism Protection of Critical Energy Infrastructure.” It can be said that the energy bloc was covered. The document was well received. On its basis a working group will further interact and develop cooperation mechanisms.

As to transport, it is necessary to raise the question more broadly here, without limiting ourselves to the Asia-Pacific Region. For example, now off the African coast, in the Horn of Africa area, this is a sufficiently broad problem. This theme was discussed at the bilateral meeting of Presidents Medvedev and Bush. Regarding the problem of fighting piracy they agreed to strengthen the international legal base through the adoption of necessary decisions in the UN Security Council and to give the appropriate powers to states ready to fight pirates. Further, in basic terms without unnecessary detail the problem of protecting the chief marine trade lanes was discussed. In this regard, the task is not only to clamp down on and exterminate those seizing ships around the coast of Somalia for ransom, but also to secure the principal marine trade lanes. That’s a larger scale, costlier job, but it has to be taken up, and I am convinced that APEC as an organization encompassing vast areas of the world’s ocean will, of course, be involved in this effort. So attention to the theme of transport has by no means decreased; it has become more specific, and the more specific it is, the more time it will take to work out specific steps.

Question: What can you say about the existing base in international law for combating pirates off the Somali coast?

Answer: It must be slightly more clear-cut and tougher. The Indian navy simply sank one ship of pirates when those began armed action. We want people who in such conditions act resolutely to be absolutely protected by international law.

Question: Are you already engaged in preparing Medvedev’s meeting with Obama?

Answer: Essentially I’ve been totally preoccupied with this thing lately.

November 25, 2008

