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news



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Press Advisory for March 27

**Ambassadors Pickering and Vorontsov To Discuss Collapse of Detente,
Offer Commentary on Declassified Documents from Carter-Brezhnev Era**

WASHINGTON — Thomas R. Pickering, U.S. ambassador to Russia, and Yuli Vorontsov, Russian ambassador to the United States, will review the collapse of detente in the Carter-Brezhnev years and discuss possible parallels to current U.S.-Russia relations during a news conference at 9:30 a.m. Monday, March 27, at the National Press Club.

The news conference will mark the first public presentation of findings by Brown University's "Carter-Brezhnev Project," including the release of recently declassified top-secret documents from the late 1970s. Those documents, from archives in the United States, Russia, Cuba and the former East Germany, deal with superpower conflicts over Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Middle East, China and Cuba — conflicts that led directly to the collapse of detente and the "Second Cold War" of the 1980s.

Pickering and Vorontsov will have spent the previous four days at a high-level conference in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., organized by the Carter-Brezhnev Project. At that conference, former high-ranking officials from the Carter White House and Brezhnev Kremlin will discuss the foreign policy issues of that time and review the newly declassified documents to better understand factors that led to the collapse of detente.

Their insights have a particular relevance to the Clinton-Yeltsin relationship. In early December 1994, President Yeltsin accused the West of offering Russia a "Cold Peace." Days later, Russia invaded Chechnya. Some U.S. analysts see a parallel to the invasion of Afghanistan and a possibility that the invasion of Chechnya could bring about a third Cold War. Pickering and Vorontsov will discuss current trends and risks in the U.S.-Russia relationship.

Who	Thomas R. Pickering, U.S. ambassador to Russia Yuli Vorontsov, Russian ambassador to the United States Archivists and scholars from the Carter-Brezhnev Project
What	Discussion of the collapse of detente in the Carter-Brezhnev years; commentary on recently declassified U.S., Russian, Cuban and German documents; release of declassified documents to the press
Where	First Amendment Room, National Press Club, Washington D.C.
When	9:30 a.m., Monday, March 27, 1995

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The Carter-Brezhnev Project

Senior Officials from U.S. and Russia Review Carter-Brezhnev Documents, Study Collapse of Detente, Growth of Superpower Mistrust in Late 1970s

Former senior U.S. and Soviet Union officials met in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., March 23-26 to recreate and understand the decisions that led to the collapse of detente and the emergence of a "Second Cold War" between the two superpowers in the late 1970s. Their meeting, the third in a four-part series sponsored by The Carter-Brezhnev Project at Brown University, was guided by scholars familiar with the documents and history of that period and featured hundreds of pages of recently declassified documents from U.S. and Russian archives.

Two participants in the Carter-Brezhnev Project – Thomas R. Pickering, U.S. ambassador to Russia, and Yuli Vorontsov, Russian ambassador to the United States – commented on the discussions and responded to questions during a morning news conference on Monday, March 27, at the National Press Club in Washington. The documents were also released at that time. (A digest of document highlights begins on page 3 of this release.)

"Although history never repeats itself exactly, many analysts have seen parallels between the Carter-Brezhnev and Clinton-Yeltsin relationships – particularly between the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Russian invasion of Chechnya," said James G. Blight, senior research fellow at the Center for Foreign Policy Development in Brown's Watson Institute and director of the Carter-Brezhnev Project. "It has been said that we walk backward into the future, staring at our past and wondering what it might portend. There are many reasons to believe that the Carter-Brezhnev experience of 20 years ago contains lessons that can usefully be applied to the Clinton-Yeltsin situation."

In January 1977 when the Carter administration arrived in Washington, the United States and the Soviet Union recognized a chance for progress toward the elimination of superpower tensions. In speeches given two days apart, Chairman Leonid Brezhnev and Presi-

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dent Jimmy Carter spoke of advances in relations between the two countries and of possibilities for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The *Washington Post* caught the buoyant optimism of the time, calling it a "rare moment in history" when circumstances on both sides open the way to "a breakthrough in international relations."

The optimism was short-lived. Before the decade was over, the arms race had resumed, mistrust and disillusionment had grown, and the superpowers had confronted each other over developments in Cuba, Ethiopia, Somalia, Angola, Central America, the Middle East and, finally, Afghanistan. Despite good intentions and great expectations in Washington and Moscow, U.S.-Soviet relations declined precipitously and years of harsh rhetoric from both sides ensued.

"By most accounts, the United States and Russia are now caught in a downward spiral in their relations with each other. The honeymoon in U.S.-Russia relations has been over for some time," Blight said. "Our hope is that by understanding why opportunities were missed the last time we passed this way, such opportunities as are still available for a stable, lasting partnership can be seized this time."

The Carter-Brezhnev Project

Like its predecessor project on the Cuban missile crisis, also headquartered at Brown University, the Carter-Brezhnev project uses the method of "critical oral history." High-ranking former officials gather to discuss declassified documents from both sides in the presence of scholars familiar with the documentation and secondary literature on the topics in question. Participants in the Carter-Brezhnev Project include, on the U.S. side, Cyrus Vance, former secretary of state; Harold Brown, former secretary of defense; Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security adviser; and Adm. Stansfield Turner, former CIA director. On the Russian side, participants include Georgy Kornienko, former first deputy foreign minister; Anatoly Dobrynin, former ambassador to the United States; and Gen. Anatoly Gribkov, former chief of staff of the Warsaw Pact. As a result of the project's efforts, hundreds of pages of highly sensitive documents have been declassified and released from U.S. and Russian archives for use by participants in the project.

Four conferences originally were planned and, as of the press conference on March 27, three have been held. In October 1992, a small group of scholars and former officials from the U.S. and Russian sides met to assess the feasibility of the project. The decision was made to move ahead with three major international conferences. The first was held in

May 1994, on "SALT II and the Growth of Mistrust" – the nuclear arms control process, culminating in the signing of the SALT II accord by Carter and Brezhnev in Vienna in June 1979. The conference just completed in Florida March 23-26, 1995, was titled "Global Competition and the Deterioration of U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1977-1980." It covered conflicts in Africa and the role of Cuba in those conflicts, the Middle East and other Third World areas, as well as U.S.-Soviet competition regarding Europe and China. This September, a final conference will occur in Oslo, Norway, to address the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the U.S. response and the development of the Second Cold War.

The Carter-Brezhnev Project is supported by the Arca Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the W. Alton Jones Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Winston Foundation for World Peace. Principal collaborators with Brown University include the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center, and the Norwegian Nobel Institute.

Document Highlights

The following documents represent a small fraction of the documents released by efforts of participants in the Carter-Brezhnev project. The goal has been to unearth new materials that shed light on why the U.S.-Soviet relationship collapsed during 1977-80. The documents include rarely released examples of presidential correspondence from both Washington and Moscow as well as some releases from the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation.

Also included are unusually complete records of meetings between Cuban President Fidel Castro and other Cuban officials with Soviet and East German counterparts, obtained from the Socialist Unity Party (SED) archives in Berlin.

These documents provide fresh insight into the decision-making processes and multi-lateral consultations of the Soviets and their East Bloc allies. Collectively, they reveal clues to the origins of the deep mistrust which grew during the period in question and shed light on missed opportunities that might have arrested the process of decline.

- *Untitled message from Carter to Brezhnev on concerns regarding the Middle East and Horn of Africa, Dec. 21, 1977.*

On Oct. 1, 1977, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko issued a surprise joint communiqué announcing a superpower effort to bring peace to the Middle East. The effort immediately stalled on the U.S. side, but on Nov. 19, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat went to Jerusalem and set in motion an Egyptian-Israeli initiative that eventually led to the Camp David accords. The Soviets were furious, believing that Washington had cut them out of this important multilateral effort.

The letter from Carter responds to Brezhnev and Gromyko's outbursts of mistrust following Sadat's dramatic appearance in Jerusalem. "I was disappointed to learn," Carter wrote, "that Minister Gromyko feels that the recent peace initiatives by President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin were somehow contrived by the United States." He then tries to assure the Soviet leader that the U.S. still hopes to include Moscow in a comprehensive Middle East settlement. "We count on collaborating closely with you in making these negotiations as fruitful as possible," said Carter.

Carter also mentions U.S. concerns over Soviet-Cuban involvement in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia/Somalia). It is in this letter that National Security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski inserted what he termed "reasonably straightforward language" about Soviet and Cuban activities in the Horn" (*Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser*, 1984, p. 180). Until now, the full text of the letter has not been available.

- "*Horn of Africa; Middle East*," *Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Vance and Boris N. Ponomarev, Candidate Member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Jan. 26, 1978.*

One month after the letter from Carter containing Brzezinski's stern language about the Horn of Africa, the conflict in Ethiopia/Somalia continued to cause tension between the United States and Soviet Union. In this conversation, Ponomarev presses Vance on the question of whether the United States is sanctioning the diversion of U.S. weapons by its allies to the Somalis, who had invaded the Ogaden desert between Ethiopia and Somalia. After Vance insists that no such transfers are taking place, Ponomarev "asked if the Secretary was sure that Saudi Arabia and Iran had not sent arms supplied to them by the U.S. to Somalia," according to the memo. Vance replies that "Saudi Arabia and Iran had told us that they had not done so and that we had checked on this and found it to be correct."

In fact, other documents from internal Carter administration deliberations after this meeting, which have recently been declassified, indicate that the U.S. knew that the Saudis were shipping U.S. weapons to Somalia.

In the same conversation with Ponomarev, Vance discusses the Middle East peace process and encounters a disbelieving Ponomarev on the subject of alleged U.S. collusion with Sadat. "Then certain events took place," Vance said, "including the visit of Sadat to Jerusalem, about which Sadat did not consult with the U.S." The memo continues, "At this point, Ponomarev interjected in English, 'Really?'"

- "*About a Response to the President of the USA Regarding the Issue of the Soviet Military Personnel in Cuba.*" *Two documents: one from a Politburo transcript, the other the text of a letter from Brezhnev to Carter drafted for Politburo approval, both dated Sept. 27, 1979.*

The day before this Politburo meeting, the transcript states, Carter had sent a hot line message in which he "once again appealed to us ... regarding the issue of the story they have dreamed up about the presence of our military brigade in Cuba." The letter itself opens with: "First of all, I must tell you openly, Mr. President, that we are extremely surprised by the openly hostile ... campaign, which has been launched in the USA ... It seems to us

that the only result of the swelling of this artificially created campaign can turn out to be a real loss to the relations between our countries."

The affair over the "brigade in Cuba" was bizarre, and driven in large part by the partisan political motives of two U.S. senators running for reelection, Frank Church of Idaho and Richard Stone of Florida. (Both were defeated.) Each endeavored to prove that the Soviets had recently placed a combat brigade into Cuba which had, in fact, been there ever since the missile crisis of 1962. The Soviets, however, at all levels, seem never to have doubted that there were darker U.S. motives at work. They felt there was a plot afoot within the U.S. government to scuttle U.S.-Soviet relations, detente, and the SALT II arms control treaty in the process.

- *"Verbatim Minutes of the Official Conversations Between SED Secretary E. Honecker and Fidel Castro Ruz, in the Palace of the Revolution in Havana, May 28, 1980."*

This unusual transcript tells the story, from Castro's perspective, of the impact of the brigade in Cuba episode, and how the Cubans and Soviets differed over how to deal with it. In discussions with Moscow, Castro tells Honecker, one question was what to call the unit in Cuba. In Politburo minutes, the unit is called a "training center." Castro, on the other hand, had wanted to call it what it in fact was -- a combat brigade. He told Honecker, "We had always favored calling it a brigade ... If we call it a training center, for moral reasons, we forgo the right to have a brigade." Moscow, worried about its relationship with the U.S. just as the SALT II treaty was coming to the Senate for a vote on ratification, wanted to play down the incident and not make a stand on principle. "Of course the Soviet comrades," Castro said, "did not want to heat up the international situation, and since SALT II was still pending before the Senate, we had no other choice than to call it a training center."

(According to other documents recently released to the Carter-Brezhnev project, it was actually Fidel's brother, Defense Minister Raul Castro, who came up with the "training center" formulation.)

The brigade episode reminded Castro and his associates, as the documents make clear, of their treatment by the Soviets 18 years earlier in the Cuban missile crisis. In both cases, the Soviets chose to tend to their relations with the Americans, at the expense of principle and of Cuban security interests. At least that is the way the Cubans saw it, in 1962 and in 1979.

- *"Minutes of Conversation between Comrade Erich Honecker and Comrade Fidel Castro on Sunday, April 3, 1977, between 11:00 and 13:30, and 15:45 and 18:00 at the House of the Central Committee"*

In this highly detailed report, Fidel Castro reveals the scope of Cuba's political activities in Africa. In particular, he tells Honecker at length about the emerging problems facing the Soviets and their allies in the Horn of Africa. Somalia was at that time on good terms with Moscow and received weapons from them. But in July 1977, Somali forces invaded the Ogaden region of neighboring Ethiopia, ultimately prompting the Soviets to drop their support for the Somalis in favor of the Ethiopians.

In this document, Castro reports on his secret efforts to avert an impasse in relations between the two neighboring countries. He reveals to Honecker that he was able to bring the two leaders, Siad Barre of Somalia and Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, together at a secret summit in Aden, Yemen, which ultimately collapsed, Castro said, because of the intransigence and overt hostility of Siad Barre.

This document, along with a wealth of other materials on the Horn of Africa obtained by the Carter-Brezhnev project, provides considerable insight into the ways in which a local conflict, driven by ancient rivalries, became swept up in the global competition of the U.S. and Soviet Union, turning a bush war, more or less, into societal catastrophes for Ethiopia and Somalia.

- *"About Comrade Andropov's conversations with Afghan leaders about certain issues of Soviet-Afghan cooperation," excerpt from working transcript of a meeting of the Politburo, Feb. 7, 1980.*

This conversation occurs six weeks after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB, which played (some would say) the dominant role in the intervention, reports on a recent trip to the region. The essence of his report is that the situation has become stabilized:

"First of all it is necessary to note directly that the situation in Afghanistan is stabilizing now. This is evident from all the data. In the conversation I had with Comrade Karmal [Moscow-oriented Afghan leader Babrak Karmal], he cited in great detail what has been done in the month since the removal of [Hafizulla] Amin from power. Although the situation in the country does continue to be complex, and demands the most urgent and pressing measures aimed at its stabilization, the main thing is that now the leadership of Afghanistan understands its fundamental tasks and is doing everything possible so that the situation really does stabilize."

Although Andropov is not recorded as saying so explicitly, he appears to imply that it will soon be unnecessary for Soviet troops to remain in Afghanistan. His intent is somewhat clarified by Defense Minister Dmitry Ustinov, who disagrees with Andropov's assessment and implied recommendation:

"Yuri Vladimirovich has made a very thorough report about his journey to Afghanistan. But I want to say that we must speak very carefully regarding a withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan. I think about a year will be needed, maybe even a year and a half ..."

Ustinov is followed by Brezhnev himself, who says, "I believe that we even need to increase the contingent of forces in Afghanistan somewhat."

This excerpt gives a glimpse of Soviet thinking on what may have been its biggest foreign policy disaster since the German invasion of the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II. Many observers trace the collapse of the Soviet Union to the unexpected hostility the Soviet leadership encountered all over the world, and ultimately within its own borders, to its unwinnable war in Afghanistan, its "Vietnam," as it is now commonly called. It is especially interesting that the head of the KGB may have seen at least part of what

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was coming, and wanted to remove Soviet forces before they got bogged down in what became the Afghan quagmire.

In another document released to the Carter-Brezhnev project, a March 1979 excerpt from another Politburo session, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko gives an excellent argument for staying out of Afghanistan because it would, he says prophetically, destroy U.S.-Soviet detente. These documents lend weight to the conclusion that the Soviet decision to intervene in Afghanistan was not without controversy within the Soviet leadership, and that it may have been aimed primarily at protecting relatively narrow interests in Afghanistan itself – propping up its allies – rather than promoting any long-term strategic designs on the region, as was believed by many in the Carter administration.

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The Carter-Brezhnev Project

Biographical Information on Press Conference Participants

James G. Blight is a senior research fellow at the Center for Foreign Policy Development of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University, where he directs the Carter-Brezhnev Project. He was the director of the Cuban Missile Crisis Project and is the author or co-author of five books on the missile crisis and of several works on U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba.

Malcolm Byrne is director of analysis at the National Security Archive, a non-governmental private repository of documentary evidence on U.S. foreign policy in the post-World War II period. He is the co-editor of several collections of declassified documents, including books on the Cuban missile crisis and the Iran-Contra affair. He is the coordinator of document acquisition for the Carter-Brezhnev Project.

Robert Legvold is professor of political science at Columbia University and former director of the Harriman Institute, where he is currently a fellow. He is the author of many works on the former Soviet Union; he is book review editor for the former Soviet Union for *Foreign Affairs* magazine. Legvold is the conference session chairman for the Carter-Brezhnev Project.

Geir Lundestad is director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway, and executive secretary to the Nobel Committee that annually awards the Nobel Peace Prize. He is a scholar of post-World War II diplomatic history, specializing in U.S. foreign policy. The Norwegian Nobel Institute will host the final conference in the Carter-Brezhnev Project's series in Oslo, September 1995.

Thomas R. Pickering was sworn in as U.S. ambassador to the Russian Federation in May 1993. He is a career foreign service officer, one of two who currently hold the rank of Career Ambassador. He has held many posts in Washington, including executive secretary of the Department of State and special assistant to the secretary of state (1973-74); deputy director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (1969); and posts in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Before becoming ambassador to Russia, Pickering had served as ambassador to India, the United Nations, Israel, Jordan and Nigeria. During the Carter years, he was assistant secretary of state for oceans and international environmental and scientific affairs.

Yuli M. Vorontsov was sworn in as ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States in August 1994. He is a career Russian diplomat, who joined the diplomatic service in 1952. Prior to serving as ambassador in Washington, he was ambassador to the United

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PARTICIPANTS

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Nations, where he served from 1990 to 1994. He has served, at various times, in the U.N. mission (1963-66), the Washington embassy (1966-1977), as ambassador to India (1977-83) and ambassador to France (1983-86). In 1986, he was appointed first deputy foreign minister of the Soviet Union. In 1988-89, he concurrently served as the Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan. In addition to serving as ambassador in Washington, he serves as adviser to Russian President Boris N. Yeltsin on foreign affairs.

Vladislav Zubok is a senior researcher at the National Security Archive in Washington and a lecturer in international relations at the American University. Originally trained at Moscow State University, he formerly worked as an analyst at the Institute of the USA and Canada Studies in Moscow. He is the author of many recent works on Soviet decision-making during the Cold War. His book on Soviet leaders, from Lenin to Gorbachev, will appear later this year.

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The Center For Foreign Policy Development at Brown University

The Center for Foreign Policy Development evolved from conversations in the U.S. embassy in Moscow in the bleak months following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. Thomas J. Watson Jr. had been appointed ambassador in June 1979, coincident with the signing of the SALT II nuclear arms control treaty by President Carter and Chairman Brezhnev at their June Vienna summit. The appointment of Watson, a liberal Democrat and former CEO at IBM, had been intended as a signal to the Soviet Union that the Carter Administration was looking forward to a bold U.S.-Soviet rapprochement. Watson arrived with great expectations. Together with his deputy ambassador, Mark Garrison, Watson intended to oversee a radical improvement in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Especially important to Watson and Garrison was participating meaningfully in an end to the nuclear arms race.

Just the opposite occurred. As the weeks and months of early 1980 passed, a deep freeze settled in on U.S.-Soviet relations. The SALT II treaty was left unratified. No new initiatives were undertaken. In this atmosphere, Watson asked Garrison, a career foreign service officer, if he might be interested in returning to Brown University, Watson's alma mater, to help found an organization devoted to developing U.S. foreign policy initiatives that would reduce the risk of nuclear war and improve U.S. relations with Russia. Thus arose the idea for what became the Center for Foreign Policy Development, which Garrison directed from 1981 until his retirement in 1993. Watson died in December 1993, but not before he and former Brown President, the late Howard Swearer, had integrated the center into what is now the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, at Brown University, directed by Thomas J. Biersteker.

The Center for Foreign Policy Development is currently directed by P. Terrence Hopmann, a political scientist specializing in arms control negotiations. It supports a variety of programs and projects devoted to reducing the risk of conflict in the former Soviet Union and to combatting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. As the host institution for the Carter-Brezhnev project, the center has come full circle to embrace the reexamination of the events which gave rise to the idea for the center many years ago. Thomas J. Watson personally participated in the first conference in the Carter-Brezhnev series, in October 1992, and Mark Garrison continues as an active participant.

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