

Ten Reasons Why Russia Can't Trust Uncle Sam

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The West says that it is perplexed by Russia's "aggressive" behavior of late, and suggests that Moscow is desirous to regain its past superpower status, and even a little empire. But if cashing in on oil is imperialism, how do we explain the following U.S. moves:



Putin: not a drunken Yeltsin

10. Scrapping the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty

In December 2001, three months after 9/11, U.S. President George W. Bush told Russian President Vladimir Putin that the U.S. was pulling out of the 1972 ABM Treaty, a Cold War-era document that specifically forbade the development and deployment of anti-missile defense systems. The treaty ensured that signatory nations adhere to the mutually assured destruction (MAD) concept - if you destroy us we will destroy you formula. Yes, it was certainly MAD, but it kept the peace for 30 years. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld attempted to reassure Moscow that the decision was nothing personal. "It [the treaty] failed to recognize that the Soviet Union is gone and that Russia is, of course, not our enemy." Putin called the move "a mistake."

9. "Mission Accomplished"

On March 20, 2003, the United States - without a mandate from the United Nations, and against the heated objections of France, Germany and Russia - invaded Iraq on the pretext that the secular Baathist state of Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was a proud sponsor of terrorism. Both accusations were proven wrong. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the BBC in an interview that the attack was a violation of international law. "From our point of view and the UN Charter point of view, it [the war] was illegal."

8. Pentagon Spending Spree

The United States, which just put the finishing touches on a \$583 billion dollar shopping trip for 2008, accounts for about half of global expenditures (or the next 14 nations). However, as Robert

Higgs of the Independent Institute argues, "the trillion-dollar defense budget is already here." Higgs calculated that U.S. military-related spending in 2006 was actually \$934.9 billion if we figure in Homeland Security (\$69.1bln), the Dept. of Energy, which oversees nuclear weapons (\$16.6 bln) and the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (\$69.8 bln), as well as other juicy pork chops. In May, the Democrat-controlled House and Senate approved almost \$95 billion for the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq through September (Go Dems!). Meanwhile, "aggressive" Russia, with a 48 percent increase in military spending since 1996, still spends 'just' \$85 billion annually on military expenditures.

7. NATO XXL

As Dan Simpson, a retired U.S. diplomat argued in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "The United States and other NATO members have taken some actions along the way to lull the Russians into acquiescence as NATO expanded to include the former Warsaw Pact nations... The argument was that these countries wanted to join NATO and that their membership posed no threat to Russia. That line prevailed as NATO membership grew to include also Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, former republics of the Soviet Union. Now the Russians see the same argument being advanced for Georgia and Ukraine. That's getting close to home."

6. New Military Bloopers

As the Pakistani government of Gen. Pervez Musharraf struggles to contain the fallout of an 8-day battle against militants at the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque), a U.S. official turned up the heat by telling CNN that if the U.S. "had actionable targets, anywhere in the world," including Pakistan, then "we would pursue those targets." Meanwhile, talk about a possible attack on Iran, a nation that ranked on America's axis of evil hit parade, continues.

5. Think-Tank Saber Rattling

Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press write an article in the prestigious U.S. journal Foreign Affairs entitled "Nuclear Primacy" (March/April 2006), which argues, in a nutshell, that "It will probably soon be possible for the United States to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike." Is this the sort of article that America should be supporting if it wants Russia to believe that elements of the proposed U.S. missile defense system in Poland and... oops! Don't want to spoil the plot! Anyways, Moscow 'responds' with very accurate penmanship one year later as it test-fires its new RS-24 ballistic missile that it said could "overcome any potential missile defense systems developed by foreign countries."

4. Cheney Comfort

One month after the above love letter hit newsstands, Vice President Dick Cheney, during a trip to Vilnius, Lithuania, assuaged Moscow's fears by reiterating, once again: "Russia has nothing to fear and everything to gain" by 'democratic activity' on her borders.

3. Gates' Gated Community

In early 2007, Pentagon chief Robert Gates urged vigilance when he warned, "We don't know what's going to develop in places like Russia and China, in North Korea, in Iran and elsewhere." Was this a simple case of mistaken identity by a former White House Russian analyst? Whatever the case, it certainly helped to provoke Putin's heated Munich speech in February, where he admonished the world's "one master, one sovereign."

2. EU Culpability

As the War on Terror continues, Europe is losing its Snow White innocence. As the German magazine Der Spiegel reported, "On July 19, 2002, a Gulfstream business jet took off from Frankfurt am Main bound for Amman, Jordan. The flight received an AFTM exempt [pilot code for 'extreme situation'], although it carried neither patients nor politicians. Instead, the jet was carrying a CIA team that took a Mauritanian terrorism suspect... to Guantanamo." Der Spiegel reported that this "camouflaging of an illegal kidnapping as a rescue flight" was not an isolated event: There were 390 such takeoffs and landings in Germany between 2002 and 2006. And considering Eastern European hotels, it's just too scary to consider those secret terrorist prisons that allegedly exist in Poland and Romania.

1. Don't Worry, These anti-Missile Missiles won't Hurt You, Really - Washington is now incredulous, shocked, mortified that Moscow has the nerve to suggest that there could be less than good intentions involved in the construction of an anti-missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, even though there are no bad-guy technologies on the horizon that such a system could intercept. Go figure!

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