

By President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia

Today is the 11th of September, a special day, a day when a terrorist act occurred in the United States of America. This is a sad day for the United States and for all countries that suffer from terrorism. Unfortunately, the terrorist threat remains real. Humankind has not overcome this challenge and the Russian Federation is ready for coordinated, full-value cooperation with the United States and with other countries in combating terrorism. We believe this is our top priority and we believe that this is much more useful for the United States than to develop relations with rotten regimes engaged in military adventures. At a meeting today we are going to discuss the acquisition of new weapons, creating new types of weapons and... upgrading of the image of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the coming years. We need modern, effective Armed Forces, and this is one of the key tasks of the state.

Some time ago a special decision was taken about a substantial raise in payments to the best officers who are in combat-ready troops or have adequately proved themselves during military exercises. Now we must concentrate on upgrading our weapons. We will do so consistently, carefully, and on the basis of considerations and problems that have emerged in recent times. There is no doubt that these decisions will be affected by the crisis in the Caucasus, Georgia's aggression and its continuing militarisation. This puts the task which I now formulate among the highest state priorities over the next few years.

We will need to generally improve the combat preparation and training of our Armed Forces. We will conduct exercises, carry out visits, and engage in these activities not only in the Russian Federation, where we are already doing them on a regular basis, but also in countries which are among our closest allies - our partners in the CSTO. We will work on these issues with other states that want to expand their military and military-technical cooperation with the Russian Federation. I have therefore decided to have our strategic aviation fly to Venezuela at the invitation of the leadership there. *

There will also be naval exercises, a maritime component, and exercises will be conducted elsewhere as well.

* This was subsequently reported in the blog Blackjacks over Cuba 15 September 2008

An edited version of words attributed to the Russian President on the website of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence