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Russia summit wraps up

Clinton says U.S. would offer economic aid if positive change is made

MOSCOW (AP) — Asserting an unshakable friendship with Russia but offering only general remedies for its ailing economy, President Clinton sought Wednesday to reassert his statesman role by cajoling President Boris Yeltsin and his political foes to find common ground on reform.



YELTSIN

Ending a two-day summit that marked his first venture on the world stage since his acknowledgment of an affair with a young White House intern, Clinton assured Yeltsin he could count on new offers of economic aid if Russia shows it will complete its free-market reforms.

"The answer is to finish the job that has been begun, not to stop it in midstream or to reverse course," Clinton said at a joint news conference with Yeltsin at the Kremlin.

"America and the international community are, I am convinced, ready to offer fur-

ther assistance if Russia stays with the path of reform," Clinton said.

While speaking bluntly of Moscow's differences with Washington over NATO and other security issues, Yeltsin said his country was determined to "conclude our reforms" and recognized that, in the end, it was up to Russia itself to make the right moves on the economic front.

"What we need from the United States is political support to the effect that the United States is in favor of reforms in Russia," Yeltsin said. "This is what we really need, and then all the investors who would like to come to the Russian reformed market will do so, will come with their investments."

Clinton sounded a similar theme in a meeting with some two dozen members of the communist-led Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, and regional leaders at the residence of U.S. Ambassador James Collins. Clinton told the meeting, "Russia must have its own approaches that keep the nation strong."

It was a recognition of the

diversity that marks the parliament in Russia's seventh year of experimenting with democracy. And it was represented in the turnout that ranged from Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov and Alexander Lebed, the hard-line former general from Siberia, to Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the Yabloko bloc.

"I come here as someone who considers himself a friend of your country and someone who deeply believes that in the century just ahead of us America and Russia must be partners," Clinton said. "I hope you will be able to bridge your differences to agree on, first, a program to stabilize the current situation, and then a path to finish the framework of basic things that every successful economy has."

Clinton's care in not stepping on anyone's toes apparently succeeded. Asked afterward if the American president was afraid of Communists, Zyuganov said "he is not afraid."

But whether Clinton persuaded the Duma leaders to collaborate with Yeltsin, after rejecting his choice for prime minister, Viktor Cher-

Clinton field questions recent scandal

MOSCOW (AP) — In an ornate room alongside the president of Russia, Clinton insisted Wednesday he had not "given" in his explanation of his affair with Monica Lewinsky.

The president had not used the Aug. 17 televised address in which he acknowledged an improper relationship with Lewinsky and said he regretted the scandal. The tone of that address had drawn criticism from Democrats and Republicans that Clinton was too defensive, too contrite and showing too much remorse over Kenneth Starr's investigation.

Clinton, asked about his affair with Lewinsky at a news conference with Boris Yeltsin, had gone back and reread his speech.

"I thought it was clear that I was sorry, my profound regret to all who were hurt by this, all who were involved and my desire to see more people hurt by this scandal caught up in it," the president said. "I was for others to judge whether I was too contentious — but he did his stinging criticism of Starr's investigation about prying into private lives."

"I have acknowledged that I made a lot of very valuable time with my secretary last couple of weeks and said I was sorry to work," Clinton said.

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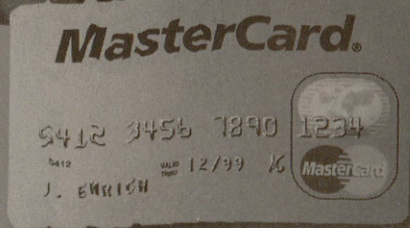
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