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# Bush hope to convince Putil of need for missile defense

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Russian President Vladimir Putin makes his first visit to the White House on Tuesday, Hope Pregnancy Centers President Bush hopes he can overcome Russian objections to his missile defense plans with promises of new cuts in the U.S.

nuclear arsenal. What the two presidents can accomplish the next day at Bush's Texas ranch — over a chuck-wagon picnic with crooning cowboys — is less tangible, but perhaps more important to Bush's war on terrorism and his broader agenda for U.S.-Russia relations.

As national security adviser Condoleezza Rice put it, Bush and Putin are steadily building "a relationship that is very, very good, and also normal," where issues can be addressed without the high-stakes negotiations that were the hallmark of the Soviet era.

On Bush's wish list for his three days with Putin are several issues, both longrange and immediate, that could benefit from the personal friendship and trust that Bush hopes to cultivate in a mix of formal White House talks and down-home hospitality at his 1,600-acre ranch in central Texas:

-Unflinching Russian support in the U.S.-led war against Osama bin Laden, his al-Qaida terrorist network and its allies in Afghanistan's ruling Taliban.

Putin has called the terrorists behind the Sept. 11 attacks a common enemy and vowed to help the United States "fight this evil."

Putin said in a weekend interview that Russia has supplied the United States with air corridors and "very valuable intelligence information," as well as "tens of millions dollars worth of military-technical assistance" to Afghan opposition forces fighting the Taliban.

Andrew Kuchins, Russia expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, warned that "if the United States wanted to take the military efforts outside Afghanistan, especially Iraq or Iran, our nascent partnership with Russia is going to get pretty complicated pretty fast." There are also signs that a U.S.-Russia squabble over the political configuration of any post-Taliban Afghanistan could be in the offing.

—A deal to begin reducing warheads on

Bush will present to Putin the results of a nuclear strategy review by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and announce plans to send two-thirds of America's stockpiled nuclear warheads to the scrap heap.

The idea is that, if the American arsenal fell below 2,000 — to roughly match the 1,500 that would be left in Russia's stockpile under Putin's cost-savings plans — then the Russians might rest easy that any American missile shield is not meant as a weapon against Russia. Each side currently has about 6,000 warheads.

-Further softening of Russian opposi-

Whether it happens this week or down the road, experts monit Russia talks expect Bush and Putinto some sort of executive agreement 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty interpreted to permit testing of as protect the United States and its all missiles launched by Iraq, North I other rogue states. Such an agreement forestall for years the thorny question to do with the treaty when it bumpsi actual deployment of a U.S. missile

Putin said in the interview that he optimistic a compromise could be for

"We know the president's vi strategic offensive weapons can and reduced. This is a compromise in direction," Putin said.

Bush will forge ahead with or agreement.

-Tight control over the nucle other weapons material lying around some 40,000 tons of chemical wear enough plutonium and uranium for mated tens of thousands of nuclear

"If even a minuscule fraction of nuclear weaponry, material or e leaked out of the country, it won bonanza for state or terrorist orga that might do us harm," said Ka Inderfuth, President Clinton's assistant retary of State for South Asian affair.

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