

Dear colleagues,

I am exceedingly pleased and honoured to join my good friend, Dr Vladimir (Volodya) Orlov at this event organized by the Russian Center for Policy Studies (PIR Center), on the 20th anniversary of the Center's founding on 30 April 1994.

Over its two decades, the PIR Center has come to be widely recognized as the leading independent non-governmental organization and think-tank working on global and regional security issues in the Russian Federation. It is not surprising that the Presidency, the foreign and defence ministries, the Duma, civil society and the media, in the Russian Federation, all recognize the contribution of Dr Orlov and his esteemed colleagues at the PIR Center, to strategic policy discourse within and outside the Russian Federation.

The PIR Center's prestige and excellence is not confined to the Russian Federation, indeed it has achieved global reach through its valuable work on promoting Russian-US strategic dialogue, security in the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia and in the European space, among other areas and activities.

The PIR Center has highly regarded educational, public awareness and publishing activities. The PIR Center's periodical *Security Index Journal*, formerly *Yaderny Kontrol* (Nuclear Control) has published more than 100 issues, carrying articles and opinions by senior Russian official and academicians, as well as by foreign scholars and practitioners. I am always intrigued by the logo of the Journal, which is a rhinoceros! – on some pages, the rhinoceros is emerging from a file folder!

Now, no one would say that Volodya Orlov is a one-dimensional person. Among other talents, he is an avid photographer, who has taken some amazing photographs during his travels in the service of the non-proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, which one can find in the PIR Center's calendar – which is equivalent of the Pirelli calendar in our field – exclusive and hard to come by!

But back to the rhinoceros, as a Renaissance Man, Volodya was taken by Albrecht Dürer's famous 1515 AD woodcut of a rhinoceros, which Dürer based on a written description and brief sketch by an unknown artist of an Indian rhinoceros that had arrived in Lisbon earlier that year. In reality, Dürer never saw the animal itself and, as a result, Dürer's rhinoceros is a somewhat stylized or mythical depiction. There are legends about rhinoceros stamping out fire in Malaysia, India, and Burma. Myths have it that the rhinoceros would come when a fire is lit in the forest and stamp it out. There are no recent confirmations of this phenomenon. However, this legend has been reinforced by the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, where an African rhinoceros is shown to be putting out two campfires. What I take from this is that Volodya's rhinoceros in the *Security Index Journal* symbolically is putting out WMD fires!

Congratulations to PIR Center on its 20th anniversary and I wish it continuing success and fame

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