

U.S. Senate Approves McFaul As New Ambassador to Russia

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WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate on Saturday approved President Barack Obama's top adviser on Russia policy, Michael McFaul, as the country's ambassador to Moscow.

The former Stanford University professor replaces John Beyrle, who was appointed in 2008 by former President George W. Bush and is expected to leave Moscow later this month.

McFaul was a leading architect of the Obama administration's "reset" policy focused on improving relations with Russia and helped negotiate the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty.

McFaul's confirmation had been delayed by Senator Mark Kirk.

The Republican was seeking assurances from the Democratic administration that it would not share classified data with Russia on the U.S. missile defense system, as part of Washington's efforts to convince Moscow that the system being built in Eastern Europe is not directed against Russia.

Kirk told the Senate last week that he would no longer delay a vote on McFaul's nomination for two reasons. First, he said he had in fact received the written assurances he sought from the Obama administration. Kirk also pointed to an amendment in a defense bill Congress was about to pass that specifies that if the administration does decide to give classified missile defense data to the Russians, it must first give 60 days notice and certify to Congress that the data will not end up in the hands of third parties, like Iran.

"I will be supporting his nomination also because he will be good in working with the opposition and human rights communities in Russia," Kirk said of McFaul.

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