

McFaul: No Interest in Revolution

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U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul has rejected as "nonsense" accusations by a senior member of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's party that he's trying to encourage revolution.

President Barack Obama sent him to Russia to pursue the policy of a "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations, McFaul said in an interview with the Kommersant newspaper. He met with opposition activists earlier this month, within days of taking up his appointment.

"The point of the reset isn't to prepare a revolution," McFaul said, referring to Obama's policy of seeking to improve ties with Russia. "That's not what we are doing."

The contacts with the opposition are part of official U.S. policy to spread democratic values around the world, McFaul said, according to a transcript of the interview published Wednesday and confirmed by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

Russian state television last week accused McFaul of interfering in domestic politics and Andrei Isayev, a top lawmaker in Putin's United Russia party, said Tuesday that the ambassador was acting in an "open and cynical manner."

McFaul also rejected Isayev's contention that he's an "expert" in Orange Revolutions, referring to popular upheavals in the former Soviet nations of Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

"I'm an academic, a political scientist and a sociologist, not a professional revolutionary," said McFaul, a former professor at Stanford University and longstanding Russia specialist who was the top White House adviser on Russian affairs before taking up his current post.

Putin, 59, who's seeking to return to the presidency in the March 4 election, is facing the broadest unrest of his 12 years in power amid allegations of fraud in December parliamentary polls. He has often criticized the United States for what he sees as its efforts to dominate the world and its interference in other countries' affairs.

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