

United Russia Under Fire for McFaul Talks

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U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul remains a hot potato in Russian politics.

A meeting between McFaul and the ruling United Russia party sparked a demand from A Just Russia for an ethics inquiry — a tit-for-tat of how United Russia treated A Just Russia when its members met with McFaul earlier this year.

McFaul sat down with the head of United Russia's faction in the State Duma, Andrei Vorobyov, to discuss cooperation between the United States and Russia. Two other members of the party's Duma faction, Andrei Klimov and Vyacheslav Nikonov, also attended the talks.

The response was swift from Just Russia deputies, whom United Russia accused of "taking directions" from McFaul when they met with the ambassador in February.

"Do you remember how United Russia deputies criticized the opposition for meeting with McFaul?" Just Russia Deputy Gennady Gudkov wrote on Twitter on Friday. "Today United Russia Deputy Vorobyov himself met with McFaul. We have decided to ask: 'Why?'"

Gudkov and Just Russia Deputy Ilya Ponomaryov signed an appeal for the Duma's ethics committee to investigate the meeting, saying McFaul was a "specialist on Orange Revolutions" and "Western intelligence officials were advising Russian deputies" on the eve of a United Russia convention, Interfax reported.

United Russia held a convention Saturday and elected Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev as party leader.

United Russia deputies, who control the Duma, rejected the request for an ethics probe.

The ethics committee, incidentally, issued an official reprimand to Ponomaryov and Just Russia Deputy Oksana Dmitriyeva over their February meeting with McFaul, which also included Communist Deputy Leonid Kalashnikov.

While meetings between U.S. ambassadors and Russian political leaders have been routine in the past, the issue has become a hot one since the arrival of McFaul, a former professor and not a career diplomat.

United Russia members have suggested that he supports color revolutions like those that toppled regimes in Ukraine and Georgia in the mid-2000s because he wrote about them as a professor.

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