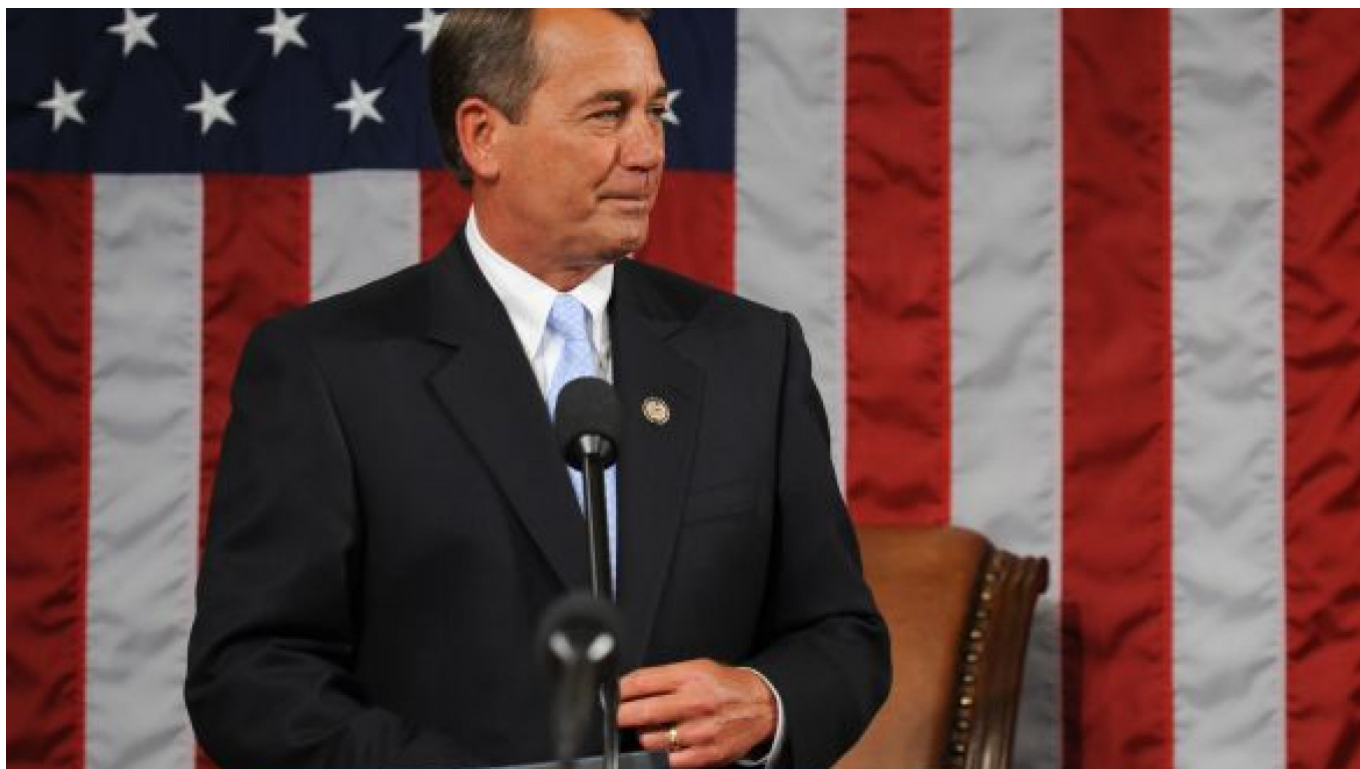


# U.S. House Speaker Snubs Russian Delegation

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U.S. House Speaker John Boehner

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner has refused to meet with a delegation of Russian diplomats hoping to dissuade U.S. lawmakers from supporting military intervention in Syria.

The speaker, a Republican from Ohio, declined an official request from the Russian Embassy in Washington, CNN reported.

The embassy confirmed that the delegation would visit Capitol Hill next week.

Last Saturday, U.S. President Barack Obama called on Congress to approve a limited set of airstrikes to punish the forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad for allegedly killing more than 1,400 of his own people with chemical weapons in late August.

President Vladimir Putin has expressed doubt about U.S. evidence that a chemical attack took place and said that any foreign military action in Syria should be approved by the United Nations.

The Russian delegation may be hoping that Republican congressional leadership will derail the intervention plans by Obama, a Democrat. British Labour lawmakers voted down Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron's call for military intervention last week.

But Boehner has already expressed support for a limited U.S. strike.

It was unclear whether other members of Congress would agree to meet with Russia's representatives.

Former Republican Senator Dick Lugar told CNN that he did not expect that the delegation would be able to sway any votes. "At this particular point, my understanding has been that relations between members of Congress and the Russian parliament have been very sour," he said.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the exact wording of a resolution authorizing the use of force in Syria with support from both Democrats and Republicans. A Senate vote on the resolution is expected next week.

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