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U.S. Envoy: No Visa-Free Regime

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The U.S. ambassador to Russia has crushed feeble hopes of a visa-free regime between the two countries, saying it could only be implemented in the distant future, Novaya Gazeta reported Wednesday.

"I would like to live to see the time when there is no visa regime between Russia and the United States," John Beyrle said in remarks published in Russian.

"Of course, it won't happen overnight, but as a final, very ambitious goal this is only right and logical," he said.

Beyrle added that the two countries planned to "soon" extend the duration of bilateral visas to two years, though he conceded that this was a far cry from the 10-year duration that is the U.S. "global standard" for visas.

The proposal to cancel visas between the United States and Russia was first voiced by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in March. President Dmitry Medvedev said this week that he would raise it with U.S. President Barack Obama during talks next month.

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