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Obama Congratulates Putin By Phone on Election Victory

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WASHINGTON — U.S. President Barack Obama called President-elect Vladimir Putin on Friday to congratulate him on his election victory, and the two discussed issues including Iran, Syria and missile defense, according to a White House statement.

While listing Iran and Russia's invitation to join the World Trade Organization as areas of cooperation, the statement said the two leaders agreed to continue discussions on areas where their countries have differed, including Syria and missile defense.

"President Obama and President-elect Putin agreed that the successful reset in relations should be built upon during the coming years," the White House statement read.

Obama made the "reset" of U.S. relations with Russia one of his top foreign policy priorities after taking office three years ago. He had a solid working relationship with departing President Dmitry Medvedev.

Official results showed Putin won more than 63 percent of the votes in the weekend election,

but independent international monitors said the poll was skewed to favor him.

On Monday, Michael McFaul, the new U.S. ambassador to Russia and a former White House aide, wrote on Twitter that he was concerned about the detention of protesters in Russia who challenged Putin's election victory.

His comments prompted Russian officials to push back by suggesting the United States used tougher methods to disperse anti-Wall Street protests.

Obama and Putin are to meet in May at the Group of Eight summit at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

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