

G8 Gathering Moved as Goodwill Gesture

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The  Moscow Times

U.S. President Barack Obama's late decision to move the upcoming G8 summit to Camp David was made to please Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Kommersant reported Sunday.

The summit was originally planned to take place May 18-19 in Chicago and be followed by a NATO conference in the same city May 20-21.

Obama's official reasons for moving the conference were that he had not yet held a conference at Camp David during his term and that it would "provide a more informal setting with these close partners," spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden said, the Chicago Tribune reported.

However, a source in the White House told Kommersant that the decision was more likely made to get relations with Putin off to a good start, since Kremlin sources have said Putin would not attend the NATO conference if talks on missile defense are not furthered.

"It's a friendly gesture. We're helping Putin avoid an awkward situation," the source said.

A Kremlin source confirmed this, saying the original itinerary might have caused Putin to lose face.

"Unless there's advancement on missile defense, there's no point in going to the NATO summit," the source told Kommersant. "But a sudden departure [following the G8 summit] might be construed by the Western press as a reluctance to negotiate, reflecting badly on us."

The move has also been interpreted as an attempt to avoid protests at the summit. Chicago police were expecting 2,000 to 10,000 demonstrators.

"They are running scared from the people," @OccupyWallStreetNYC wrote on Twitter.

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