

Obama Asked to Explain Remark to Medvedev

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WASHINGTON — House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner asked U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday to state clearly and publicly whether he planned any concessions to Russia on the U.S. missile defense program.

Boehner said in a letter to Obama that he was alarmed by the president's overheard remarks Monday assuring President Dmitry Medvedev that he would have "more flexibility" to deal with contentious arms control issues after the Nov. 6 presidential election.

Obama and Medvedev were attending a nuclear security summit in Seoul and were unaware that their conversation was being picked up by microphones as reporters were led into the room.

"Given the specter you have raised of shifting positions, it would be appropriate that you state publicly and clearly that no unilateral concessions will be made to the Russians, before or after the election," Boehner, a Republican, wrote to Democrat Obama.

Boehner said it was "troubling that you would suggest to Russian leaders that their reckless ambition would be rewarded with greater 'flexibility.'"

If Obama is planning concessions on missile defense, Boehner said, the president should report them and consult "immediately" with the appropriate committees in Congress.

Obama's remarks had been pounced on earlier by Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who called them troubling and said Russia was "our No. 1 geopolitical foe."

But Boehner refused to criticize Obama while the president was still out of the United States. Obama returned Tuesday evening.

Another senior Republican, former presidential candidate John McCain, also took aim at Obama on Wednesday for the comments to Medvedev, saying Obama was "playing fast and loose with national security."

McCain, a senator, lost the White House to Obama in the 2008 presidential election.

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