

Russia Accuses McFaul of Arrogance Over Missile Shield Comment

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Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul on Wednesday of arrogance over remarks he made on the contentious issue of missile defense, Russia's latest rebuke of an envoy whose three months in Moscow have been clouded by controversy.

Lavrov said McFaul had "arrogantly" rejected Russia's concerns about U.S. plans for a European missile shield in a recent interview with RIA-Novosti, the news agency reported.

"Yesterday our colleague, the U.S. ambassador, arrogantly announced there will be no changes on missile defense, even though it would seem that an ambassador ... should understand it is necessary to take the interests of the state in question into account," RIA-Novosti quoted Lavrov as telling students in Azerbaijan.

McFaul had said the United States would press ahead with the creation of a European anti-missile shield capable of protecting the United States and its NATO allies and would not place limits on its potential development.

McFaul's remarks were in line with previous statements by the United States.

There was nothing new about the substance of Lavrov's remarks, but his choice of words seemed to underscore tension surrounding McFaul, who was behind President Barack Obama's "reset" policy with Russia, but has faced criticism since he arrived in January.

McFaul has become a lightning rod for accusations that the United States supports Kremlin opponents and the leaders of opposition protests that were the largest of President-elect Vladimir Putin's 12-year rule.

McFaul sparred verbally last week with a television crew as he headed to a meeting with a human rights activist, saying it had been following him everywhere and asking how its members had learned of his schedule. After that incident, the U.S. State Department said it had raised concerns about his security with the Russian government.

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