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Romney's Son Visits Russia

By The Moscow Times

November 05, 2012



Matt Romney

Matt Romney, a son of U.S. presidential candidate Mitt Romney, visited Moscow this week on business and relayed a message from his father to President Vladimir Putin, a news report said.

Matt came to the city in search of investors for his California-based real estate company Excel Trust, not as a representative of his father, the New York Times reported Thursday.

In his presidential campaign, the elder Romney has called Russia the United States' "number one geopolitical foe" and has said U.S. President Barack Obama's "reset" policy with Moscow has been a failure. Romney has promised more "backbone" from the U.S. in its relations with Russia if he is elected president on Tuesday.

But his son Matt told a person supposedly able to pass messages to Putin that Romney wants "good relations" if he succeeds Obama in the White House, a person who knew about the conversation told the Times.

Romney's son Matt is a senior vice president at Excel Trust, which owns retail properties across the U.S. A spokesman for the company told the Times that the trip to Russia had been planned for some time and "would have nothing to do with anything governmental."

Matt Romney has spent time with his father on the campaign trail along with the candidate's four other sons.

The U.S. presidential race is neck and neck, with Obama a slight favorite to win a second term, according to U.S. state and national polls.

Romney's tough rhetoric on Russia, which has included criticism of the Kremlin's support of the Syrian government amid its civil war with opposition forces, has prompted harsh rejoinders from some Russian politicians and pundits.

Putin has been more diplomatic in his statements about Romney, saying he sees both an upside and downside to his statements about Russia.

"The fact that Romney considers us an enemy is a minus, but the fact that he speaks directly and openly, that speaks to the fact that he is a direct and open person — and that's a plus," Putin said at a press conference on Sept. 11.

He also said he thought Romney's criticism of Russia was largely a campaign tactic.

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