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U.S. Ambassador Calls for End to 'Exploitations of Human Tragedy'

By The Moscow Times

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U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul has called for an end to "sensational exploitations of tragedy" in a blog post on Friday to address "a number of issues surrounding the tragic death" of 3-year-old Max Shatto, a Russian child adopted by a Texas woman.

McFaul's statement comes as a direct response to various Russian media reports accusing the U.S. of being lax in its investigation into the young boy's death.

Children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov expressed outrage about the boy's death on Twitter on Monday, initially accusing the boy's adoptive mother, Lauren Shatto, of killing the boy and complaining that the U.S. State Department "had no reaction" to the incident.

McFaul said Friday, however, that U.S. diplomats have been working closely with Russian diplomats behind the scenes. In addition, "representatives from the Russian Consulate and Embassy visited the Shatto family," McFaul wrote.

Russian diplomats also called the State Department twice in the past week to "express appreciation for the excellent cooperation," he said.

McFaul also noted that a thorough investigation into the boy's death is still under way, and that investigators are "abiding by the ... idea that one is innocent until proven guilty."

Max Shatto, whose birth name is Maxim Kuzmin, was adopted from a Russian orphanage and died in Odessa, Texas in January.

News of the boy's death triggered furor from many Russian officials, even prompting the Investigative Committee to open a criminal case into the matter.

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