

Putin and Obama Plan 2 Meetings to Tackle Tensions

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The  Moscow Times

Presidents Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama will meet twice in the upcoming months for talks aimed at easing tensions amid differences over human rights and other issues.

The two presidents have agreed to hold talks on the sidelines of a Group of Eight summit in Northern Ireland in June and to meet for a U.S.-Russian summit in early September, the National Security Council said.

The foundation for the meetings was laid during a visit to Moscow by U.S. National Security Advisor Tom Donilon on Monday, said council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden.

"National Security Advisor Tom Donilon held discussions with President Putin, Security Council Secretary-General [Nikolai] Patrushev, Foreign Minister [Sergei] Lavrov, and presidential foreign policy adviser [Yury] Ushakov on the full range of bilateral and global issues in preparation for the meeting between President Obama and President Putin on the margins of the G8 summit and a U.S.-Russia bilateral summit in early September," Hayden said a [brief statement](#). "The discussions were comprehensive and constructive."

(Read more about Donilon's visit [here](#).)

During his talks, Donilon also passed a letter from Obama over to Putin, White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters in Washington.

"We understand we have differences, and we are very clear and transparent and candid about those differences and we engage with Russian officials on those differences," Carney said. "But we also have areas where we can cooperate."

U.S.-Russian relations have been strained since Obama signed into law the Magnitsky Act, which punishes Russian officials implicated in human rights violations, in December. The law is named after lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who died in a Moscow jail in 2009 after accusing Russian officials of embezzling millions of dollars from the Russian government.

Russia immediately responded to the law by banning U.S. parents from adopting Russian children.

Tensions grew further Friday when the U.S. released a blacklist of Russian officials barred from entering the U.S. and Russia responded on Saturday by publishing a blacklist of U.S. officials whom it accuses of human rights violations.

Carney on Monday urged the Russian government to help resolve the standoff over the blacklists by punishing those behind Magnitsky's death. No one has been jailed in the case.

"One way to resolve this is for the Russian government to take action against, investigate into, take action on those individuals responsible for Mr. Magnitsky's death," Carney said.

Among the other issues that Putin and Obama will probably discuss during their upcoming meetings are differences over Iran, North Korea and Syria.

It was not immediately clear where the September summit would be held, but the Kremlin has spoken about organizing it around the time of the G20 meeting in St. Petersburg on Sept. 5-6.

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