

U.S. Official Says Social Networking Could Help Smooth Relations

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Tara Sonenshine rejected the idea that relations between the U.S and Russia are deteriorating and said social networking should be used to forge better ties during her visit to Moscow.

"I would dispute the idea that we have a bad relationship. About 60 percent of Americans have a positive view of Russia. Your country has the same indicators: 50 to 60 percent of Russians think positively of Americans," Sonenshine said in an interview with Kommersant published Tuesday.

Sonenshine proposes increasing the amount of joint programs between the two countries, including cultural, educational and sports programs, to "better understand each other."

She said an increase in social networking between Russia and the United States is particularly important in building stronger relations. It would be a mistake to consider such sites

problematic, she said, since "digital diplomacy, just like traditional diplomacy, involves interaction on a personal level."

According to Sonenshine, Russia's "independent and strong Internet community" could help it to give the world a better idea of its values and cultural identity.

Sonenshine also commented on reports that the Kremlin is not pleased with comments that U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul makes about Russian officials on Twitter.

She noted that while McFaul did at times criticize Russian authorities, he also highlighted the positive aspects in relations between Moscow and Washington.

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