

Mitt Romney Says Sochi Games Likely to Be Safe

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mitt Romney during a rally in Tempe, Arizona, in 2012. **Gage Skidmore**

Former U.S. presidential candidate Mitt Romney said Russia should not have been chosen to host the Olympics considering its role in global politics but the upcoming games in Sochi are likely to be as safe as any other.

Romney, who led the Winter Games in Salt Lake City in 2002, told Fox News Sunday that the threat of violence was one inherent to any event on the scale of the Olympics.

"I don't think any major global event that brings people from all over the world together like that can possibly escape the threat of violence," Romney said.

The former Republican presidential candidate said the recent bombings that killed at least 34 people in Volgograd, 700 kilometers away from Sochi, were a sign that Russia "has a special problem given the threats that have been leveled."

Early July, Doku Umarov, head of the Islamic extremist group Caucasus Emirate, called upon his followers to use "maximum force" to disrupt the Games, which are set to begin on Feb. 7.

Romney said "my guess is the Russians have done a pretty good job on the intelligence side of things to keep the most dangerous people away," but voiced reservations about the Olympics being held in Russia because of its role in the international arena.

Romney criticized Russia for not being a "particularly collaborative player on the world stage," referring to events that have caused tension with the U.S., such as the harboring of NSA intelligence leaker Edward Snowden and Russia's relationship with the governments of Syria and Iran.

"Were it my choice, I would not vote for Russia to hold the Winter Olympics or the Summer Olympics. But it's not my choice," Romney said.

While the former Massachusetts governor said that Russia had the right to make a bid at hosting the Olympics, he said, "They do strain the view of people like myself as to their leadership and their characterization of the Olympic spirit."

During his unsuccessful campaign against U.S. President Barack Obama, Romney called Russia the U.S.' "No.1 geopolitical foe."

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