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Fake Twitter Account of New U.S. Ambassador Blocked

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John Tefft

A Twitter account purportedly belonging to the new U.S. ambassador to Russia John Tefft has been taken offline after the social media giant unmasked it as a fake.

The @J_Tefft feed was marked by a series of badly written and bizarre tweets, including a "Happy Birthday" message to bodybuilder and former Californian Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported Friday.

"Russia is ready to take me?" said one message posted to the account in early July, after the Kremlin approved Tefft's nomination as ambassador to the country.

The account, which appeared online just last month, was followed by more than 1,700 users, including several journalists and the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius, according to the report.

However, users attempting to gain access to the sham feed were on Friday greeted with a message from Twitter that "the profile you are trying to view has been suspended."

The account's removal came as news broke that the real John Tefft will soon be moving to Moscow, after members of the U.S. Senate put aside partisan differences to back his appointment as the next ambassador to Russia.

The U.S. has gone without a top-ranking envoy in Russia since March, when former ambassador Michael McFaul left his post to return to the U.S. In the intervening months, relations between the two countries have deteriorated rapidly, with the U.S. accusing Russia of backing a separatist uprising in eastern Ukraine after annexing the Crimean Peninsula from it in March.

Tefft, who declined to comment on the fake Twitter account, did not reveal whether he planned to follow in the footsteps of predecessor McFaul by opening a Twitter account upon his arrival in Moscow, the RFE/RL report said.

McFaul, who is followed by more than 80,000 users, was an avid tweeter during his time in Russia, and his usage of the social media network quickly became a trademark of his new-age diplomacy.

See also:

U.S. Senate Confirms John Tefft Will Be New Ambassador to Russia

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