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Russian Wrestling President Denied U.S. Visa on Eve of Championships

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Mikhail Mamiashvili

Russian Wrestling Federation president Mikhail Mamiashvili was denied a U.S. visa on the eve of world championships in Las Vegas, the federation said on its website Sunday.

Mamiashvili had planned to attend the world championships in Greco-Roman, freestyle and female wrestling from Sept. 7 to 12 in Las Vegas, the statement said.

"The U.S. denied me a visa, they didn't explain their decision," he was cited by R-Sport news agency as saying in a phone interview. "I will not fly to Las Vegas, the team is already there. I'm positive the decision has nothing to do with sport," he said.

The first vice president of the federation, Georgy Bryusov, claimed the decision to deny a visa to Mamiashvili, whom Finnish daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat once described as "a personal friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin," was politically motivated.

"I'm sure the U.S. wrestling federation did everything they could to resolve the visa issue. But

I have to acknowledge that politics has once again prevailed over sport and over common sense," he was cited in the federation's statement as saying.

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