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Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Is Banned From Returning to Moscow

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Michael McFaul (L) and Barack Obama. **The White House Press Service**

Professor Michael McFaul, who served as the United States' high-profile ambassador to Russia from 2012 until 2014, has reportedly been added to the Kremlin's sanctions list. According to posts on Facebook and Twitter by McFaul himself, he is no longer allowed to travel to Russia, a country McFaul says he has been "living in and traveling to" since 1983.

"Was told that I am the Kremlin's sanctions list because of my close affiliation with Obama," McFaul wrote on social media, saying, "I found out about my travel ban when I tried to get a visa to travel to Moscow next month to do Clinton transition work. No longer needed!"

A source in Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed to the TASS news agency that McFaul has indeed been added to the Kremlin's sanctions list. "Michael McFaul is in fact on our 'mirror' list of sanctions, which he knew," the source told TASS. "He was added to it in response to the U.S. visa sanctions on Russian citizens. Only Michael McFaul is wrong, as usual: he wasn't put on the list for being 'close to Obama,' as he wrote, but for actively taking

part in the destruction of bilateral relations and his consistent campaign lobbying to pressure Russia."

How does the former ambassador feel about the travel ban? "I will take it as a compliment!" he wrote online. "The U.S. sanctioned Russians close to Putin. To the best of my knowledge, George Kennan was the last U.S. ambassador to USSR/Russia to be banned from traveling there. Good company!"

McFaul's tenure as Washington's chief diplomat in Moscow was marked by significant Russian media attention to the ambassador's close relationship with prominent members of the anti-Kremlin opposition. Pro-Kremlin journalists often followed McFaul around closely, filming him meet with activists like environmentalist Yevgeniya Chirikova and opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, among others.

"Hope that I am not on the Russia travel ban list forever," McFaul said today on the Internet, adding that he looks forward to a day when Moscow and Washington are able to drop the sanctions against one another, set in place following Russia's military intervention in eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

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