

White House Appoints 'Hardline' Jon Huntsman as Ambassador to Russia

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Governor Jon Huntsman Chris Keane / Reuters

The White House has appointed Jon Huntsman, a former envoy⊠to China, as the new Ambassador to Russia, it <u>said</u> Tuesday in an online⊠statement.

The pick of Huntsman, who was envoy under the Obama⊠Administration and two-time governor of Utah, has not come as a surprise.

As early as in March, there were reports that Huntsman would ■be Washington's preferred candidate.

Russian media and officials at the time portrayed Huntsman as a "hardliner." Alexei Pushkov, the former head of the State Duma international affairs committee and now a senator told the RBC news outlet: "Trump has surrounded himself with people who don't want to improve relations with Russia," saying Huntsman was "definitely no dove."

But foreignpolicy expert Vladimir Frolov

<u>predicted</u> in an op-ed for The Moscow Times that ■the choice would be "welcomed by Moscow."

"At a minimum, the decision will reduce the unpredictability of U.S.-Russia relations," he said.

Huntsman is taking up the post at a time when the Trump

■Administration is mired in scandal over its links to Russia.

News of his appointment has quickly been trumped by a report ■ that the U.S. and Russian presidents had a second, until now unknown, meeting ■ at the G20 summit in Hamburg.

Before he moves to Moscow, Huntsman's appointment will still

have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

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