

Ambassador Huntsman: 'Zero Trust' Between U.S. and Russia

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Jon Huntsman Jr. (Sergei Konkov / TASS)

In his first major interview with Russian media published Monday, the new U.S. ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman said he plans to restore trust between the two countries, despite worsening relations.

Huntsman was confirmed as the U.S. ambassador in September. During his confirmation hearing, he [said](#) that he would meet dissidents, end human rights abuses and help solve the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine while cultivating a “necessary” relationship with Moscow.

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“I only just started and I can say that there is zero trust,” Huntsman [told](#) the Vedomosti business daily. “Trust is the prerequisite for joint work and progress between people and countries.”

Huntsman said that the desire to improve U.S.-Russia relations runs deep in Washington.

“I did not meet a single person — and I have literally met everyone, starting with the president — who would not talk about the need to improve relations with Russia,” Huntsman said.

Improving relations was a focal point of U.S. President Donald Trump’s election campaign, despite rising tensions between the two nations and new sanctions against Russia in August 2017.

The new ambassador pointed to Russia’s alleged election interference as the key reason behind the deterioration in relations.

“The meddling brought us to this low point, but the initial reason for the chill was the situation in Ukraine,” he said.

When asked about how to improve relations, Huntsman talked about the need for Russia to openly discuss its election meddling.

“It would be better if we honestly talked about what happened, because every time we raise this topic, my friends in Russia say: There is no evidence,” Huntsman said.

“We’ve been moving in a vicious circle.”

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