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AP

Russians say 'nyet' to McCain fundraising appeal

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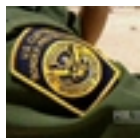
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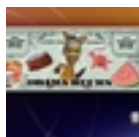
By JOHN HEILPRIN, Associated Press Writer John Heilprin, Associated Press Writer – Mon Oct 20, 5:48 pm ET



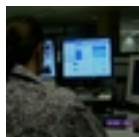
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UNITED NATIONS – The Russians have turned down John McCain's request for campaign money — and had a bit of a laugh at his expense.

Their public snub is a comeback to the Republican candidate's increasingly tough stance against Russia.

Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, received a fundraising appeal from the Republican presidential nominee Thursday, spokesman Ruslan Bakhtin said.

"Dear Friend," begins the 6-page letter to Churkin, asking for up to \$5,000 to defeat Sen. Barack Obama and help McCain "promote freedom and democracy throughout the world," according to a copy of the letter provided to The Associated Press by the Russian mission.

McCain has proposed expelling Russia from the Group of Eight world's major industrial nations and says Russia deserves international condemnation for its August war with Georgia,

He also has derided President Bush for once saying he got a sense of Russian leader Vladimir Putin's soul the first time they met and locked eyes in 2001. "I looked in Putin's eyes. I saw three letters: a K, a G and a B," McCain said last year, referring to Putin's time in the Soviet Union's KGB security agency. That approach has angered Moscow. Last month in New York, Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, cast McCain's foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger, as essentially clueless about the history behind

the Georgian conflict.

The McCain campaign's fundraising letter, dated Sept. 29, did not use Churkin's formal title. That led Churkin to conclude the request stemmed from "a computer failure" by McCain's campaign, Bakhtin said.

"It's evident that it was a mistake. It happens," said Bakhtin, who said the diplomats were entertained by the mixup. "Normally, they don't circulate these kinds of letters to diplomatic posts."

Bakhtin emphasized that the "Russian authorities are in no way engaged in funding political campaigns or political activities abroad."

He said the mission had not sent any direct reply to the McCain campaign.

Brian Rogers, a spokesman for the campaign, said he was unable to pinpoint what caused the blunder.

"It sounds like they might have been sent to the wrong place. We obviously don't solicit campaign contributions from people who aren't able to contribute," he said.

U.S. presidential campaigns are legally barred from accepting foreign contributions.



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REUTERS/China Daily

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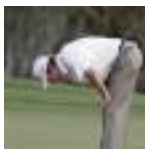
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