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## US-Russia rift widens at Olympics

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**Rising animosity between the United States and Russia is on full display as Moscow chose a former figure skater who has posted a racially insensitive photo of President Barack Obama to light the Olympic flame.**

Irina Rodnina, also a lawmaker from President Vladimir Putin's United Party, made international headlines last September when she shared on Twitter a doctored photo of President Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama, appearing to stare at a banana in the foreground.

The photo outraged the Obama administration at the time and prompted US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul to condemn Rodnina's "outrageous behavior which only brings shame to her parliament and country."

Rodnina was unapologetic for the tweet, saying "freedom of speech is freedom of speech."

Her role in the Sochi Winter Olympics, which was kept secret until Friday night's opening ceremony, has been questioned by viewers in light of the controversy.

This came just a day after news broke out that State Department official Victoria Nuland used an expletive toward the European Union when discussing the current political crisis in Ukraine in a private telephone call with Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt. The phone call has been intercepted and leaked on You Tube.

The Obama administration immediately pointed the finger at Russia, which has criticized the US for meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs. Moscow has denied that it was behind the leakage.

Meanwhile, the US State Department issued a fresh travel alert Friday for Americans attending the Olympics.

“US travelers should be aware of cybersecurity threats and understand that they have no expectation of privacy when sharing sensitive or personal information utilizing Russian electronic communication networks,” the alert said.