The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kremlin Asked to Probe Kalmyk Leader's Visit With Aliens

By Nabi Abdullaev

May 05, 2010



Kalmyk leader Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who claims that he met with aliens in 1997. **Sergei Porter**

A State Duma deputy has called on President Dmitry Medvedev to check whether Kalmyk leader Kirsan Ilyumzhinov might have divulged state secrets to aliens whom he claimed to have met in 1997.

Ilyumzhinov, 48, a flamboyant politician known for throwing expensive chess extravaganzas since becoming president of the Buddhist republic in southern Russia in 1993, will finish his fourth term in office in October, and Medvedev will have to decide whether to appoint him for another five years.

Ilyumzhinov told television host Vladimir Pozner on Channel One on April 26 that he had spent several hours in the company of aliens after they visited his apartment in downtown Moscow on Sept. 18, 1997.

He said he was falling asleep when he heard someone calling him from the balcony. When he went there, Ilyumzhinov said, he saw a "semi-transparent half tube" that he entered to meet human-like creatures in yellow spacesuits.

"I am often asked which language I used to talk to them. Perhaps, it was on a level of the exchange of the ideas," Ilyumzhinov said, speaking solemnly.

He said the aliens gave him a tour of their spaceship.

When he asked them why they had not gone on television to reveal themselves to humans, they replied that they are not yet ready, Ilyumzhinov said.

He said the aliens returned him to his home in the morning — just as his driver and two associates were about to initiate a citywide search for him after not finding him in the locked apartment.

Andrei Lebedev, a member of the Duma's Security Committee from the Liberal Democratic Party faction, said in a statement circulated Wednesday that he had sent a letter to Medvedev on April 29, urging the president to ask Ilyumzhinov how his meeting with aliens had influenced his rule of Kalmykia and whether the aliens had attempted to learn anything from him.

Lebedev also asked Medvedev whether Ilyumzhinov had ever informed the Kremlin of his contacts with aliens and whether a procedure was in place for senior officials who know state secrets — like Ilyumzhinov — to report such contacts to the Kremlin.

He called on United Russia, which holds a majority in the Kalmyk legislature and thus can propose presidential candidates to Medvedev, to consider excluding Ilyumzhinov from the list of candidates.

The Kremlin's press service declined to comment on the issue Wednesday.

Lebedev could not be reached for comment, but an aide said the deputy had been moved by "holy terror" to write to Medvedev after watching Ilyumzhinov's interview.

Ilyumzhinov said that if anyone, including Lebedev, had any questions for him, he was ready to meet and talk candidly, Interfax reported.

Ilyumzhinov's eccentricity, which helped him become and remain Kalmykia's leader in the 1990s when populism yielded political dividends, may now cost him his job, said Alexei Titkov, an analyst who tracks Russia's regions at the Higher School of Economics.

Ilyumzhinov also heads the International Chess Federation, a position he has held since 1995, and will run for re-election in September. Chess champion Anatoly Karpov has said he would run against Ilyumzhinov and expects the Russian Chess Federation to support his bid at a meeting of its overseers board on May 14.

But Medvedev's aide Arkady Dvorkovich, who heads the board, said April 21 that it had decided to back Ilyumzhinov, sparking a bitter outburst from Karpov, who is supported by the chess federations of the United States, Germany, France and Spain.

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