

Police Reform Plan Faces Major Revamp

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

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President Dmitry Medvedev's bill to reform the country's notoriously corrupt police force points in the right direction but faces major changes as it undergoes unprecedented public debate, lawmakers said Wednesday.

"There are some weak spots and contradictions in the bill, and I think the text that will be forwarded to the State Duma will differ from the text we are debating today," Federation Council Senator Viktor Ozerov told reporters after a round-table [discussion](#) in the upper house of parliament.

Ozerov, who chairs the Federation Council's Defense and Security Committee, promised that lawmakers would listen to popular demands and praised the level of debate as unprecedented in the country's post-Soviet history.

"I think this is the first time since the adoption of the Russian Constitution that there is such an all encompassing discussion, and this will have positive effects," he said, Interfax reported.

Medvedev took the unusual step of publishing the 11-chapter bill, which would also change the name of the police force from *militia* to *politsia*, online on Aug. 7 and inviting Internet users to comment. As of late Wednesday, the

draft on Zakonoproekt2010.ru had attracted more than 17,800 comments.

Yury Volkov, a deputy State Duma speaker and a member of United Russia who participated in Wednesday's round table, also welcomed the level of discussion.

"We have taken the most all-encompassing form of debate, allowing extreme and insulting comments to appear," he told The Moscow Times. "But among the thousands of comments, some will allow us to take a fresh look at the bill, and that is a big plus."

But economist Mikhail Delyagin said the bill actually increases the powers and reduces the accountability of the police force.

In an [article](#) published Wednesday in Yezhednevny Zhurnal, Delyagin argued that the draft declares any police action to be legitimate until proven otherwise by a court decision.

He also said the police's right to enter private homes and to check citizens' documents would be widened.

Several round-table participants said the bill was not radical enough. Vladislav Grib, a lawyer and member of the Public Chamber, said public councils should be formed at the precinct level "because police lawlessness occurs locally," the Rosbalt.ru news site reported.

Public councils that act like mini-versions of the Public Chamber, itself an advisory body to the government, have been set up in recent years in various government agencies.

The Moscow police's public council said Wednesday that it was preparing changes to the police bill. The changes will be presented to the Interior Ministry on Sept. 6, RIA-Novosti reported.

Moscow police chief Vladimir Kolokoltsev, who was appointed after a policeman went on a supermarket shooting spree that killed two in 2009, told the council that the number of crimes involving police officers in the first half of 2010 had been halved compared with the same period in 2009, RBC.ru reported, without giving precise figures.

Also on Wednesday, city police opened three centers where citizens can file official complaints about police behavior. The complaints will be collected on the police public council's web site at Os-guvd.ru, said the council's chairwoman, RIA-Novosti editor-in-chief Svetlana Mironyuk.

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