

# Duma Deputy Demoted After Criticizing Medvedev

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A United Russia lawmaker will lose his senior post in the State Duma after praising Prime Minister Vladimir Putin for condemning the Western military operation in Libya but criticizing President Dmitry Medvedev on the issue.

Konstantin Zatulin, first deputy head of the Duma's CIS Committee, will be demoted to a rank-and-file committee member, senior United Russia official Oleg Morozov said Monday.

He will likely be replaced by fellow member Alexander Kozlovsky, said Morozov, who attributed the decision to "interfaction rotation," Interfax reported.

Zatulin said the Kremlin might be behind his dismissal, telling Gazeta.ru that it was linked to "rising tensions" ahead of next year's presidential election.

Zatulin sided with Putin in criticizing the Libya operation last month, which Putin compared to "medieval crusades."

Medvedev, sticking to Russia's official stance on Libya, condemned the comparison. But at a Duma session in late March, Zatulin said Putin had shown "bravery" while all other comments on Libya belonged in a "different category."

Zatulin said Monday that his demotion probably was ordered by Kremlin first deputy chief of staff Vladislav Surkov, not Medvedev himself. He added that United Russia had the right to demote him, but expressed regret over the decision.

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