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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Chapman Targets Venture Capital

By The Moscow Times

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Chapman pausing during an interview at Bloomberg's office on Monday. **Andrey Rudakov**

Anna Chapman, expelled from the United States last year for spying, is starting a new career in venture capitalism as she allies with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to lure technology investment to Russia.

"I've always been fascinated with technology," Chapman, 29, said in an interview in Bloomberg's Moscow office on Monday. "And right now, I want to make my own input into developing this industry, the venture capital industry."

Chapman, part of the Russian spy ring uncovered in the United States and deported last year, is a member of Young Guard, the youth wing of the ruling United Russia party headed by Putin. She said her mission is to encourage young Russians to launch startup businesses at home rather than emigrate.

Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev want to wean Russia off its dependence on energy exports to accelerate growth and match the pace of other developing economies such as India

and China. Medvedev has championed the Moscow suburb of Skolkovo as the country's Silicon Valley for developing new technologies.

Chapman, who has her own weekly television show, "Mysteries of the World With Anna Chapman," this month started editing Venture Business News, which features technology news including about Skolkovo. Chapman plans to link entrepreneurs with investors. She declined to give an estimate on the amount of capital she plans to attract.

"Hopefully we will contribute" to the success of Skolkovo, Chapman said. "I think it's important that not all initiatives come from the Kremlin."

She was part of a sleeper spy ring of 10 Russians, some of whom had posed as ordinary Americans for more than a decade. After they returned to Russia in July, Putin met with the 10 spies and sang Soviet-era patriotic songs with them. The agents would probably find jobs in "respectable places" and have "bright and interesting lives," Putin said at the time.

In October, Chapman posed in lingerie as a James Bond girl holding a gun on the front cover of Maxim's Russian edition.

"In the West, she's got a lot of notoriety, but not all publicity is good publicity," Roland Nash, chief investment strategist at Verno Capital, a Moscow hedge fund that manages about $140 million, said by phone. "She's got to turn around part of her image." In Russia, "she is quite an imaginative solution."

Chapman, who was married to a Briton and lived in London before moving to New York, said she has experience of setting up her own businesses. Her latest venture was a real-estate search engine that operated in 40 countries and was valued at $10 million before the global financial crisis hit in 2008, she said.

Chapman has been working since October as an adviser for Moscow-based Fondservisbank, which invests in aerospace and other high-technology industries.

She declined to talk about her potential political career.

United Russia member Olga Kryshtanovskaya, who invited Chapman to join a movement to bolster female representation in parliament and aim for a woman president in 2018, said she is an inspiration to young people, who consider her a "heroine" who defended the country's interests. Women don't need any help in Russia to get what they want, Chapman said.

"If you are a decent, smart woman, if you bring value, you will go as far as you want, period," she said. "If you want something, you go and get it. There is no need to talk about your rights to have it."

Chapman, who has taken out an international trademark on her name, said she was busy fending off "funny" show business offers for her to sing or promote products such as anti-cough medicine. She also has declined movie roles, saying she has no talent for acting.

"Thank you very much to everyone who has offered me a role in a film," she said. "But I respectfully declined to save your films because if you named the 10 worst actresses in the

world, I'll probably be there."

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