

2 United Russia Deputies Jump Ship

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September 04, 2011



United Russia says corporate income tax breaks would cover the machine-building and processing industries. **Vladimir Filonov**

In a sign of growing discord in the run-up to parliamentary elections, State Duma Deputy Alexei Lebed left United Russia on Friday and accused the party of crushing dissent among members.

"I quit because I understand that every person should live honestly [and] have the right to speak their mind independently from the party's directives," Lebed, a former Khakasia governor, told reporters in the republic's capital, Abakan, RIA-Novosti reported.

Lebed, a retired general like his older brother Alexander, a political heavyweight killed in a helicopter crash in 1998, is the second Duma lawmaker to leave the ruling party within a week.

On Tuesday, Igor Isakov, who represents the Krasnoyarsk region, quit United Russia after scoring poorly in recent Duma primaries, a much-touted event fraught with allegations

of vote rigging.

Speculation swirled Friday that the two lawmakers might run in the Dec. 4 elections on the tickets of other parties, including the rival pro-Kremlin A Just Russia and the Kremlin-linked Right Cause.

Isakov did not comment publicly on his decision, but his spokesman told RIA-Novosti that his boss might run with the pro-business Right Cause.

A Just Russia founder Sergei Mironov rushed ahead by saying Lebed planned to join his party. "Alexei Lebed is a well-known general, a former governor ... and also a paratrooper. We are in talks about including him in A Just Russia," he told Interfax.

However, in an interview with Izvestia [published](#) online late Friday, Lebed suggested that he was far from having made up his mind. "I'd easily join the Liberal Democratic Party," he said about the party headed by nationalist populist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

Asked whether he would join A Just Russia, he merely replied that Mironov "has his own nuances," and that the only party he would never join is the Communist Party.

Lebed joined United Russia in 2005 and became a Duma deputy in January 2009, after President Dmitry Medvedev dismissed him as Khakasia governor in December 2008 following 13 years in office.

United Russia officials said Friday that they considered the deputy no loss for the party.

Lebed "almost never attended" meetings of the regional party leadership and refused to take part in the Duma primaries, which ended last month, said the head of the party's Khakasia branch, Sergei Mozharov, RIA-Novosti reported.

Lebed told Izvestia that he had decided against taking part in the primaries because he considered the intraparty votes to be a sham.

"I immediately understood that I would be right at the end of the list. The primaries' supposed transparency has not been achieved in the republic," he said.

Lingering hostility between the two pro-Kremlin parties burst into the open recently as United Russia functionaries said senior members were deserting A Just Russia after polls showed that the party's chances to take the Duma's 7 percent hurdle were slim.

"Only those who lost in the primaries or did not take part in them and those who have no chance to make it into the next Duma are leaving United Russia," said Alexei Chesnyakov, a senior United Russia official, Interfax reported.

"Meanwhile, people are leaving A Just Russia because they do not believe their party will make it into the next Duma," he said.

But Mironov claimed that Lebed was not the only United Russia member willing to join A Just Russia. As an example, he pointed to the Smolensk region, where a whole group of former ruling party officials had switched sides. "More and more disenchanted United Russia

members are leaving," he said.

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