

# Duma Singer Kobzon Says U.S. Denies Visas to Family

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Singer Iosif Kobzon — who is also a State Duma deputy for United Russia — said Tuesday that he has been refused entry to the United States for almost two decades and that members of his family have also been denied U.S. visas, Interfax reported.

Kobzon is seeking to go on tour in the United States later this year but is skeptical about his chances of being allowed in.

"There supposedly is a chance [for me] to receive a visa, but, in fact, there is none. For 18 years I've been deprived of the opportunity to meet with [fans]," Kobzon said Tuesday, Interfax reported.

The singer and parliamentarian said his daughter, who has an Australian passport, as well as his wife and son have all been refused U.S. visas.

Kobzon was a celebrated signer in the Soviet Union and has served in the Duma since 1997. He went on a performance tour of the United States in 1994, but he saw his multi-entry visa

annulled in 1995 by the U.S. State Department, which cited Kobzon's possible participation in "illegal operations," Itar-Tass reported.

Kobzon told Interfax that the entry ban was related to false information given to the United States about Kobzon's association with the "Russian mafia."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has approved Kobzon's entry to the country, RIA-Novosti reported Tuesday, citing a statement from the company organizing the singer's concert tour. However, the final decision regarding his visa will be made after an obligatory interview at the U.S. Embassy, the statement said.

Asked about Kobzon's case, a U.S. Embassy spokesperson said individual visa applications are confidential but that "any ineligibilities the applicant might have" are reviewed during the visa process to determine whether or not a visa can be issued.

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