

Swindlers Who Tried to Sell Duma Seats Get 5 Year Prison Sentences

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The State Duma building reflected in the roof of a car. **Andrei Makhonin**

Two men who attempted to sell seats in the State Duma for 20 million euros were each sentenced to five years in prison Monday for attempted fraud.

In June, Pavel Popov, 42, and Vladislav Kalinin, 51, told two businessmen that they could get their names on certain political parties' candidate lists and seats in the next Duma using connections they had in the Duma and the Federation Council, police said in a statement.

Popov and Kalinin demanded around 10 million euros from each businessman for their services, including a 100,000 euro "prepayment" "to demonstrate the seriousness of their intentions to become deputies," the statement said. The fraudsters then asked for 1 million euros to guarantee the pair spots on party lists and said another 8 to 9 million euros would need to be given personally to the leader of the party whose list they would be on.

The police statement did not specify which parties' candidate lists Popov and Kalinin offered to get the businessmen's names on.

During the negotiations, Popov and Kalinin presented phone numbers that supposedly belonged to high-ranking state officials and promised that former Duma deputies would participate in future meetings with them. Police said Popov showed the businessmen the identification card of an aide to a Cabinet minister, without specifying whether the ID was Popov's or someone else's.

Police detained Popov during a meeting with their fraud targets at the Zolotoye Koltso hotel after the handover of the first payment, 24 million rubles (\$800,000). Kalinin was arrested later.

The pair was convicted of attempted large-scale fraud and each sentenced to five years in prison.

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