

# Star Psychic Detained for 'Selling' Top State Jobs

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 05, 2012



Four people posing as presidential administration officials have been arrested for allegedly trying to sell a Duma seat. **Denis Abramov**

A well-known television psychic, her fitness trainer, an FSB agent and a former City Hall official have been detained on suspicion of selling a State Duma seat and a top cop position to power-hungry businessmen while posing as presidential administration officials.

Svetlana Solovyeva, aka "Izolda Gross" on the popular show "Battle of the Psychics," coach Dmitry Vershin, FSB officer Mikhail Kostin and ex-official Zaur Mustafayev were taken into custody on Wednesday by the police's special "economic crimes" unit.

They are suspected of offering top Interior Ministry positions to interested parties for 500,000 euros (\$630,000) apiece, as well as ensuring a victory in the December State Duma elections for a million dollars.

The businessman who wanted the Duma seat was wary, however, and didn't make the payment upfront, police said. When he lost the vote, he refused to pay the con artists. Then things got hairy.

By means undisclosed, the alleged fraudsters pressured their mark into giving them property in the Moscow suburb of Shyolkovsky, but that property belonged to the firm that he was director of, investigators said. The company's founder noticed the illicit transfer and opened a criminal case against the director.

Then, instead of laying low for a while, the team offered to settle all the businessman's problems for another 4 million rubles (\$120,000), police said. But by that time, the mark had gone to the cops.

Media reports said the group did not have any influence to be giving away government positions.

While it is not uncommon for businesspeople to spend top dollar on election campaigns, the decision on whom to allow to run is made by Kremlin-connected officials, said Pavel Salin of the Center for Current Politics.

"Those who get caught 'buying' seats are mainly crooks who fail to fulfill their promises," Salin said. "The real power brokers remain in the shadows."

"But this practice is becoming more transparent," he added.

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