

Duma Shakeup Feared After Gudkov's Ouster

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Gennady Gudkov alongside opposition figurehead Alexei Navalny during Saturday's protest rally on Prospekt Akademika Sakharova. **Igor Tabakov**

Following the expulsion of opposition Deputy Gennady Gudkov from the State Duma for unlawful entrepreneurship, parliament will investigate other reports of lawmakers engaging in illegal business activities, regardless of their political affiliation, a senior pro-Kremlin deputy said Monday.

"Any information that reaches us will be studied carefully," Vyacheslav Lysakov, a deputy head of the Duma's Constitutional Affairs Committee, told The Moscow Times.

Lysakov, who is also a leader of President Vladimir Putin's All-Russia People's Front, was responding to criticism that Friday's vote to remove Gudkov from the Duma was a Kremlin-ordered punishment for the Just Russia politician's outspoken support for opposition street protests.

Some observers maintain that if all lawmakers are judged by the same standards as Gudkov was, a major shakeup will ensue in parliament, with dozens of deputies forced to give up their seats.

Gudkov and his supporters say the Duma's decision to remove Gudkov from parliament was based on illegal evidence and violates the Constitution. Just Russia deputies have launched a campaign to show that a host of Duma members from the pro-Kremlin United Russia party are flagrantly engaging in unlawful entrepreneurship.

Other observers pointed out that all four Duma factions, including the more opposition-minded A Just Russia and the Communist Party, have members who could be expelled for similar violations.

Gudkov said Monday that three Just Russia deputies with significant business interests had withdrawn their signatures from a Constitutional Court petition filed by the party to check the lawfulness of his ouster.

Sergei Petrov, Oleg Mikheyev and Alexei Chepa removed their signatures from the document, Gudkov told RIA-Novosti. The trio did not take part in Friday's vote on whether to divest Gudkov of his Duma seat.

Opponents of the policy used to oust Gudkov, even within United Russia, believe that more investigations of a similar nature could jeopardize the current parliament.

"If you can lose your seat for this, you can dissolve the Duma immediately," Valery Fedotov, a St. Petersburg businessman and mid-ranking United Russia official, [wrote](#) on his blog.

Fedotov added sarcastically that for the early elections that would result, parties should run only youth activists, military servicemen and migrant workers, because "they will be even more disciplined in their voting."

But Lysakov said that everyone was equal before the law.

"Every case demands investigation," he said in a telephone interview. He denied suggestions that Kremlin pressure had influenced Friday's 291-150 vote by pointing to dissenters within the United Russia faction. "These people are all alive and well," he said.

Stanislav Govorukhin, a prominent film director who managed Putin's election campaign earlier this year, was the only member of the party faction to vote against Gudkov's ouster. Faction member Boris Reznik abstained, while member Alexander Khinshtein did not attend the vote.

Lysakov admitted, however, that Gudkov was singled out as the first victim of the policy because of his support for the opposition.

"He engaged in conspicuous behavior. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones," he said.

Experts were divided as to whether the Duma would proceed with similar inquiries aimed at United Russia deputies.

Stanislav Belkovsky, an independent analyst and former Kremlin insider, speculated that some United Russia deputies will soon be forced to resign as a result of their business activities.

"This would be an image victory for the Kremlin to show that the Gudkov affair was not just political revenge," he said.

Gleb Pavlovsky, a former Kremlin adviser who is editor of the [russ.ru website](#), disagreed, arguing that this would create unnecessary conflict with the ruling party.

"Nobody tried to hide in the first place that this was a political punishment," he said.

Gudkov himself said he believed it was possible, but not likely, that more deputies would be stripped of their seats.

"[The Kremlin] will hardly want to see another dangerous precedent," he said by phone.

Gudkov also said he would continue his political work in the Duma by working as an aide to a member of the Just Russia Duma faction, saying he will even continue to get a vote in faction meetings.

"I will carry on the work in my party and all things that I have been doing so far," he said, specifically mentioning his membership in the protest movement's organizing committee.

Party leader Sergei Mironov said Gudkov might become an aide to his son Dmitry.

"He will definitely become an aide to one of our faction's deputies. We will see if this will be Dmitry Gudkov or someone else," he told reporters, according to Interfax.

Members of the Just Russia Duma faction said Gudkov's seat might be given to Oleg Shein, a former Duma deputy from Astrakhan. Shein rose to prominence this spring when he staged a monthlong hunger strike after losing a mayoral election in the southern city.

Gudkov did not say exactly when the decision regarding his successor would be made. "Let us first wait for the Constitutional Court's decision," he said. He added that the chances of the appeal succeeding could be slim.

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