

Lawmaker Quits Over Alleged Business Ties

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Little-known lawmaker Alexander Knyshov, pictured, has denied any involvement in business activities since being elected to the country's lower house in December.

A United Russia lawmaker being investigated for business ties said Friday that he had decided to vacate his parliamentary post voluntarily.

Alexei Knyshov, a little-known deputy who sits on the State Duma's Construction and Land Use Committee, said he decided to throw in the towel after investigators argued that he was running a business alongside his parliamentary duties, which is against the law.

The State Duma, which could now revoke Knyshov's mandate, said it had received the Investigative Committee's report on Knyshov, RIA-Novosti reported Friday, citing unnamed sources.

This week, investigators said in a statement that Knyshov headed two construction firms in his native Rostov-on-Don, in southern Russia, and was also an owner of a Slovakia-registered company.

"I have made the difficult decision to leave the Duma," Knyshov said on his Live Journal blog Friday. He said he made the decision so as not to make his party colleagues "face a difficult choice."

While Knyshov has denied any involvement in business activities since being elected to the country's lower house in December, he also said he doesn't have any proof that he doesn't own a Slovakian firm.

Investigators first opened a probe into Knyshov after Dmitry Gudkov, a left-wing opposition lawmaker with the Just Russia party, published documents accusing Knyshov and other high-ranking Duma deputies of running businesses while holding parliamentary posts.

Gudkov's father, Gennady Gudkov, a senior Just Russia lawmaker, was stripped of his Duma mandate on the same charges in September after the ruling United Russia party swayed a Duma vote.

Gudkov said at the time that the move was retaliation for his prominent role as an organizer of protests against President Vladimir Putin's rule.

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