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A Just Russia Might Sanction Gudkovs

By Jonathan Earle

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Gennady and Dmitry Gudkov will lose their leadership positions within the oppositional A Just Russia party for rejecting an ultimatum to quit the protest movement's Coordination Council, Izvestia reported on Tuesday, citing party chairman Nikolai Levichev.

Both will lose their spot on the party's central committee, and Gennady Gudkov, a former State Duma deputy, will also be stripped of two other senior positions, Levichev said.

The decision won't be made in the "next few days," but at a future party meeting, he said, adding that there were no plans to oust the father and son duo from the party entirely.

Dmitry Gudkov, a current State Duma deputy and active opposition supporter, said the party presidium could not strip him and his father of all leadership roles, as Levichev seemed to suggest.

"We were elected by a party congress, and only the congress can" do that, he said, Interfax reported.

A party congress is planned for September, he said, and the Gudkovs' future leadership role would be discussed at a the next presidium meeting in March, an unnamed source told Interfax.

But, Gudkov added, the presidium bureau could decide to exclude them from that organ, and Sergei Mironov, head of the party's Duma faction, could freeze their authority until the next congress.

The presidium last month issued an ultimatum to the Gudkovs to quit the 45-member Coordination Council, a grassroots group elected to lead the street protest movement, after an opposition march in which portraits of A Just Russia lawmakers were among those symbolically tossed into the garbage.

The march was a protest against the so-called Dima Yakovlev Act, which banned U.S. adoptions and was overwhelmingly approved by lawmakers in December.

Faced with the same ultimatum, two opposition supporters, Duma Deputy Ilya Ponomaryov and Astrakhan regional Deputy Oleg Shein, renounced extra-party affiliations.

Ponomaryov distanced himself from Left Front, and Shein resigned from the Coordination Council.

The Gudkovs refused to quit the group, whose members include opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Dmitry Gudkov said he shouldn't have to choose between the party and the opposition council, whose core demands — including political reform, direct gubernatorial elections, new Duma elections — matched those backed by Mironov during his failed presidential campaign last year.

A leadership role in the street protest movement, which began in response to allegations of fraud during Duma elections in Dec. 2011, appears to have come at a high cost for the family.

In September, lawmakers ousted Gennady Gudkov from the Duma for allegedly breaking ethics rules that bar lawmakers from engaging in business.

The Moscow Arbitration Court on Tuesday stripped the Gudkovs' private security company, Pantan, of its operating license, which was suspended in May in connection with a case that Gennady Gudkov has said is politically motivated, Interfax reported.

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