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Navalny Targets Senator Malkin

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Federation Council Senator Vitaly Malkin has become the latest lawmaker to be targeted by anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny for unethical behavior, amid mounting speculation that the upper house of parliament will also be hit by resignations.

In a blog post Thursday, Navalny published documents showing that Malkin has failed to declare ownership of 111 condominiums in Canada and that he has an Israeli passport.

The revelations are not new - the Senator's fruitless attempts to get a Canadian residence permit through his local real estate holdings have been reported by the Toronto-based National Post and the Moscow Times back in 2009.

The National Post also ran a story earlier this month, citing immigration records that Malkin obtained an Israeli passport under his Hebrew name Avihur Ben Bar. Russian law bars lawmakers from holding another country's citizenship.

Pundits and national media have speculated that Malkin might be among the first Senators that will be forced to quit because of a planned law that forbids state officials to hold foreign assets. Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko said Thursday that at least two members of the upper house will quit after after that bill becomes law, Interfax reported.

Matviyenko did not name anybody, but her comments came after Izvestia reported the same day that billionaire businessman Suleiman Kerimov, former Norilsk Nickel president Andrei Klishas and Malkin are likely to lose their Senator seats.

Calls to Malkin's Federation Council office went unanswered Thursday.

A colorful businessman who made a fortune in banking the 1990s together with current Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, Malkin has been a Senator for the remote Siberian republic of Buryatia since 2004.

Court documents from 2009 show that Canadian authorities refused Malkin a residency arguing that he had been associated with money laundering, arms trade and trade in Angolan "conflict diamonds." Malkin has denied any wrongdoing.

While he apparently never declared his Candaian real estate, Malkin has not shied away from declaring his wealth. His latest income declaration, published on the Federation Council website, says that he earned a whopping 1.1 billion rubles ($33 million) in 2011. He also listed three houses, one of them in italy, nine apartments and five plots of land.

Last summer, Malkin made headlines when he traveled to Washington as part of a group of Senators who lobbied Congress against adopting the so-called Magnitsky act that imposes U.S. sanctions on Russian officials implicated in human rights violations.

The speculation about the Senators comes on the heels of a string of resignations of State Duma deputies after accusations of either undeclared property or illegal business activity. Five lawmakers have quit parliament so far, among them the Duma's ethics committee head Vladimir Pekhtin, who left last month after Navalny published documents showing that he owned luxury real estate in Florida.

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