The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ethics Commission to Assess Gudkov's U.S. Visit

By Yekaterina Kravtsova

March 17, 2013



Dmitry Gudkov speaking on the sidelines of a news conference Thursday. **Alexander Zemlianichenko**

Four State Duma deputies asked the assembly's ethics commission on Friday to evaluate former Just Russia Deputy Dmitry Gudkov's speech that he gave at a Freedom House forum in the United States this month.

In his speech, Gudkov spoke out against repressive Russian state policy, supported the Magnitsky Act and asked the U.S. to help President Vladimir Putin to battle corruption within Russia, which Duma deputies considered a call for intervention in Russia's internal affairs.

"Dmitry Gudkov's actions demonstrate his defying the requirements set for members of the Russian parliament, ignoring his deputy duties and betraying national interests," Duma Vice Speaker Sergei Zheleznyak told reporters on Friday.

Human rights activist Lyudmila Alexeyeva and Mikhail Kasyanov, co-chairman of the Republican Party — People's Freedom Party, also spoke at the forum, where the main topic of discussion was how to stop corruption within the Russian government.

Gudkov said the request might mean an attempt to kick him out of the Duma. The acting head of the ethics commission, Andrei Andreyev, told RIA-Novosti that he could not predict the commission's decision, but hinted at disciplinary measures, such as being denied the right to address the lower house of parliament for a period of time.

Zheleznyak, who initiated the request, initially announced that all four Duma factions had signed it. But the Communist and Just Russia parties later said they had not made any requests about Gudkov.

"I am the head of the faction, and I don't know anything about the request. I didn't sign it," Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov said in comments carried by Interfax.

But the signatures of one Just Russia member, Svetlana Goryacheva, as well one Communist, Oleg Denisenko, are indeed on the request. Igor Lebedev of the Liberal Democratic Party was also among those who signed it.

"I want to hear the official position of the dedicated commission, so it would be not faction or party assessment, but an assessment of the Russian parliament. After the ethics commission, the whole house will vote for it," Zheleznyak told RIA-Novosti.

A hearing of the ethics commission will take place on March 20. "On Wednesday, the ethics commission will consider me. I haven't been invited yet but am going to visit it," Dmitry Gudkov wrote on his Twitter blog on Friday.

At a news conference on Thursday, Gudkov said the main goal of his trip to the U.S. was to visit American families that had adopted Russian children.

"I wanted to find out whether Americans indeed eat our children," he joked.

Gudkov was one of a few deputies who voted against Russia's ban on U.S. adoptions. Gudkov and his father, Gennady, were expelled from the Just Russia party on Wednesday for being members of the opposition's Coordination Council.

Some observers said the real reason for the dismissals was Gudkov's U.S. visit.

"The thing is not what he said, but that he did that in the U.S. when there are tensions in U.S.-Russian relations, and the fact that he communicated with American officials pretty much was perceived as a provocation," said Maria Lipman of the Carnegie Moscow Center.

Experts did not exclude that eventually the younger Gudkov would be kicked out of the Duma — his father was kicked out last year — and that such a fate might await a Gudkov ally in the protest movement Ilya Ponomaryov, who said he would suspend his activity in A Just Russia after the Gudkovs were ousted.

"The situation when people from the opposition use deputy immunity doesn't serve the Duma's interests," Lipman said.

Dmitry Gudkov has participated in the protest movement since December 2011 and not once has he said the Duma should be disbanded.

"The State Duma has turned into a rubber-stamp parliament, a 'mad printer' as we call it. It passes harsh anti-constitutional laws enforcing punishment for protest activist," Gudkov said in his Freedom House speech, which he published on his LiveJournal blog. =

Upon the request of A Just Russia's Nikolai Levichev, a linguistic analysis of Gudkov's speech was conducted.

The analysis's undisclosed author asserted that the speech was written by a native speaker, which spawned allegations that Gudkov's speech was prepared by the U.S. for propaganda purposes.

However, at the forum, Gudkov apologized for having a poor knowledge of English. He later said he prepared the speech on the way to the U.S. and only an adviser helped him write it.

"Gudkov always says more or less the same things," said Gleb Pavlovsky, a political analyst and former Kremlin insider. "They just want to introduce a new censorship measure for deputies' speeches and actions, which is illegal."

Pavlovsky said Gudkov's potential expulsion from the Duma would fully depend on the Kremlin.

On Thursday, A Just Russia conducted a meeting with representatives of the presidential administration, including its first deputy head, Vyacheslav Volodin. Levichev told RIA-Novosti that the meeting was "friendly and fiduciary."

"It was decided to find fault with Gudkov, the U.S. visit became just a good reason," Pavlovsky said. "It's obvious that Gudkov is a target; the question is what means the Kremlin will choose to hit it."

Contact the author at e.kravtsova@imedia.ru

Related articles:

- Gennady Gudkov Says He'd Make Own Party
- Gudkovs Kicked Out of Just Russia
- Zhirinovsky Demands Gudkov's Arrest for Trip to U.S.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/03/17/ethics-commission-to-assess-gudkovs-us-visit-a22399