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Ethics Commission Tells Gudkov to Quit Duma

By Yekaterina Kravtsova

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Dmitry Gudkov

The Duma's ethics commission on Wednesday advised Deputy Dmitry Gudkov to quit over a speech critical of Russian authorities that he delivered in the U.S. earlier this month.

But Gudkov, who skipped the commission hearing in favor of a television talk show, refused to resign.

"Gentlemen, United Russia deputies, only after you," Gudkov said, Interfax reported

The commission also forbade Gudkov from speaking in the parliament for a month and asked him to apologize publicly.

The commission acted after receiving a complaint about the March 5 speech at a Freedom House forum from a deputy in each of the Duma's four factions, including Deputy Speaker Sergei Zheleznyak of United Russia. The complaint said Gudkov betrayed Russia's national

interests in his speech.

"The commission's decision denies Gudkov the right to address the parliament for a month, recommends that he officially apologize via the mass media and that he use his right to voluntarily leave the Duma," Igor Lebedev, a deputy speaker and member of the Liberal Democratic Party, told reporters after the meeting.

The commission is comprised of six United Russia deputies, two Liberal Democrats, three Communists and two Just Russia members. But the Duma was not united in its support of censuring Gudkov, who was ousted from the Just Russia party last week for participating in opposition activities.

The Communist and Just Russia factions said Friday that they did not back the complaint and two deputies — Communist Oleg Denisenko and Just Russia's Svetlana Goryacheva — had expressed their own opinion in signing it.

Gudkov said Wednesday that he had learned of the decision a day before it was issued.

"I met some members of the ethics commission in the Duma yesterday," he said on Dozhd TV, where he appeared on the talk show. "They told me that the decision has been made and that it had been approved by the Kremlin."

He also said he had not been invited to appear at the commission meeting, although earlier he had said that he would attend anyway.

On Wednesday morning he wrote on his LiveJournal blog that he would not be able to attend because he had been scheduled to participate on the television talk show, which was devoted to the launch of the "Parfyonov" analytical show next weekend.

"Nothing interesting," Gudkov wrote about the commission's meeting. "'Parfyonov' is more important."

Although A Just Russia officially ousted Gudkov for being a member of the opposition's Coordination Council, observers said it was punishment for his U.S. speech.

Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov said earlier this week that he did not approve of the speech but that banning Gudkov from addressing the parliament for a month would too harsh a penalty.

Contact the author at e.kravtsova@imedia.ru

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