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U.S. Athlete at Center of Putin Booing Scandal Backs Bolotnaya Suspect (Video)

By Oleg Sukhov

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Monson squaring off with riot police at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul in 2008.

Monson voicing support for Gaskarov .

U.S. mixed martial artist and anarchist activist Jeff Monson, who participated in a fight at which then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was apparently booed in 2011, has voiced support for Alexei Gaskarov, a suspect in the Bolotnoye case.

In a video posted on YouTube on Saturday, Monson, nicknamed "Snowman," urged everyone to write a letter of support to anarchist and anti-fascist Gaskarov, a member of the opposition's Coordination Council who is under arrest in connection with the investigation into violence at last May's anti-Kremlin rally on Bolotnaya Ploshchad.

The case against 12 of the suspects, which some analysts believe to be politically motivated, is currently being heard by the Zamoskvoretsky District Court, while two have already been convicted and 15, including Gaskarov, have yet to be tried.

"He's fighting for the freedoms that you and I take for granted, unless they're taken away," Monson said in the video. "Fascism discriminates, hates and persecutes. It makes it illegal to say what you want, to be who you are, to be different."

Putin being apparently booed at Monson's fight with Yemelyanenko in November 2011.

"Alexei supports the movement that, no matter what the media says or how it distorts it, is about one thing — love," Monson went on. "This is an individual who's sitting in jail because he loves. He loves all of us so much that he's going to sacrifice his own freedom for this."

Monson recorded the video in the run-up to his fight on Saturday with Russian martial artist Magomed Malikov during the M-1 Grand Prix 2013 in Ingushetia, in which the U.S. athlete lost. Monson, clad in a traditional Caucasian costume, entered the ring to the tune of Holy War, a World War II-era Russian song — a move apparently aimed against fascism and Russian authorities.

Monson became a celebrity in Russia after a video of his fight with Russian martial artist Fyodor Yemelyanenko went viral in November 2011. Putin's appearance in the ring during the fight was accompanied by boos and whistles. Many commentators said the booing was directed at Putin, while he said it could have been aimed at Monson.

The U.S. athlete is known for his explicit anarchist views. He has various anti-government slogans tattooed all over his body, including "destroy authority," as well as "freedom" and solidarity" in Russian. In 2009, he was fined almost $22,000 and jailed for three months for spray-painting the Washington State Capitol with anarchist symbols.

Contact the author at o.sukhov@imedia.ru

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