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Ponomaryov Accused of Orchestrating Bolotnaya Riots

By The Moscow Times

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A State Duma deputy from the leftist A Just Russia party Ilya Ponomaryov has been accused of helping to organize mass riots on Bolotnaya Ploshchad in central Moscow, one of the officers in charge of policing at the rally testified.

"Ilya Ponomaryov — along with Udaltsov — has organized mass riots," Dmitry Deinichenko said without specifying the source of his information.

The testimony came on Wednesday during the trial of 12 people suspected of taking part in clashes with police at a now-infamous anti-government protest march on the day of President Vladimir Putin's inauguration on May 6, 2012.

Being a Duma deputy, Ponomaryov is immune to criminal prosecution. He denied any wrongdoing during the rally.

His alleged accomplice, one of the main leaders of street opposition Sergei Udaltsov, is currently under house arrest. He has submitted application papers to be one of the candidates in the upcoming Moscow mayoral election. The Moscow electoral commission has yet to confirm his candidature.

One of the few outspoken critics of the government in Russia's lower house of parliament, Ponomaryov has lately been under increased pressure with the Investigating Committee, which accused him of embezzling $750,000. The money was paid to him by the state-funded Skolkovo foundation for a series of lectures, investigators said.

Investigators promised to strip the lawmaker of his immunity to conduct their inquiry, but this has not materialized yet.

Both Ponomaryov and Udaltsov were at the forefront when skirmishes erupted, but there is no clear evidence of them directing the crowd in the clashes.

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