

Putin's Hang-Glider Helper Set for Senator Role

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Alexander Yermakov helped fund Putin's hang-glider flight in 2012.

The man who helped organize President Vladimir Putin's infamous hang-glider flight with a flock of cranes is poised to become a senator, a news report said Wednesday.

United Russia, the pro-government party, could propose a vote on Alexander Yermakov's candidacy at a meeting of its general committee later this month, two unnamed top-level party officials said, Vedomosti reported.

Yermakov is a member of the party and a deputy for the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district from where Putin took off with the birds in September 2012.

The flight was part of an effort to teach the cranes, which had been raised in a reserve, to migrate southward and live in the wild. Putin guided them on the first leg of their migration.

Putin's aerial exploits gave rise to loads of satire in news media and blogs, which mocked the flight as a ridiculous PR stunt in a country that had just emerged from a wave of massive street protests. To make things worse, none of the cranes made it to the destination. One briefly joined a group of wild cranes but was attacked by a dog and lost its way.

The Natural Resources and Environment Ministry allocated some funds toward the project, but they ran short and a fund called Streh, or Crane, where Yermakov is director, picked up the tab for most of the expenses.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he couldn't recall who Yermakov was, but said any conservationist deserved a pat on the back.

"He could have been noticed — and it's normal," Peskov said, the newspaper reported. "A bad person wouldn't be taking care of nature."

But Peskov said he doubted that Yermakov's promotion would stem solely from his involvement in the hang-glider event.

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