

Astrakhan Lawmaker Stabbed at Moscow Hostel

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November 21, 2013

The  Moscow Times

A Just Russia deputy Oleg Shein was hospitalized Thursday after being stabbed at a Moscow hostel in an incident that opposition politicians are saying was "an attempt to get rid of a competitor."

Police say Shein was injured during an argument with his roommates, and he is currently in the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Shein said he was stabbed with a knife by a roommate after trying to intervene when she attacked another roommate. He told NTV television that he believed the girl was a "wino" and attributed her behavior to "mental illness or deviation."

"After 1 a.m. I heard a shrill cry for help, and I saw that next to me, near a guy's bed, there's this black silhouette of a girl — like in American movies — moving her hand up and down, and then the guy ran out of the room and shut the door," Shein told LifeNews in a video

posted on YouTube. "I asked 'What's going on?', felt a sharp blow directed at my left thigh, started to get up and felt two more blows to my left and right forearms."

Police have detained the suspect, a 20-year old resident of the Chelyabinsk region.

But the detention has done nothing to quell speculation that the attack was politically motivated, with several deputies saying it was suspicious that such a thing happened ahead of Shein's planned participation in Astrakhan's mayoral election. The election is expected to be held after Mayor Mikhail Stolyarov, who was arrested last week on bribery charges, resigns later this month.

Shein came to Moscow to meet with Sergei Mironov; Vladimir Churov, chairman of the Central Elections Commission, and a top Kremlin official to discuss the upcoming mayoral election, Vasily Vorokh, head of A Just Russia's Astrakhan executive committee, told the Znak.com news portal.

Mikhail Yemelyanov, a deputy head of A Just Russia's faction in the State Duma, told NTV that the attack was "an attempt to get rid of a competitor." Alexander Ageyev, a State Duma deputy representing the party, also said that a "political conflict" was behind the incident.

Ilya Ponomaryov, a former top member of A Just Russia, said by phone that the incident was likely orchestrated.

"I do not believe in coincidences that much," Ponomaryov said, adding "I know the customs of the Astrakhan elite very well."

He also said Shein's victory in the upcoming mayoral election would be "guaranteed" as long as there is no vote rigging.

Alexander Khinshtein, a United Russia deputy of the State Duma, said it would be absurd to connect the incident to Astrakhan politics, however.

"Based on the information I have, the Astrakhan or professional version is as likely as the theory that this crime was committed by an alien," he said in comments on United Russia's official website.

Khinshtein asked top Interior Ministry and Investigative Committee officials to personally monitor the investigation.

NTV reported that the event took place at the Artist hostel. The television network cited residents of the building where the Artist is located as saying that the hostel was allegedly being used as a brothel.

Shein was a State Duma deputy from 1999 to 2011 and has been a member of the Astrakhan region's legislature since 2011.

In March 2012, Shein was the runner-up in the Astrakhan mayoral election, losing it to United Russia's Stolyarov, according to the official results. However, Shein claimed victory and held a 40-day hunger strike to protest alleged vote rigging. The election and hunger strike triggered the largest protests in the city's recent history, which drew thousands of people,

including major Moscow opposition leaders, and gained attention nationwide.

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Original url:

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