

Scandalous Lawmaker Loses Immunity

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Alexei Mitrofanov

An eccentric Duma deputy who once produced a porn film about the Kremlin's political enemies was stripped of his legislative immunity by his colleagues on Tuesday in light of a fraud probe currently pending against him.

The Investigative Committee accused Alexei Mitrofanov of having defrauded a businessman of \$200,000 by falsely promising to help him win a dispute in a Moscow arbitration court.

Investigators claim to have caught Mitrofanov red-handed along with several accomplices in 2012, but could not pursue an investigation at the time because of his immunity.

The lawmaker denied all accusations against him. If charged and convicted, he could face up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to 1 million rubles (\$29,000).

Mitrofanov, 52, a Moscow-born expert in international relations, produced comedy shows on television before becoming a State Duma deputy with the national-populist Liberal Democratic Party in 1993.

He has remained in the Duma ever since, having crossed party lines to join the pro-Kremlin A Just Russia in 2007 against the outcries of his former comrades.

Mitrofanov has regularly made splashes in the Russian media, most notably through his support of the faux-lesbian pop duo Tatu, and his involvement in the production of a 2005 pornographic movie entitled "Yulia," which featured lookalikes of Ukrainian politician Yulia Tymoshenko and former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, both ardent critics of Russia.

His most recent high-profile initiative was a proposal to register all Russian website with the government. The bill passed one of three required readings in the Duma in March despite cries of censorship from Internet freedom activists.

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