

A Just Russia's Mironov Warns Party Against Contact With U.S. Officials

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A Just Russia party head Sergei Mironov.

A left-of-center party leader has sent a memo to lawmakers from his State Duma faction to “urgently recommend” that they avoid any contact with U.S. officials, Vedomosti reported Tuesday citing a copy of the letter.

A Just Russia party head Sergei Mironov warned that U.S.-Russian relations had changed, and not for the better, advising his party members “not to allow Americans to advance communication in a way that is beneficial for them,” or better yet to avoid contacts altogether, according to the report.

The letter was sent out on July 4 — U.S. Independence Day — the report said.

While avoiding contact was not exactly an order, Mironov said the course of action was “strongly recommended,” according to Vedomosti.

While A Just Russia occasionally passes for an opposition party in the country, it has generally stayed in the Kremlin's good graces, holding the third-largest number of parliamentary seats and supporting the Kremlin throughout the Ukrainian crisis that has led to Western sanctions against Moscow and soured U.S. - Russian Relations.

One of the party's more vocal critics of the Kremlin, Ilya Ponomarev, said of the memo that "everybody should mind their own affairs" and that he would not abide by the recommendation, but added that it would be "very positive" if Mironov followed his own advice, Vedomosti reported.

Political analyst Dmitry Oreshkin said "lawmakers sense what their fates depend on," Vedomosti reported.

"Our president needs an iron curtain, needs to create the image of an enemy," Oreshkin was quoted by the report as saying.

"So Mironov is demonstrating his vigilance and is doing what any obkom [Communist regional committee] secretary would have done during Soviet times, expecting to earn career advancement."

Members of the ruling United Russia party, as well as Communist and Liberal Democratic Party members, have received no such admonitions from their leadership, the report said.

The number of Russians who believe that their country is heading toward a new Cold War with the West has reached 37 percent, according to a survey released Tuesday by independent pollster Levada Center.

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