The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Senator Requests Probe, Sanity Check for Ultraconservative Lawmaker

By Alexey Eremenko

November 27, 2014



Vitaly Milonov

A Russian senator has requested that a criminal investigation be carried out into a St. Petersburg lawmaker notorious for his militant religious zeal, bucking an otherwise conservative trend in the country's politics.

Vitaly Milonov — one of the architects of Russia's anti-gay law — appears to have committed a handful of crimes during his time in public office, Federation Council member Konstantin Dobrynin wrote Thursday on his LiveJournal account.

Milonov, who is also a church sexton, has been photographed wearing a T-shirt that read "Orthodoxy or Death" — a slogan banned in Russia as extremist. He was also pictured with knives and firearms during "humanitarian missions" to pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine, Dobrynin wrote.

Additionally, the flamboyant lawmaker has denounced various nationalities, including Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, whom he described as "crazy goats," "pigs" and "fascist Turkish mugs," Dobrynin said.

All of this qualifies Milonov for a total of 11 criminal charges, including promoting terrorism and illegal firearms possession, the senator said. The charges carry a combined sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

Milonov should also be forced to undergo a mental health examination, said Dobrynin, an ex-businessman who represents the northern Arkhangelsk region in the Federation Council, Russia's upper house of parliament.

The Investigative Committee had yet to comment on the request as of this article's publication.

Milonov, 40, was quoted by local news website SPBDnevnik.ru as saying he had opted "to maintain a polite silence."

The St. Petersburg lawmaker has a lengthy and flamboyant track record as a champion of ultraconservative values in Russia.

In addition to authoring the ban on "gay propaganda" enforced in St. Petersburg in 2012 and later extended nationwide, Milonov has campaigned to ban the music channel MTV, Darwin's theory of evolution and hookahs, and to restrict abortions and institute vice police in Russia.

He denied posing with firearms in Donetsk, local news website Fontanka.ru said in August.

In June, a petition to carry out a mental health assessment of Milonov's ideological ally, ultraconservative State Duma lawmaker Yelena Mizulina, gathered 100,000 signatures. While this mandated a government review, the authorities decided not to act upon it.

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Original url:
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