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Russian Deputies Play Hooky to Plant Flag in Antarctic

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The two Russian Duma deputies made headlines last week after they reportedly went missing in the Antarctic.

Two State Duma deputies who missed the parliament's opening session Tuesday have planted a Russian flag at the top of Mount Vinson, the highest peak in the Antarctic, one of them said Wednesday.

Oleg Savchenko and Alexander Sidyakin's trip to the Antarctic made the headlines last week when they were feared missing after connection with them was lost. The deputies were soon declared alive and well, but the expedition became controversial when it was reported that Savchenko and Sidyakin had not followed procedure and informed the authorities of their trip, and when the cost of the expedition was estimated by Russian media at 3 million rubles ($46,000).

"It's not a vacation or recreation. It was a mission," Savchenko was cited by state news agency RIA Novosti as saying of the climb up Mount Vinson.

Their press secretary said earlier that the deputies had paid for the trip themselves and that they would give up part of their salaries due to their failure to return to work on time, RIA Novosti reported.

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