

Ponomaryov Not Returning to Russia for the Moment

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Ilya Ponomaryov

Opposition State Duma Deputy Ilya Ponomaryov has said he will not return to Russia in the near future to face criminal charges that he dismisses as politically motivated, the Interfax news agency reported.

“I do not intend to return to a prison,” Ponomaryov told Interfax late Tuesday after investigators announced they would seek to obtain an international warrant for his arrest.

A prominent figure at opposition protests in Moscow and the only Duma deputy to vote against the annexation of Crimea last year, Ponomaryov was stripped of his parliamentary immunity in April on the request of prosecutors investigating alleged embezzlement at the Skolkovo innovation hub.

“I have spoken to investigators before, I think, in August, and including when I was in the United States. Everyone understands everything perfectly well. The arrest warrant is pure speculation, playing games with the public,” Ponomaryov said, Interfax reported.

Investigators said Tuesday that they were charging Ponomaryov with misappropriation of up to \$750,000 worth of funds from the Skolkovo Innovation Center, where he was employed in 2010.

One of the last independent voices in the lower house of Russia's parliament, Ponomaryov reportedly left Russia last year and now spends most of his time in the United States.

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