

Russian Parliament Resumes Work With Smear Attack on Opposition Deputy

By [Daria Litvinova](#)

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The first fall session of the State Duma, Russia's lower chamber of parliament, was marked Tuesday by virulent anti-Western sentiment and the launch of a smear campaign against the Duma's only deputy openly critical of Kremlin policies.

The Duma's speaker, Sergei Naryshkin, focused on sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries over Ukraine, calling them “predatory.” He called on deputies to be ready to work while their opponents “continue along their suicidal path,” the RBC news agency reported Tuesday.

“The kind of political shamelessness that Washington expressed toward Valentina Matviyenko [speaker of the Federation Council, the upper chamber of parliament], who was invited to the Inter-Parliamentary Union Summit, wasn't seen even during the Cold War,” Naryshkin, a member of the ruling United Russia party, was cited by RBC as saying Tuesday.

The U.S. State Department issued a restricted entry visa to Matviyenko last month due to the

fact that she features on the list of individuals sanctioned by the U.S. over Russia's involvement in the Ukraine crisis. The entire delegation of Russian senators refused to go to New York for the Inter-Parliamentary Union after that.

Naryshkin added that constructive dialogue between different political forces would help to combat “provocations” launched by the U.S.

His colleague Sergei Neverov, also from United Russia, showed the deputies part of a documentary by sensationalist TV channel NTV, which is notorious for a series of opposition-bashing programs.

The subject of the latest NTV show, which aired on TV on Friday evening, was one of the deputies assembled in the Duma: Kremlin critic Dmitry Gudkov, who won his seat in the Duma in 2011 as a member of the Just Russia party, but was kicked out of it in 2013 for supporting the opposition.

The NTV program excerpt depicted Gudkov meeting with Hubert Knirsch, head of the political department of the German Embassy in Moscow. According to the TV show, Knirsch asked Gudkov how the opposition was preparing for elections, and Gudkov said that in the event of defeat, opposition forces would be able to organize a rally, adding that sanctions were useful for the opposition.

“While we're arguing about economic policy, import substitution and electoral laws, there are those who sit in the same room with us but try their best to worsen the situation in the country and reinforce sanctions,” Neverov was cited by RBC as saying Tuesday, commenting on the video.

Gudkov told The Moscow Times that he had indeed met with Knirsch in June, but said they discussed completely different things to those alleged in the TV program.

The deputy said he was surprised at a sensationalist “documentary” being shown in the Duma, as usually the screen in the auditorium is used to demonstrate presentations, statistics and other documents related to lawmakers' reports.

“No one has ever shown a lurid video like this — not to mention one that is completely fabricated,” Gudkov said in a phone interview. “It's beyond political ethics,” he added.

In every session, according to the lawmaker, each party faction has 10 minutes to talk about issues they consider important, and on the first day back at work on Tuesday, the United Russia faction chose to focus on their colleague Gudkov.

“The tone has been set. It's clear what awaits us [in the State Duma this season],” he said.

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