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Former Separatist Commander Strelkov May Found Russian Political Party

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Igor Strelkov

A former commander of Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, Igor Strelkov, may found a political party that would oppose Russia's President Vladimir Putin, the Russian commander said in an interview published Thursday.

The political party would aim to combat illegal migration into Russia, Kommersant daily reported.

Former defense minister of the breakaway Donetsk People's Republic, Strelkov, also known as Girkin, had previously spoken in support of Putin, while claiming the presidential "entourage has been infiltrated by the fifth column," the report said.

The military commander may gain a following in Russia, political analyst Alexei Makarkin was quoted as saying. Russia's national television channels had once promoted Strelkov's role at the helm of the Ukrainian insurgency, and while he has disappeared from broadcasts lately,

Russian stores prominently display his books about the separatist rebellion.

Only about 21 percent of Russians said they knew about Strelkov, but most of those people view him positively or even with "admiration," according to a survey released in late 2014 by independent Levada Center pollster.

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