

Russian Politician Who Defected to Ukraine Charged With Fraud

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Former Communist Party deputy Denis Voronenkov **Anna Isakova / TASS**

A Russian politician who defected to Ukraine has been [charged in absentia with large-scale fraud.](#)

Former Communist Party deputy Denis Voronenkov reportedly fled to Kiev during the investigation in October 2016, which focused on an illegal property seizure two years earlier.

As an elected member of parliament, Voronenkov had previously been immune from prosecution. He then lost his seat in elections in September 2016.

The charges were formally brought against Voronenkov the day after he gave a damning interview to Ukrainian media outlet Censor.net.ua.

He told the channel that Russia was in the grip of a "pseudo-patriotic frenzy" similar to Nazi

Germany, and claimed that it was a “mistake” for Russia to annex the Crimean peninsula.

Voronenkov also revealed that he had gained Ukrainian citizenship in December 2016.

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The interview has sparked outrage in Moscow, with the Communist Party pledging to expel Voronenkov from its ranks.

The Gnessin Academy of Music also promised to expel Voronenkov's wife, opera singer Maria Maksakova, from its organization. Maksakova, who fled to Ukraine alongside her husband, also served as a United Russia deputy in the state Duma. She is also being investigated for illegally holding German citizenship while holding a public office.

Voronenkov has faced a [number of other criminal accusations during his career](#). In the early 2000s, the politician was investigated on accusations of bribery. He has also been accused involvement in the murder of her business partner Andrei Burlakov.

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