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State Duma Bars Reporters From Taking Photos of Parliamentary Sessions – Vedomosti

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The State Duma chamber. **Антон Новодережкин/ТАСС**

Starting Wednesday, members of the press will no longer be allowed to take still photographs during sessions of the lower house of Russia's parliament, the State Duma, after lawmakers accused journalists of taking unflattering pictures of them as they worked.

The Vedomosti business newspaper, citing four anonymous sources within the State Duma, reported that only camera operators were allowed on Wednesday to enter a balcony area where reporters usually take photos of parliamentary sessions.

It was not immediately clear when or if the restrictions for photojournalists would be lifted. One of Vedomosti's sources speculated that the ban, which was not formally announced, could remain in effect until the State Duma elections scheduled for September of this year.

Another source told the newspaper that some lawmakers had expressed anger over how

reporters began taking photos of them during their return to work last week after the New Year's holiday break.

The source did not specify which photos sparked the alleged outrage. However, major publications like the newspaper Kommersant have for years been known to sometimes use less-than-flattering images of Russian lawmakers and other government officials in their articles.

State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin and the ruling United Russia party reportedly warned lawmakers last week against discussing "sensitive issues" in the parliamentary chamber since their conversations could be caught by "long-focus camera lenses at any moment."

On Tuesday, Volodin accused reporters during the start of a State Duma session of trying to "spy, peek and portray" lawmakers in a "negative light."

"When you find yourselves in various situations, note that we never mock, offend or mess with you," the speaker said as photographers entered onto the balcony area reserved for members of the press.

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