

Deputies Hit Back at Baseball Bat Threat

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In an apparent sign of growing pre-election nervousness, a senior United Russia official on Tuesday threatened legal action against a Communist colleague who jokingly promised to take baseball bats to poll-rigging officials.

The scandal stems from a statement by Vladimir Rashkin, a State Duma deputy with the Communists, who threatened vigilante action against members of the elections commission.

"We have already purchased baseball bats and will be knocking off mischievous hands of those who break the law and rewrite [election] protocols," he said at a news conference in Saratov on Friday, the local newspaper Versia [reported](#).

When asked whether the party has "combat teams" ready, he added: "We have them. The first is in front of you — it's Rashkin. All of you guys are soft, white and fuzzy, but the time has come."

The spirited speech prompted the ruling party's Vladimir Medinsky, also a Duma deputy, to ask law enforcement agencies to check Rashkin's words.

Such statements from a public politician can only be considered a "call for terror," Medinsky said, Interfax reported. He added that the Duma's Credentials and Ethics Commission will also be asked to look into the matter.

Opposition parties, including the Communists, have been accusing election officials in recent years of large-scale falsifications in favor of United Russia, though most cases never reached courts.

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