

# Duma Deputy Gudkov in More Hot Water

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Gennady Gudkov seeking to address the floor in the State Duma, where he holds a seat with the Just Russia party.

Investigators on Monday took a step toward charging opposition-minded State Duma Deputy Gennady Gudkov with breaking the law by actively managing business interests and collecting profits from them.

The Investigative Committee said it has forwarded its findings in a case against Gudkov to the Prosecutor General's Office, which could ask the Duma to lift Gudkov's legal immunity if it decides to pursue the case.

While it is legal for government officials to own a business, they cannot profit from that company nor be directly involved in its activities while holding office.

Gudkov, a Just Russia member and deputy chairman of the Duma's Security Committee, has denied wrongdoing and accused law enforcement officials of putting pressure on him because of his support of the anti-Kremlin rallies that erupted after the disputed Duma elections

in December.

Just Russia founder Sergei Mironov said Monday that Gudkov was being singled out.

"I don't doubt that those claims that investigators have against Gudkov can be applied to a dozen deputies," Mironov wrote on Twitter.

Another Just Russia official said prosecutors were unlikely to proceed with the case.

"They will play things cool, nobody needs to turn him into another disgraced figure," said the official, who requested anonymity because of the subject's sensitivity.

Officials "had enough revenge" on Gudkov by forcing him to sell his Oskord private security firm, the official added. Gudkov, who founded the firm in 1992, turned over its ownership to his wife, Maria Gudkova, when he was first elected to the Duma in 2001. He announced last month that he had been forced to sell Oskord for a song because of his support for the political opposition, which included attending rallies and providing private security guards to protect rally speakers.

The Investigative Committee says Gudkov co-owns and manages the Kolomensky Stroitel construction materials trader and receives revenues from a textile producer called Roshan.

Last week, the Investigative Committee also accused Gudkov of owning stakes in several foreign companies and developing a business in Bulgaria.

Muddying the waters, Bulgarian citizen Ivailo Zartov, who operated a firm with Russian partners, including Gudkov's wife, was sentenced last week to nine years in prison for stealing from the firm. It was a complaint from Zartov that investigators used to open an inquiry into Gudkov possibly owning assets abroad.

As a Duma deputy, Gudkov has strengthened ties with members of the Bulgarian parliament.

In a twist, the head of the Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, has been accused of wrongdoing similar to that of the Gudkov case. Opposition leader Alexei Navalny late last month said Bastrykin broke the law by having real estate and business interests in the Czech Republic while serving as a government official.

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