

# Upper House Backs Tougher Punishments for Treason

By [The Moscow Times](#)

October 30, 2012

**The**  **Moscow Times**

Russia's upper house on Wednesday approved a bill drastically toughening punishments for treason, a news report said.

The new bill calls for fines of up to 500,000 rubles (\$19,000) or eight-year prison terms for illegal attempts to obtain state secrets. It also significantly broadens the definitions of a state secret and treason.

Presenting the bill to senators, Andrei Klishas, head of the State Duma's Legislation Committee, dismissed complaints from Mikhail Fedotov, head of the Kremlin's human rights council, calling them "emotional," Interfax reported.

Last Thursday, Fedotov asked the Federation Council not to accept the bill.

Commenting on the Federation Council's decision, veteran rights campaigner Lyudmila

Alexeyeva told the news agency that the bill "would return us not simply to the Soviet past, but to the Stalinist past."

Alexeyeva added that rights activists will ask the president not to sign the bill into law, since it opens the door to selective justice and the prosecution of activists and government critics.

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