

Duma's Ethics Chief Asks to Step Aside After Navalny's Expose

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Deputy Vladimir Pekhtin has asked to temporarily be relieved of his duties as chairman of the State Duma's Ethics Committee pending an investigation into allegations that he failed to declare more than \$2 million in real estate holdings in the U.S. state of Florida, Interfax reported on Wednesday.

In a letter addressed to Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin, Pekhtin, a member of the ruling United Russia party, asked to be sidelined from the committee until a check into the accusations, made by opposition whistleblower Alexei Navalny on his blog on Tuesday, was completed.

"I never owned and don't own any property in the United States," Pekhtin wrote. "The property mentioned in the press belongs to my son, Alexei, who, before I was even elected to the Duma in 1998, went to study in the United States, where he was later able to work and own property."

He also said that he has asked the Duma committee that oversees income and other financial declarations — which deputies are required to make by law — to investigate the claims against him.

Public documents show that Pekhtin and his son co-own two apartments in Miami Beach worth an estimated \$540,900 and \$1.3 million, respectively, as well as a house in Florida worth an additional \$400,000, Navalny [wrote](#).

In an interview with Izvestia the day the blog post appeared, Pekhtin seemed to flip-flop on whether he owned property abroad, [stating](#) that he owned "practically no" foreign real estate before adding, "I don't own any [foreign property] at all! I've lived here my whole life, in Russia."

Pekhtin won't exclude the possibility of suing for defamation of character, Interfax reported.

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