

St. Petersburg Deputy Governor Didn't Bring Real Gun Into Work, Aide Says

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A photo showing St. Petersburg deputy governor Igor Albin with a handgun clipped to his belt.

A photo showing the deputy governor of St. Petersburg with a handgun clipped to his belt at a local government meeting has prompted assurances from his aide that the weapon was nonlethal and that the politician is a "law abiding man."

[The picture](#) showing Deputy Governor Igor Albin at a meeting with a gun in a holster attached to his jeans made the rounds on Russian social networks last week.

Albin's aide, Yelena Mikhina, confirmed the photo is genuine and said it was taken during a utilities committee work meeting last Saturday, regional news portal Zaks.ru reported Wednesday.

Mikhina said the gun was a replica, and therefore harmless, but could not explain why Albin had brought the fake firearm to the city administration meeting, the report said.

Albin is "a law abiding man," Mikhina was quoted as saying in the report, adding the deputy "fires all kinds of weapons, is skilled in hand-to-hand combat and is good at knife-throwing — but not at Smolny [administration seat], not during work hours, but at shooting ranges."

A State Duma lawmaker from the Liberal Democratic Party, Roman Khudyakov, has called for an investigation into the case to ascertain just what kind of weapon the deputy governor had on him, and whether he possesses a license for the gun in question, Zaks.ru reported.

"If it was pneumatic, and not a real firearm, and he has a permit for it, then he has the right to carry it," Khudyakov was quoted as saying. "But if he doesn't have a permit, then it's a violation of the law and this needs to be sorted out."

The leader of pro-gun movement Right to Arms, Maria Butina, said that while it is legal to own a licensed handgun, weapons are banned from city administration buildings, Zaks.ru reported.

"When an ordinary citizen comes into, say, the State Duma, he must surrender his weapons," she was quoted as saying. "Government officials and lawmakers also have to surrender theirs. If [Albin] did not do so, why not?"

Others appear to be more understanding — Russian bodyguards are notoriously unreliable, Sergei Dubov, the leader of the Grey Legion gun enthusiast association told Zaks.ru, adding that a man sometimes has to take his security into his own hands.

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