

Russian Deputy Kobzon Calls Crimea 'Crippling Financial Burden'

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The  **Moscow Times**

A prominent Duma deputy from the ruling United Russia party has called Crimea a “crippling financial burden” and claimed that other sectors are suffering spending cuts because of it, the Afisha news website reported Monday.

Kobzon claimed that infrastructure in Crimea was being financed at the expense of other areas like health care, education and culture.

“We have taken on a crippling burden,” he said.

Kobzon, who enjoyed a successful career as a singer before entering politics, was banned from entering the U.S. over alleged past connections to organized crime and is barred from entering the European Union over his support for Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

However, Kobzon showed no sign of a change of stance on Crimea, calling it “long-standing Russian territory.”

Russia's economic development ministry has placed the cost of developing and modernizing Crimea at \$4.5 billion a year. Moscow is also financing the 19 kilometer-long Kerch bridge linking the peninsula to the Russian mainland. The bridge's budget stands at some \$3.4 billion.

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