



Report Information from ProQuest

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Navalny's Health Is Said to Be Worsening in Prison

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FULL TEXT

Aleksei A. Navalny, a Russian opposition leader who survived a poisoning last year, has numbness in one leg so severe that he cannot put weight on it.

MOSCOW – Aleksei A. Navalny, the imprisoned opposition leader who returned to Russia this year despite an earlier attempt on his life, is in deteriorating health with unexplained ailments and has received substandard medical care, his lawyers said on Thursday.

Prison doctors moved Mr. Navalny, 44, to a hospital for tests on Wednesday but offered no explanation for his complaints of severe back pain and numbness in one leg, and then returned him to the penal colony east of Moscow, said his lawyer, Olga Mikhailova.

"His health is extremely unfavorable, and every day gets worse," she said in an interview after meeting Mr. Navalny in prison on Thursday. His right leg has numbed to the point he cannot put weight on it, she said. "We are afraid for his life and his health."

Mr. Navalny collapsed into a coma on an airplane flight last August and was medically evacuated from Russia to Berlin. After extensive tests there, both the German and French governments, and international chemical weapons specialists, confirmed that he had been poisoned with a Soviet-designed military nerve agent, Novichok.

The poisoning was the latest in a series of assassinations and attempted assassinations of opponents of President Vladimir V. Putin that Western governments have blamed on the Kremlin. Mr. Putin has denied any state role in Mr. Navalny's collapse, arguing that if Russian agents had wanted to kill him they would have succeeded.

Mr. Navalny returned to Russia in January despite his supporters' fears for his safety. He was detained for a parole violation -- failure to report to Russian authorities while he was being treated in Germany for the poisoning -- on a previous offense that he and his allies dismiss as politically motivated, and sentenced to more than two years in a penal colony.

His new, so far undiagnosed symptoms, including back pain, began a month ago but worsened this week, and he could not rule out lingering effects of the nerve agent poisoning, Ms. Mikhailova said.

Mr. Navalny had asked his lawyers not to make the symptoms public before this week, she said. Only after prison officials on Wednesday declined to allow a meeting with Mr. Navalny did they air their worries, which she said deepened on Thursday after a meeting was granted.

Prison doctors have provided only ibuprofen pills and an ibuprofen-based topical ointment for pain, she said, and have refused to pass along medicines the lawyers provided or allow access for a personal doctor.

The prison health system, she said, has not provided the lawyers or Mr. Navalny a diagnosis for the symptoms. She said she feared if Mr. Navalny is not transferred to receive specialty care soon, his condition will deteriorate. Earlier on Thursday, Russia's prison authorities said Mr. Navalny's health was "stable and satisfactory" after an examination, the Tass news agency reported.

Prison doctors are not qualified to treat him, Ms. Mikhailova said, and she has filed appeals to move him to

Moscow to be examined by a specialist. "His condition is worsening, not improving, with the treatment he is getting in prison," she added.

His condition has been exacerbated by sleep deprivation, she said, with guards awakening him hourly, ostensibly to confirm his presence in the prison barracks, as he is classified as a flight risk.

After his poisoning, Mr. Navalny and the open-source investigative group Bellingcat studied phone records of Russian security service agents and other clues to reconstruct what they called an attempted assassination. Mr. Navalny said the poison, which can be lethal to the touch, had been applied to the inside of a pair of his underpants. It was the same class of nerve agent that sickened several people in England and killed one of them in 2018, in what western intelligence agencies said was a failed attempt to kill Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian spy.

In Germany, Mr. Navalny underwent months of rehabilitation and in interviews described harrowing neurological symptoms including disorientation and trouble walking. By late last year he said he had seemed to fully recover.

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny stood at his hearing in Moscow in February. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

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In a Message, Navalny Tells Of a Dystopia Inside Prison

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FULL TEXT

In an Instagram post, the Russian opposition leader says he is well and has not been subject to violence, but described a dystopian existence in the prison camp where he will likely spend the next two years.

MOSCOW – The Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny greeted his supporters via Instagram on Monday from the prison where he is likely to spend the next two years, referring to his new confines as "our friendly concentration camp."

Mr. Navalny, whose whereabouts had been unknown for days, said in a message posted on his Instagram page that he had been transferred to Penal Colony No. 2 in the Vladimir Region east of Moscow. Mr. Navalny had passed the message along to his lawyers, who were able to visit him at the penal colony earlier in the day for the first time. It was the prison, known for harsh conditions even by Russian standards, where Russian media reported Mr. Navalny had been sent two weeks ago. But it later emerged that Mr. Navalny was dispatched from the Moscow jail where he had been held since January to a different detention center first.

"I must admit that Russia's prison system managed to surprise me," Mr. Navalny said in the Instagram post. "I did not imagine that it was possible to set up a real concentration camp 100 kilometers from Moscow."

Mr. Navalny, the most prominent political opponent of President Vladimir V. Putin, returned to Russia in January after having recovered from a near-deadly poisoning in Siberia last year. He was arrested at passport control, then

sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for violating parole on a suspended sentence he had received in 2014. The sentence was widely seen as an attempt by Mr. Putin to silence his loudest domestic critic. The initial wave of nationwide protests prompted by Mr. Navalny's arrest has now passed, but his political machine remains potent and is preparing to challenge Mr. Putin's ruling party in the parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in September.

Mr. Navalny appears determined to keep encouraging his supporters from prison via his Instagram account, where he has more than four million followers. He wrote in Monday's post, which was paired with an old photo, that he had seen "not even a hint" of violence at his new penitentiary home, but that his fellow prisoners appeared to be terrorized by beatings widely reported to have been carried out at Penal Colony No. 2 in the past.

"The methods have now changed and, I'll be honest, I can't even remember a place where everyone speaks so politely and, in a way, welcomingly," Mr. Navalny wrote. "Video cameras are everywhere, everyone is being watched, and a report is written up in response to the slightest violation."

Even profanity was prohibited, Mr. Navalny wrote. Shockingly for a Russian prison, "this ban is strictly followed." The prison, referred to by its Russian initials IK2, has long been known for strict enforcement of rules. Lawyers and former inmates have described a separate, harsher punishment facility within its walls where inmates are not allowed to mingle or even talk among themselves.

The site is typical for Russia's colony-type prisons that evolved, with a few improvements, from the gulag camps established in the 1930s. Inmates live collectively in groups of several dozen called brigades in low-slung, two-story buildings surrounded by walls and barbed wire.

Discipline is enforced by prisoners in cahoots with the warden, according to former inmates, an arrangement that will allow the prison administration to strictly control Mr. Navalny's life at all times. Prisoners spend hours standing with their hands clasped behind their backs, looking at their feet, forbidden from making eye contact with the guards, one former inmate, the nationalist politician Dmitri Dymushkin, told a Moscow radio station recently. Mr. Navalny, in Monday's post, said he remained classified as a flight risk, meaning that he was woken up every hour at night by a guard with a camera reporting on his condition.

The constant surveillance, Mr. Navalny wrote, reminded him of a dystopian novel: "I think that someone up high read Orwell's '1984' and said, 'Oh, awesome. Let's do that. Education through dehumanization.'"

But as he has done repeatedly in recent months, Mr. Navalny still sought to radiate optimism. He has used his imprisonment to try to show Russians that they need not fear Mr. Putin, as long as they believe that, sooner or later, their side will prevail.

"If you deal with everything with a sense of humor, you can live with it," Mr. Navalny wrote. "So, all in all, all is well here."

Photograph

Penal Colony No. 2, in the Vladimir Region of Russia, where Aleksei A. Navalny has been transferred to serve his sentence. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Dimitar Dilkoff/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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U.S. Announces Sanctions on Russia Over Navalny; Putin Isn't a Target

Sanger, David E; Erlanger, Steven . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y]03 Mar 2021: A.9.

FULL TEXT

The action came as the administration declassified an intelligence finding that the F.S.B., one of Russia's leading intelligence agencies, was responsible for the poisoning of Aleksei A. Navalny.

The Biden administration on Tuesday declassified an intelligence finding that the F.S.B., one of Russia's leading intelligence agencies, orchestrated the poisoning of the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny, and announced its first sanctions against the Russian government for the attack and his imprisonment.

The sanctions closely mirrored a series of actions that European nations and Britain took in October and expanded on Monday. Senior officials said the move was part of an effort to show unity in the Biden administration's first confrontations with the government of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

But none of the sanctions were specifically directed at Mr. Putin or the oligarchs who support the Russian leader. Just as President Biden held back last week from direct sanctions against Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia for his role in the operation that killed Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi dissident, the American sanctions did not touch Russia's senior leadership.

Mr. Navalny's supporters praised the sanctions announced on Tuesday, although the measures fell well short of the sweeping action that the opposition leader's team had called for as he was being sentenced to two and a half years in prison. One of Mr. Navalny's top allies, Vladimir Ashurkov, sent Mr. Biden a letter in January arguing that only sanctions on top Russian decision makers, along with the business figures he said held their money, could "make the regime change its behavior."

"The most painful sanctions, which, unfortunately, neither Europe nor the United States have yet reached, would be sanctions against oligarchs," Maria Pevchikh, another Navalny ally, posted on Twitter on Tuesday.

In announcing the role of the F.S.B., or Federal Security Service, in the poisoning, American intelligence officials were confirming the reports of many news organizations, some of which traced the individual agents who tracked Mr. Navalny and attacked him with Novichok, a nerve agent that Russia has used against other dissidents. It was unclear if the United States planned to release a formal report, as it did last week when it confirmed two-year-old findings on Mr. Khashoggi, or whether it would simply summarize the key finding in the Navalny case.

The sanctions are notable chiefly because they are the first Mr. Biden has taken in the six weeks since he became president. While most presidents have come into office declaring they would seek a reset of relations with Russia, Mr. Biden has done the opposite. He has warned that Mr. Putin is driving his country into an era of authoritarianism and promised to push back on human rights violations and efforts to destabilize Europe.

One official told reporters on Tuesday morning that the Biden administration was not seeking to reset relations or escalate confrontations. The test may come in the next few weeks, when the administration is expected to announce its response to the SolarWinds cyberattack, in which suspected Russian hackers bore deeply into nine government agencies and more than 100 companies, stealing data and planting "back doors" into their computer networks.

While the Navalny case was a vivid example of Russian brutality – his F.S.B. attackers stalked him as he traveled across Europe and apparently applied the nerve agent to his underwear – the Biden administration sees SolarWinds as a more direct attack on the United States. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, said the response "will not simply be sanctions" and hinted at some kind of covert response as well.

But in the Navalny case, only sanctions were announced -- and they might have little effect. History suggests that sanctions work better, if at all, on smaller, less powerful nations, and then only over time. They are often used to signal disapproval without much expectation of changed behavior.

As Carl Bildt, the former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden, said: "Sanctions have become very popular in Congress, and they're becoming popular with the E.U., too. If you don't have any other instruments, sanctions are

very popular."

In 2018, the Trump administration announced sanctions against Russia for the use of a nerve agent against Sergei Skripal, a former Russian double agent living in Britain, and his daughter, Yulia, and expelled dozens of Russian diplomats. But that proved little deterrent to the F.S.B. using the same technique against Mr. Navalny and Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Russian dissident who was poisoned, in 2015 and 2017, and nearly died both times.

A senior American official said that the action announced on Tuesday was in many ways catching up to designations that the Europeans had already made. The official said the main effort was to assure that the United States and Europe were "on the same page" after several months in which European sanctions went beyond any imposed by Washington.

The European Union on Monday approved sanctions on four senior Russian officials considered responsible for the prosecution and imprisonment of Mr. Navalny.

The decision, approved by the member states, went into effect on Tuesday and represents the first time the European Union has used new powers under its version of the Magnitsky Act, which allows Brussels to impose sanctions on human rights violators worldwide.

The new sanctions are narrowly drawn to target those who were directly and legally responsible for Mr. Navalny's conviction in what appeared to be a show trial and his subsequent imprisonment upon his return to Russia from Germany, where he recuperated from the poisoning.

The European Union has already imposed sanctions on six Russians and a state scientific research center in response to the attack on Mr. Navalny.

These latest European actions, which are travel bans and asset freezes, cover four individuals: two prosecutorial officials, the head of Russia's National Guard and the head of Russia's prison service.

They are Igor Krasnov, Russia's prosecutor general; Aleksandr I. Bastrykin, the head of the Investigative Committee, which handles investigations into major crimes and reports directly to Mr. Putin; Viktor V. Zolotov, the head of Russia's National Guard and a former Putin bodyguard, who threatened Mr. Navalny in September 2018; and Aleksandr Kalashnikov, the head of Russia's prison service.

The Treasury Department froze the assets of Alexander Bortnikov, the director of the F.S.B., but officials acknowledged that given his position he was unlikely to have left assets in the United States or Europe.

The European Union was under further pressure to respond to Mr. Navalny's conviction last month to another two and a half years in prison after Josep Borrell Fontelles, the bloc's foreign policy chief, made a controversial visit to Moscow, failed to visit Mr. Navalny and was criticized for his mild response to accusations by Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, that the European Union was "an unreliable partner."

During Mr. Borrell's visit, on Feb. 5, Russia expelled three diplomats from Germany, Poland and Sweden – all members of the European Union – for monitoring the protests after Mr. Navalny's jailing, without informing Mr. Borrell. That produced the tit-for-tat expulsion of three Russian diplomats from the three countries.

European foreign ministers agreed on the sanctions a week ago, although some ministers called for a wider net, including Russian oligarchs and supporters of Mr. Putin. But Mr. Borrell argued that legally the actions had to be limited to those directly responsible for the acts that were deemed sanctionable.

Even though the European and American sanctions fell short of targeting prominent Russian oligarchs, officials in Moscow were quick to condemn the Biden administration's move.

"I have no doubt that the new sanctions will not go unanswered," Leonid E. Slutsky, the foreign affairs committee chairman in Russia's lower house of Parliament, told the Interfax news agency. "This is yet another step toward the degradation of relations between Russia and Western countries."

Anton Troianovski contributed reporting.

Anton Troianovski contributed reporting.

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny in a Moscow court last month. The Biden administration announced on Tuesday that it was imposing sanctions against Russia over Mr. Navalny's poisoning and imprisonment. (PHOTOGRAPH BY

DETAILS

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Biden Administration Accuses Russian Intelligence of Poisoning Navalny, and Announces Sanctions

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FULL TEXT

Russian government for the attack and the imprisonment of the opposition politician.

The sanctions closely mirrored a series of actions that European nations and Britain took in October and expanded Monday. Senior administration officials said it was part of an effort to show unity in the new administration's first confrontations with the government of President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

But none of the sanctions were specifically directed at Putin, or the country's intelligence chiefs or the oligarchs that support the Russian leader.

In announcing the role of the FSB, or Federal Security Service, in the poisoning, U.S. intelligence officials were confirming the reports of many news organizations, some of which traced the individual agents who tracked Navalny and attacked him with Novichok, a nerve agent that Russia has used against other dissidents. It was unclear if the United States planned to release a formal report, as it did last week when it confirmed two-year-old findings on the role of the Saudi crown prince in the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, or would simply summarize the key finding in the Navalny case.

The sanction actions were notable, chiefly because they are the first Biden has taken in five weeks since he became president. While most past presidents have come into office declaring they would seek a reset of relations with Russia, Biden has done the opposite — warning that Putin is driving his country back into an era of authoritarianism, and promising to push back on violations of human rights and efforts to destabilize Europe.

One official told reporters Tuesday morning that the administration was not seeking to reset relations, but also was not seeking to escalate confrontations. The test may come in the next few weeks, when the administration is expected to announce its response to the SolarWinds cyberattack, in which suspected Russian hackers bore deeply into nine government agencies and more than 100 companies, stealing data and planting “back doors” into their computer networks.

History suggests the new sanctions may have little effect.

In 2018, the Trump administration announced sanctions against Russia for the use of a nerve agent against a former Russian double agent living in Britain, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter Yulia, and expelled dozens of Russian diplomats. But that proved little deterrent to the FSB using the same technique against Navalny.

White House officials are expected to announce the sanctions later Tuesday, and the Treasury Department will publish a list of the names of those under sanctions.

But a senior official conceded that the action was, in many ways, catching up to designations that the Europeans have already made. The official said the main effort was to assure that the U.S. and Europe were “on the same page” after several months in which European sanctions went beyond any imposed by Washington.

The European Union on Monday approved the imposition of sanctions on four senior Russian officials considered responsible for the prosecution and imprisonment of Navalny.

The decision, approved by the member states, will go into effect as early as Tuesday, when the sanctions are published, and is the first time the EU has used new powers under its version of the Magnitsky act, which allows Brussels to sanction human rights violators worldwide.

The new sanctions are narrowly drawn to hit those directly and legally responsible for Navalny’s conviction in what appeared to be a show trial and subsequent imprisonment upon his return to Russia from Germany, where he recuperated from the poisoning.

The EU has already sanctioned six Russians and a state scientific research center in response to the poisoning of Navalny.

These latest European sanctions, which are travel bans and asset freezes, cover four individuals: two prosecutorial officials, the head of Russia’s national guard and the head of Russia’s prison service.

They are Igor Krasnov, who became Russia’s prosecutor-general a year ago; Alexander I. Bastrykin, whose Investigative Committee handles investigations into major crimes and reports directly to Putin; Victor V. Zolotov, head of Russia’s National Guard and a former Putin bodyguard, who threatened Navalny in September 2018; and Alexander Kalashnikov, head of the federal prison service.

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Document 5 of 72

Russia Is Sending Navalny To Prison Known for Abuse

Kramer, Andrew E; Erlanger, Steven . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]02 Mar 2021: A.12.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Convicts in the isolation unit at Penal Colony No. 2 are forced to stand for hours with their hands clasped behind their backs, forbidden to make eye contact with the guards.

MOSCOW – Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition politician, is going to serve his prison sentence in a penal colony notorious for disciplinary measures considered harsh even by Russian standards, Russian news outlets reported on Monday.

Russia's decision to transfer Mr. Navalny to a prison known for abusive treatment of inmates came even as the Kremlin faced mounting foreign criticism for the sentencing as well as an assassination attempt on Mr. Navalny last summer.

Mr. Navalny returned to Russia in January despite the government's threats of arrest, after spending months in a Berlin hospital recuperating from being poisoned. He was subsequently convicted in a show trial of violating the terms of his parole during his stay in Germany and sentenced to more than two years in prison.

On Monday, the European Union placed sanctions on four senior Russian officials considered responsible for his prosecution, the first time the union has exercised that power under a new law to punish human rights violators worldwide. The officials are: Igor Krasnov, the prosecutor general; Aleksandr I. Bastrykin, head of the Investigative Committee, a law enforcement agency; Viktor V. Zolotov, the head of the National Guard; and Aleksandr Kalashnikov, the head of Russia's prison service.

The European Union had already sanctioned six Russians and a state scientific research center in response to the poisoning.

Russia was hit with another round of criticism on Monday with the release of a United Nations report on Mr. Navalny's poisoning with the military-grade nerve agent Novichok.

"We believe that poisoning Mr. Navalny with Novichok might have been deliberately carried out to send a clear, sinister warning that this would be the fate of anyone who would criticize and oppose the government," two United Nations researchers, Agnès Callamard, a specialist on extrajudicial killing, and Irene Khan, an expert on freedom of expression, said in a statement. The Russian government had been provided a copy of the report two months ago but allowed a period for response to expire without offering any, the statement said.

Russia's prison service has not officially disclosed Mr. Navalny's whereabouts, following the customary Russian practice of keeping inmates incommunicado while in transit and in the first days or weeks at a new prison.

Nevertheless, the news reports on state-run outlets offered an early glimpse of the likely conditions of his imprisonment. The site, Penal Colony No. 2 and also known by its initials IK2, is in the Vladimir Region in European Russia east of Moscow, indicating Mr. Navalny will not serve his sentence in the country's harshest prisons in Siberia or the Arctic.

But the colony is known for strict enforcement of rules and for making extensive use of a separate, harsher, punishment facility within its walls where inmates are not allowed to mingle or even talk among themselves, according to former inmates and lawyers.

The site is typical for Russia's colony-type prisons that evolved, with a few improvements, from the gulag camps established in the 1930s. Inmates live collectively in groups of several dozen called brigades in low slung, two-story buildings surrounded by walls and barbed wire.

While guards oversee the prison, fellow prisoners maintain discipline within the brigades, either in cooperation with guards, a group known as "activists," or as criminal gang leaders, known as "thieves in law."

Penal Colony No. 2 is controlled by activists in cahoots with the warden, according to former inmates, an arrangement that will allow the prison administration to strictly control Mr. Navalny's life at all times. Activist-controlled prisons are called "red zone" facilities, in Russian prison parlance.

Penal Colony No. 2 is, "the reddest of red" prisons, a lawyer, Maria Eismont, who represented a former convict at the site, told Open Media, an opposition news site.

"Everything is done so a person feels his total dependence" on the warden, she said. Inmates are even denied prompt visits from lawyers, which is technically illegal, she said. "Everything is done to isolate political prisoners." Mr. Navalny's organization released a description of the colony on Monday underscoring the role of the co-opted prisoners in managing the population.

Upon arrival, for example, guards force inmates to renounce on video the code of honor governing prisons run by the criminal thieves in law, by saying, "I do not support the prisoners' way of life." It is in essence an acquiescence to the authority of the activists, according to this description, but this fealty cannot be stated openly because, formally speaking, the activist groups were outlawed a decade ago.

All the same, at Penal Colony No. 2, activists command fellow prisoners to perform meaningless tasks such as making beds multiple times a day, or undressing and then dressing again, according to accounts of former convicts.

Dmitri Dyomushkin, a nationalist politician who served time in the colony, described conditions in the separate punishment brigade, where Mr. Navalny could wind up for infractions as minor as failing to button his jacket, as psychologically harrowing.

Inmates, for example, must shave every morning but are not allowed to do so themselves because they are not allowed to hold razors; instead, activists wield the razors and cuts and nicks are common, he said.

Inmates spend hours standing with their hands clasped behind their backs, looking at their feet, forbidden from making eye contact with the guards, Mr. Dyomushkin said in an interview on the Echo of Moscow radio station. Inmates use toilets without partitions and are obliged to do so in the presence of an activist, he said.

"They will find many ways to pressure him," Mr. Dyomushkin said of Mr. Navalny's term in Penal Colony No. 2. In these conditions, he said, "your personality deforms."

Aleksei A. Navalny, above at a hearing last month, must serve time at Penal Colony No. 2, right, notorious for its harsh treatment of inmates. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAXIM SHEMETOV/REUTERS; DIMITAR DILKOFF/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE – GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

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Document 6 of 72

Court Rejects Last Appeal By Navalny; Fate Unclear

Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]21 Feb 2021: A.16.

[!\[\]\(380b8c89d31b6e4bc43715f362c2f817_img.jpg\) ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The fate of opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny remains unclear, however. He could be held in a high-security prison in Moscow for other pending legal matters.

MOSCOW – A Russian court cleared the way on Saturday for the possible transfer of the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny to the country's penal colony system, the latest step by the authorities to silence the man who has become the country's most vocal critic of President Vladimir V. Putin.

The court rejected Mr. Navalny's last possible appeal before such a transfer, but it remains unclear whether or when he will leave his cell in a high-security prison in Moscow. He could be held there for further court appearances on other pending legal matters.

Mr. Navalny was detained in January upon returning from Germany, where he was being treated for a near-lethal poisoning with a nerve agent last year -- an act that he and Western governments blamed on the Kremlin. He returned despite knowing that his homecoming would almost surely land him in prison, a challenge that gave rise to mass street protests in support of him.

The ruling, which was expected, upheld Mr. Navalny's sentence of more than two years in prison and set Russia on a collision course with Western nations, which could impose additional sanctions on Moscow. On Tuesday, the European Court of Human Rights, whose jurisdiction is recognized by Russia, ruled that Mr. Navalny must be released immediately from prison.

The Kremlin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, rejected that demand and called the Strasbourg-based court's ruling "a serious attempt to intervene in internal judicial matters of Russia."

In his final argument in court on Saturday, Mr. Navalny quoted from the Bible, and said that prosecutors, the judge and other government officials should stop lying because sooner or later the truth will triumph. He also told his

followers not to feel deserted.

"Our system and our government is trying to convince people that they are all alone," he said.

Asked on Saturday whether Mr. Navalny's incarceration would make Russian political life too uniform, Mr. Peskov said that "there is enough pluralism on the Russian political scene" and that "the Kremlin has many opponents."

Over the past month, Mr. Navalny's allies have organized two countrywide protests in his support that drew tens of thousands to the streets. The police arrested thousands.

The poisoning, the sentencing and the crackdown on protesters all signaled a pivot by Mr. Putin to harder-line domestic policies. Mr. Navalny has been jailed frequently before, but only for brief stints in Moscow, and he has never been sent to a penal colony.

Under Russia's criminal justice system, transferring an inmate to the penal colonies is a lengthy process of travel on a specialized prisoner train wagon. It can begin at any point after a court rejects the first appeal of a sentencing, which happened on Saturday.

The trip can take weeks, with stops at transfer prisons, during which inmates are generally not allowed to contact lawyers or family members. Their destination sometimes remains unknown until they arrive.

Mr. Navalny can petition the European Court of Human Rights on grounds that its demand to release him has gone unheeded. Although the court cannot legally compel Russia to abide by its ruling, the dispute could escalate to the Council of Europe. It could also potentially lead to Russia's expulsion or withdrawal from that group.

It would be a significant breach. Russia joined the Council in 1996, signaling an end to the Cold War division of Europe on human rights issues.

In a separate hearing on Saturday, Mr. Navalny was sentenced to a fine of \$11,500 on a conviction of having slandered a World War II veteran. The defamation case has been seen as intended mostly for publicity purposes to tar Mr. Navalny as unpatriotic.

Pro-Kremlin news outlets have covered the hearings extensively, casting Mr. Navalny as a power-hungry neo-Nazi ready to defame a war veteran to further his political career.

In court, Mr. Navalny called the case a "disgusting public relations process." He accused relatives of the war veteran, Ignat S. Artyomenko, 95, of having used their grandfather in a Kremlin-backed smear.

Mr. Navalny last year criticized a group of people including Mr. Artyomenko for supporting changes to the Russian Constitution that allow Mr. Putin to remain in power until 2036.

In his second final argument in one day, Mr. Navalny compared the Russian government to a "big swine that slurps from a trough filled with petrodollars."

Andrew E. Kramer contributed reporting.

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Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny, left, in a Moscow courtroom on Saturday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Kirill Kudryavtsev/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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Russian Court Clears Way to Send Navalny to a Penal Colony

Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]20 Feb 2021.

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DETAILS

Subject: Criminal sentences; Poisoning; Convictions; Human rights

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Document 8 of 72

Notorious Jail Conditions Await a Famous Prisoner

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[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Its prison camps, descended from the Soviet gulag, are notoriously harsh. But in a shift from the Stalin era, inmates have treated political prisoners with respect.

MOSCOW – While doing time in a Russian penal colony, Aleksandr Y. Margolin saw prisoners savagely beat another inmate, and from that point on, the beaten man obediently cleaned the toilet every day, a demeaning chore signaling that he had fallen into a low caste in the prison hierarchy, known as the "degraded."

"The conditions are not very homey," Mr. Margolin said of Russia's prison camps, descendants of the Soviet gulag, many of them scattered across Siberia.

Inmates are housed not in cell blocks but in free-standing, rough wood or brick barracks, dozens of men in each one, with nothing to separate victimizers from victims. The open floor plan arrangement, little modified since the time of the gulag, has over the decades given rise to a coarse, often brutal prison culture requiring care to navigate. This is the world the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny will likely face, after a Moscow court found that he had violated his parole and, this week, sentenced him to spend more than two years in a so-called general-security correctional colony. He is appealing the sentence, but even his allies hold little hope that it will be overturned.

"The steel doors slam behind me with a deafening clang," Mr. Navalny wrote in a statement after the sentencing. Authorities have not disclosed where he will serve, and he might be kept in a jail in Moscow if other court matters are pending.

Last August, Mr. Navalny was poisoned in what he, Western governments and international groups have described as an assassination attempt by the Russian state using a military-grade nerve agent. He was flown to Germany, where he remained for months of treatment and recovery; Russian authorities charged that as a result, he failed to check in regularly with them, as required under an earlier parole.

Last month, he returned to Russia, choosing prison over exile, and was promptly arrested. His case has triggered mass protests that the government calls illegal, and that have been met with a crackdown by security forces.

If Mr. Navalny is dispatched into the penal colonies, what awaits is a penitentiary system that has by the accounts of rights groups and experts on incarceration improved markedly since the Soviet period -- but that is not saying much. Russian prisons are still riddled with brutality, according to former inmates and human rights groups.

"The conditions are tough," said Valery V. Borshov, a former member of Parliament who served on a committee on prison reform. "You are in a huge room, with 40 or 80 other men. It can become unbearable."

Low-cost and high-volume, the penal colony model, with barracks encircled by barbed-wire fencing, makes up the vast majority of prisons in Russia -- 684 of a total 692 penitentiaries. It evolved from the deadly forced-labor camps of the gulag, an acronym for Main Directorate of Camps, which reached their peak under Stalin. Today, inmates

typically work in light industry, like sewing military uniforms, rather than mining or timber, as in the Soviet days. With about half a million people locked up, Russia has an incarceration rate of 334 inmates per 100,000 people – far higher than almost every other country in Europe, but about half the rate of the United States.

The barracks are locked shut at night without a guard and the inmates left to fend for themselves, a practice that sustains Russia's harsh prison hierarchy through nighttime beatings.

A privileged group are leaders of criminal gangs, known as "thieves in law" or "authorities." A second elevated class are inmates known as "activists," who cooperate with corrections officers.

Men who fall from favor or are sentenced for rape risk falling into the lowest class, known as the "degraded." They perform menial chores and many are sexually abused.

The rest fall into a broad category called simply the "men," acquiescing to the gang leaders, refraining from cooperating with the guards and avoiding the abuse suffered by those at the bottom of the pecking order. A system of rituals keeps the hierarchy intact. Men, for example, never share silverware with the degraded.

Some former political prisoners manage to find a place in the system. Mr. Margolin, who was imprisoned in 2014 for his role in antigovernment protests, said he successfully sought help from criminal "authorities" to defend himself from an aggressive fellow inmate. The help was forthcoming, he said, partly because he was convicted for attacking a police officer at a protest.

"That was highly valued," he said.

Oleg G. Sentsov, a Ukrainian filmmaker who served five years in Russian jails and a Siberian penal colony before being freed in a prisoner swap with Ukraine, said in a telephone interview that inmates at his high-security prison camp, mostly murderers, respected him.

"They weren't psychos," Mr. Sentsov said of the killers among whom he slept. Most were in for domestic violence.

"They got drunk, maybe, and killed their wives with axes. But in prison, it's different. It's seen differently."

Mr. Navalny, he said, would do all right because "he is brave," he added. "I didn't have problems with the inmates, and I don't think he will, either."

Mikhail B. Khodorkovsky, a former oil magnate and once Russia's richest man, who served a decade in prison after financing the political opposition, was stabbed in the face by a fellow inmate wielding a homemade knife. He suffered only a slight wound. The attacker said he had tried to poke out an eye.

Nonetheless, Mr. Khodorkovsky said in a telephone interview, inmates were generally not hostile to him as a political prisoner, and some said, "You are in for truth."

"The situation is radically different now from the gulag, where the criminals saw themselves as patriots and the political prisoners as enemies of the people," and preyed on them, he said.

Mr. Navalny is, however, likely to confront legal harassment from the prison administration for petty violations that can justify rejecting parole or confining an inmate to a punishment cell, said Tanya Lokshina, associate director for Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia division.

"In politically motivated cases, we see from observing them over time, the penitentiary authorities will come up with violations so the individual's prison record is marred," she said. Mr. Khodorkovsky, for example, repeatedly wound up in a penalty cell for petty infractions like wearing another inmate's gloves.

Mr. Navalny may also face more serious risks. In 2019, his doctor said he had been poisoned with a "toxic agent" while in jail in Moscow. Upon his release, Mr. Navalny derided government officials for apparently trying to kill him while he was in their custody.

"Are they such idiots as to poison me in a spot where they would be the only suspects?" he wrote then on his blog about what he characterized not as an attack by fellow inmates, but the state.

Photograph

Aleksei Navalny, a fiery Russian opposition leader, inside a glass cell during a court hearing. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Babushkinsky district court in Moscow, via Shutterstock FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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Russia Casts Out Diplomats Over Navalny Protests

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FULL TEXT

Officials from Germany, Poland and Sweden were ordered to depart, on the same day as the E.U.'s foreign policy chief visited Moscow and the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny faced a new trial.

MOSCOW – Russia on Friday expelled three European diplomats whom it accused of participating in illegal protests in support of the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny -- a move announced as the European Union's foreign policy chief was visiting Moscow and as Mr. Navalny faced a new criminal trial.

The timing of the expulsions of diplomats from Germany, Poland and Sweden seemed intended to send a message both at home and abroad. In the West, the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell Fontelles, had been criticized for going ahead with a trip to Moscow this week despite the jailing of Mr. Navalny, and for playing down the possibility of new sanctions against Russia.

The Kremlin's decision to expel diplomats from three E.U. member states on the same day as Mr. Borrell's visit signaled that Russia was not prepared to compromise on the Navalny case. Hours before the Foreign Ministry announced the expulsions, Mr. Borrell called for Mr. Navalny's freedom at a news conference alongside Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov.

For Russia's domestic audience, the expulsions served as the latest example of what the Kremlin has described as Western interference fomenting public discontent. The Foreign Ministry said representatives of Germany, Poland and Sweden had been summoned and notified that three of their embassies' diplomats had been identified as participants in unauthorized pro-Navalny rallies on Jan. 23.

"It was underscored that such actions from their side are unacceptable and do not accord with their diplomatic status," the Foreign Ministry said. "They have been ordered to leave the Russian Federation as soon as possible." Mr. Borrell said he learned of the expulsions during his meeting with Mr. Lavrov and "strongly condemned" them. Sweden called the expulsion of its diplomat "completely unfounded." Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany said she had learned of them during a video conference with President Emmanuel Macron of France on Friday.

"We consider these expulsions to be unjustified and believe them to be another facet of the detachment from the rule of law that can be observed in Russia at this time," Ms. Merkel said.

Mr. Navalny survived a nerve-agent poisoning in Siberia last summer and recovered in Germany, accusing Mr. Putin of having tried to kill him. Then he returned to Moscow last month despite facing near-certain arrest. His arrival set off the biggest nationwide anti-Kremlin protests of recent years and brought an enormous crackdown on the opposition, with more than 10,000 arrests in the last three weeks. The Kremlin's show of force suggests that Mr. Putin sees the longtime gadfly as a significant threat – and that the president will not shy away from bringing the government's vast resources to bear on stifling dissent.

The Kremlin denies any involvement in Mr. Navalny's poisoning and says detentions at unauthorized protests are justified and lawful. On Friday, Mr. Navalny faced a new criminal trial -- this time on charges of slandering a war veteran -- while his supporters geared up for what they expect to be a yearslong battle against the Kremlin.

The start of the new trial came three days after a different court sentenced Mr. Navalny to two years and eight months in prison for violating his parole on a 2014 embezzlement conviction that Europe's top human rights court later ruled was politically motivated.

The trial, in which Mr. Navalny is not expected to face more prison time, appeared to be a vehicle for the Kremlin to tie his team up further in the courts while also giving the state news media a fresh opportunity to tar the opposition leader's image. The slander offense that Mr. Navalny is being tried for was punishable by a fine or community service when he was charged with it last year, though lawmakers have since increased the potential punishment to up to two years in prison.

Prosecutors accuse Mr. Navalny of slandering a World War II veteran in social media posts last year. The posts criticized people who support President Vladimir V. Putin's constitutional amendments approved last July that allow him to remain in power until 2036.

"You're using him and his medals to defend Putin the thief and all of his thieving friends," Mr. Navalny said in court on Friday, according to a recording.

Mr. Navalny can still appeal his prison sentence in the previous trial, and his allies are working to prepare their supporters for a long fight ahead.

One of Mr. Navalny's top aides, Leonid Volkov, said his camp would not be calling for more street protests in the coming weeks because it needed to regroup before nationwide parliamentary elections that are scheduled for September.

"This is a path that could take several years, but this is our plan," Mr. Volkov said. "We need to preserve our candidates for the election, and we need to preserve our campaign offices."

The Navalny camp's strategy is to build up pressure on the Kremlin and chip away at Mr. Putin's legitimacy, with the expectation that sooner or later, his authority will collapse amid discontent in the general public and in the ruling elite.

Mr. Navalny's allies abroad, including Mr. Volkov, are also increasingly engaging with Western governments in the hopes of persuading them to impose sanctions on people close to Mr. Putin.

"If we keep going out every week, we'll get thousands more arrested and hundreds more beaten up and the work of the campaign offices will be paralyzed," Mr. Volkov said. "We will get Aleksei out of prison, first and foremost, using foreign-policy methods."

Mr. Navalny, in a letter from jail that his team published late Thursday, called on his supporters to keep up the fight.

"The iron doors slam shut behind me with a deafening clang, but I feel like a free man," Mr. Navalny wrote. "They can hold onto power, using it for personal gain, only by relying on our fear. But we, having overcome fear, can free our homeland from a little bunch of thieving occupiers."

In court on Friday, Mr. Navalny tried to cast the slander case against him as a narrative concocted by Kremlin propaganda specialists who were seeking to take advantage of the Russian public's sympathy for World War II veterans.

Mr. Navalny's offense, according to prosecutors, was a tweet last June in which he described people appearing in a video agitating for Mr. Putin's constitutional amendments as "traitors," "people without a conscience."

One of the people in that video was the veteran Ignat Artemenko, 94, whom prosecutors later picked out as a particular victim of Mr. Navalny's alleged slander.

Mr. Artemenko appeared in court by video link, but the trial was soon interrupted because he was not feeling well and an ambulance had to be called, according to journalists in the courtroom.

"I told you that they'd need to call an ambulance for him!" Mr. Navalny said.

"Let the record show that it was Aleksei Anatolyevich Navalny who brought him to this state," the prosecutor said.

Steven Erlanger contributed reporting from Brussels, and Melissa Eddy from Berlin.

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Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny, in cell, during a court hearing on Friday. He is charged with slandering a World War II veteran on social media. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MOSCOW BABUSHKINSKY DISTRICT COURT, VIA AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES); The European Union's Josep Borrell Fontelles, left, and Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia on Friday in Moscow. (PHOTOGRAPH BY RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, VIA REUTERS)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; Arrests; Diplomacy; Trials; Diplomatic &consular services; Social networks; World War II; Criminal sentences; Convictions; Constitutional amendments; Elections; Foreign policy
Business indexing term:	Subject: Social networks
Location:	Sweden Russia Germany Poland
People:	Lavrov, Sergei V Navalny, Alexei
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Document 10 of 72

Sham Justice for Navalny

Publication info: New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]05 Feb 2021: A.26.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

A reader is disgusted by the sentence handed down to a critic of Vladimir Putin, calling it "autocracy at its worst."

To the Editor:

I read with dismay and disgust "Prison Sentence Stifles the Voice of a Putin Critic" (front page, Feb. 3), about Aleksei A. Navalny's sentence of more than two years handed down Tuesday. Let's stop calling the country Russia, stop calling it anything approaching a democracy, stop calling it anything but Vladimir Putin's fief.

It's a sham, all of it, as Mr. Navalny has once again so masterfully demonstrated. You can't speak out against Mr. Putin, you can't face him in any kind of legitimate election -- all of it harking back to Soviet leaders who could not abide any dissidents' words or strength.

Cheers to the hordes of people protesting who want something better, who know this isn't democracy but autocracy at its worst. Let's hope Mr. Navalny isn't poisoned to death serving his sham sentence, and returns to expose the horrors of Mr. Putin's old-school tactics.

Beth Burrell

Merion, Pa.

Photograph

Mr. Navalny was sentenced on Tuesday to two years and eight months in a penal colony for violating his parole in a 2014 case. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Moscow City Court, via Agence France-Presse - Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Autocracy
People:	Putin, Vladimir
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LINKS

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First Lady of Opposition In Russia Is in Spotlight With Husband Detained

Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]05 Feb 2021: A.9.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

After Aleksei Navalny's sentencing, his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, has been reluctantly thrust into a public spotlight, winning admirers but making her a target of Kremlin propaganda.

MOSCOW – Yulia B. Navalnaya, the wife of the Russian opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, knows how to deal with her husband's frequent detentions at the hands of the Russian authorities.

In 2018, a Russian general wearing a gigantic green military cap and a showy array of military medals, released a video recording with a bald threat to "make nice juicy mincemeat" of Mr. Navalny. So Ms. Navalnaya stepped in to deliver the riposte her then-jailed husband could not -- and with the typical humor of the Navalny family. In an Instagram post, she snickered at his cartoonishly large hat, saying he looked like a tinpot dictator.

Now, with her husband facing a two-year prison sentence -- his first lengthy term -- the question on many minds in the opposition and elsewhere is whether the woman sometimes called the first lady of the opposition will take a more prominent role, or even enter politics in her own right.

Already far more high profile than the typical Russian political spouse, Ms. Navalnaya has inspired admirers in Russia and beyond, supporting her husband throughout his rise to prominence, eyes wide open to the extraordinary risks. Along the way, she drew sexist attacks from state media caricaturing her as an overbearing wife.

She assumed the spotlight following the poisoning of Mr. Navalny last August with a military nerve agent -- an attack he and Western leaders say was ordered by the Kremlin. Issuing a series of public demands, she extricated him from the clutches of Russian officials so he could be flown in a medically induced coma to Germany for treatment.

"I understood that in this situation, I am the closest person to him," she later said in an interview. "I am the wife. If I fall apart, then everybody else will in turn fall apart. So, I pulled myself together."

She continued to speak out after his arrest last month after returning to Moscow. "I am not afraid, and I urge you all not to be afraid either," she told a crowd of his supporters.

Mr. Navalny's sentencing on Tuesday ignited a nationwide series of large street demonstrations that have breathed new life into the Russian opposition, cemented Mr. Navalny's position as the paramount opponent of President Vladimir V. Putin and raised expectations that Ms. Navalnaya will take on a more prominent role.

The couple met on a beach in Turkey 23 years ago, and before the poisoning last summer, lived in an apartment in Moscow in a crucible of surveillance and repression. Ms. Navalnaya, 44, who has an economics degree, worked at a bank before the birth of the first of their two children, and has over the past decade been a homemaker.

"Our family has for many years lived in a way where searches, arrests and threats are commonplace," she wrote on Instagram in 2018.

And while it remains to be seen whether she will decide to take the lead while Mr. Navalny is in prison, she had proved to her friends and supporters that she has what it takes.

"Yulia Navalnaya is a unique flower" in an otherwise uninspiring lineup of Russian political wives, a commentator, Anna Narinskaya, wrote in an essay of her prominent role in recent months.

"It's not because she is the wife of an opposition politician," Ms. Narinskaya wrote, "but because she has so naturally united two difficult-to-combine elements -- the position of the wife of an accomplished man and that of a woman who controls her own fate."

Women are now mostly sidelined in Russian politics, making up only 16 percent of the lower house of Parliament and just a few senior posts outside government roles deemed appropriate in Russian political culture for women, such as in the health or education ministries.

Even the post-Soviet political opposition has been dominated by men despite its moral clarity on other issues of human rights, said Alena Popova, a co-founder of You Are Not Alone, a women's rights organization in Moscow. Yet Russia has one of the largest gender imbalances in the world, with 11 million more women than men in the population because of a high male mortality rate, leaving many issues important to women unaddressed.

"Yulia fits wonderfully into the agenda of our country now," said Ms. Popova, who would like to see her speak out more forcefully. "She is a mother, she is a wife of an imprisoned husband and she has the story of a woman who did not want to enter politics until the rotten system pulled her in."

Mr. Navalny has himself been accused of sexism. But he said the allegation sprang from a misunderstanding after he called his wife a "little chick" in an online post, saying it was a term of endearment. He defended himself by saying he has hired more women than men in his organization.

Oddly enough, Russian state media have been among the most vocal in promoting the idea of Ms. Navalnaya taking over leadership of the opposition, as happened in neighboring Belarus last year when Svetlana Tikhanovskaya stepped in to run for president in the place of her jailed husband.

But the media's discussion about her potential role has been dismissed by senior figures in Mr. Navalny's organization as a trap designed to distract attention from Mr. Navalny while he is imprisoned and potentially blunt calls for his release, while also depicting him as the henpecked puppet of a domineering wife.

"The male character of Yulia Borisovna influenced the division of power within the family," reported NTV, a pro-government channel, referring to Ms. Navalnaya by her patronymic name. "She raises the children and, like a tyrant, controls everything at home."

As ludicrous as the Russian propaganda line may be, Mr. Navalny, for one, is convinced of his wife's powers, saying she saved his life.

In the Berlin hospital, he emerged from his coma, confused, unable to recognize faces and hallucinating about doctors discussing replacing his legs with prosthetics. "It was like 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas,'" he said in an interview with Yury Dud on a popular YouTube channel.

"Finally, I sensed, I understood, that this was Yulia coming to me, adjusting my pillow, and this was important to me," he said. "I waited for her all the time."

He added, "I am incredibly grateful."

Photograph

Yulia B. Navalnaya, who is married to the Putin critic Alexei A. Navalny. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Propaganda; Poisoning; Coma; Women; Politics
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Last updated:	2021-02-13
Database:	New York Times

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Document 12 of 72

'I Am Not Afraid': With Her Husband in Prison, Eyes Turn to Yulia Navalnaya

Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]04 Feb 2021.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

In 2018, a Russian general wearing a gigantic green military cap and a showy array of military medals, released a video recording with a bald threat to “make nice juicy mincemeat” of Navalny. So Navalnaya stepped in to deliver the riposte her then-jailed husband could not —and with the typical humor of the Navalny family. In an Instagram post, she snickered at his cartoonishly large hat, saying he looked like a tinpot dictator.

Now, with her husband facing a two-year prison sentence —his first lengthy term —the question on many minds in the opposition and elsewhere is whether the woman sometimes called the first lady of the opposition will take a more prominent role or even enter politics in her own right.

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She assumed the spotlight following the poisoning of Navalny last August with a military nerve agent —an attack he and Western leaders say was ordered by the Kremlin. Issuing a series of public demands, she extricated him from the clutches of Russian officials so he could be flown in a medically induced coma to Germany for treatment. “I understood that in this situation, I am the closest person to him,” she later said in an interview. “I am the wife. If I fall apart, then everybody else will in turn fall apart. So, I pulled myself together.”

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DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Propaganda; Poisoning; Coma; Women; Political leadership; Alliances
Location:	Russia New York
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Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
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Document 13 of 72

Aleksei Navalny Is Winning

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A.22.

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FULL TEXT

The opposition leader was sentenced to prison, but he has mobilized a vast movement that's not done growing. A Russian court on Tuesday opened a new and fateful stage in the gripping power struggle between Aleksei Navalny, Russia's tough-talking and internet-savvy opposition leader, and President Vladimir Putin, by sentencing Mr. Navalny to his first serious stint in prison.

On the face of it, this would appear to be a clear victory for Mr. Putin, who has effectively proclaimed himself president for life. With his total control of the courts, the police, the official media and all sorts of sophisticated tools -- including lethal chemical agents -- Mr. Putin can keep Mr. Navalny in prison forever or arrange a fatal "accident" if he chooses to.

But in this David v. Goliath saga, the 44-year-old Mr. Navalny has succeeded through raw courage and perseverance in putting Mr. Putin on the defensive. The imprisonment was Mr. Navalny's move. Mr. Putin had tried for years to give him only brief sentences to avoid making him a martyr. But by voluntarily returning from convalescence in Germany, and then releasing a devastating YouTube video showing the obscenely opulent palace Mr. Putin was building himself on the Black Sea, Mr. Navalny left the president little choice but to dispatch him to a labor camp, and thus transform him into a powerful symbol of resistance.

The Kremlin attempted to give the court proceedings a veneer of legitimacy by moving them to a large courtroom in central Moscow and allowing Mr. Navalny to do all the talking he wanted to. But the outcome was preordained: Mr. Navalny was accused of violating parole from a 2014 conviction that the European Court of Human Rights had debunked as "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable." The accusation served to underscore the main reason Mr. Navalny couldn't make the requisite visits to the authorities: Evidence suggests he was nearly poisoned to death in August by the secret police. He was subsequently evacuated to Germany.

It was Mr. Navalny in the glassed-in prisoner's dock. But it was Mr. Putin and his corrupt cohort who were on trial behind the army of riot police officers gathered in central Moscow to prevent the sort of mass protests across all of Russia that followed Mr. Navalny's return to his country on Jan. 17. "Hundreds of thousands cannot be locked up," Mr. Navalny declared from court to his millions of followers on social media. "More and more people will recognize this. And when they recognize this -- and that moment will come -- all of this will fall apart, because you

cannot lock up the whole country."

Mr. Putin will go down in history, Mr. Navalny said in court, "as nothing but a poisoner."

Massive police repression and winter frosts may quell the demonstrations. But the vast movement Mr. Navalny has mobilized is quantitatively different from earlier opposition forces, and still growing. The opposition now has 40 offices across Russia, and most of its millions of followers are young people who have not challenged the Kremlin before. Among people ages 18 to 24, Mr. Putin's popularity has slid from 36 percent in December 2019 to 20 percent.

The Biden administration and European governments were quick to condemn Mr. Navalny's imprisonment and may follow that up with more sanctions against Mr. Putin and his lieutenants. That would be well deserved. But Mr. Putin would do well to see that the fiercest challenge to his crooked rule is not from abroad, but from Russian citizens who seek and speak the truth.

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Credit: By The Editorial Board

Photograph

Aleksei Navalny was in the prisoner's dock, but it was Russia's President Vladimir Putin and his corrupt cohort who were really on trial. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Simonovsky District Court, via Reuters FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Presidents; Convictions; Demonstrations &protests; Imprisonment; Trials; Social networks; Political activism; Activists; Political dissent
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Document 14 of 72

Website Editor in Russia Is Jailed for Sharing Joke About Navalny Protests

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]03 Feb 2021.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

MOSCOW — A Russian court Wednesday sentenced the editor of a popular news website to 25 days in jail for retweeting a reference to an anti-Kremlin protest, the latest sign of an extraordinary crackdown on freedom of

expression following the return to Russia last month of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Until recently, President Vladimir Putin has mostly tolerated a vibrant landscape of independent online news outlets that took advantage of Russia's uncensored internet to offer an alternative to the state-controlled television news. Similarly, Navalny's allies and other opposition activists were rarely thrown in jail, an indication that the Kremlin saw them more as a nuisance than as a real threat.

But all that has changed in the last three weeks. Navalny's livestreamed, dramatic return to Russia after recovering from poisoning in Germany, and his report on Putin's purported secret palace, viewed more than 100 million times on YouTube, have highlighted the stark threat that the internet poses to the Kremlin's hold on public opinion. Navalny —who had never been forced to spend more than a few weeks in jail at a time —was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison Tuesday for violating his parole on a 2014 conviction that Europe's top human rights court found politically motivated.

Then, Wednesday, Sergey Smirnov —the editor of news site Medazona, which covered Navalny's Tuesday hearing in meticulous detail —received a jail sentence of 25 days. His offense: retweeting a joke by another Twitter user about how a musician pictured in a Navalny advertisement calling for protests looked similar to Smirnov. Smirnov's retweet, according to court papers, "calls on a group of individuals of unlimited size to take part in an unauthorized protest on January 23, 2021."

Smirnov said he was simply retweeting a joke and was not calling on people to come to the rally, which he said he did not attend.

"A retweet does not equal endorsement," Smirnov told the judge at his hearing Wednesday, according to a reporter there.

Medazona, founded by members of punk rock group Pussy Riot, focuses on criminal justice and human rights issues and is one of Russia's most popular news websites independent of Kremlin control. One of those founders, Pussy Riot's Maria Alyokhina, is among the Navalny supporters put under house arrest after having been detained at a protest last month.

"This is an attempt to silence honest and professional journalism," Echo of Moscow, Russia's best-known liberal radio station, said in a statement.

Smirnov's jailing came after a night of police violence in central Moscow, where more than 1,000 people tried to protest Navalny's prison sentence. They were met by an overwhelming show of police force —one Russian outlet reported that more than 8,000 police officers had been deployed —that flooded the grand squares and upmarket side streets near the Kremlin.

"We've woken up in a different country, one in which fascists have taken power," Yevgeny Roizman, the former mayor of the city of Yekaterinburg and a Kremlin critic, wrote on Twitter. "They took over the country earlier, but they stopped hiding it yesterday."

Police officers in Moscow were filmed swinging batons at pro-Navalny protesters who had their hands up, clubbing a journalist twice on the head and dragging people out of passing cars.

Across Russia, authorities have made more than 10,000 arrests in the past few weeks, according to OVD-Info, an activist group that tracks detentions at protests. Those jailed or under house arrest include most of Navalny's closest allies inside the country and many of his key supporters in the regions.

The Kremlin reiterated Wednesday that it would not back down.

"There must not be any unsanctioned protest activity," Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters.

"Unsanctioned protests are cause for concern, confirming that the police are justified in their tough, legal actions." Still, supporters of Navalny see momentum on their side, and those allies who have managed to avoid jail called on Russians to be patient and to keep fighting. Navalny's prominence is now far greater than it was just a month ago, with extensive coverage even on the state television news. And, even in prison, he may have a unique ability to unite Russia's disparate opposition —while those allies who are in relative safety outside the country will continue to try to reach Russians online.

The Navalny team's strategy is to build its reach and visibility while chipping away at Putin's legitimacy through

corruption investigations and election campaigns against the Kremlin. His allies say they will also call for more street protests.

Vladimir Ashurkov, one of Navalny's top allies, said his team had long understood that Russia's pro-democracy groups were too weak to force political change on their own timetable. But he said they were confident that change would come, with dissatisfaction building in the general public and among the elite.

"Our strategy is to be the best-organized political force when things start to change," Ashurkov said in a telephone interview from London. "We don't know when that will happen."

He said he had discussed plans with Navalny to call for sanctions against Russian officials, state media figures and business tycoons close to Putin —which Ashurkov did in a letter to President Joe Biden last week.

"We have a plan for how we are going to organize our work and how we will constantly pressure the authorities for his release," Ashurkov said of Navalny.

Navalny has repeatedly embarrassed Putin and his allies with investigative reports about corruption that were viewed many millions of times on YouTube. Authorities previously tried to contain Navalny with jail terms of a few weeks to avoid turning him into a political martyr.

"We are entering a new period of instability and uncertainty," Ashurkov said. "But no one knows how close we are to the period we are preparing for —when liberalization begins."

Ivan Zhdanov, director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, wrote in an Instagram post to opposition supporters: "Don't panic and don't lose heart."

Tatiana Stanovaya, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center, described in a commentary the crackdown as the mark of a new phase in the Kremlin's treatment of the anti-Putin opposition.

In years past, the Kremlin's goal was to delegitimize the opposition in the eyes of the public and keep it out of official politics. Now, she said, it is being criminalized and cast as a national security threat.

At the same time, Putin's critics are for the first time uniting around a single figure —Navalny.

"A time of great confrontation has arrived," Stanovaya wrote.

DETAILS

Subject:	Political activism; Television news; Corruption; Criminal sentences; Riot control; Convictions; Police; Criminal investigations; Demonstrations &protests; Human rights
Location:	Russia New York
People:	Navalny, Alexei Biden, Joseph R Jr
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
Identifier / keyword:	World Social Conditions And Trends Death And Dying Horizontal Terms Economy, Commerce And Industry Media Law And Legislation Civil Rights And Liberties Elections Yekaterinburg (Russia) Europe Twitter Pussy Riot Echo Of Moscow News And News Media Video Recordings, Downloads And Streaming Campaign Finance Polls And Public Opinion Human Rights And Human Rights Violations Ex Convicts Prisons And Prisoners Deaths (Fatalities) Defense And Military Forces Freedom Of Speech And Expression Science And Technology Computers And The Internet Conflict, War And Peace Environment Hazardous And Toxic Substances International Relations Crime, Law And Justice Crime And Criminals Disasters, Security And Safety Accidents And Safety St Petersburg (Russia) Russia Moscow (Russia) London (England) Germany YoutubeCom Instagram Inc Anti Corruption Foundation Zhdanov, Ivan Y Putin, Vladimir V Peskov, Dmitri S Navalny, Aleksei A Biden, Joseph R Jr Social Media Embargoes And Sanctions Traffic Accidents And Safety Poisoning And Poi sons United States International Relations Demonstrations, Protests And Riots Corruption (Institutional) Politics And Government
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LINKS

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Navalny Supporters Aim to Seize Momentum in Challenging Putin

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]03 Feb 2021.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

MOSCOW — Supporters of Alexei Navalny say that momentum is on their side after a showdown with the Kremlin over the last three weeks — even after a court sentenced the Russian opposition leader to more than two years in

prison.

But at the same time, opposition activists also know that their fight could take years and will require patience and persistence.

Navalny, who has long been the loudest critic of President Vladimir Putin, was ordered on Tuesday to serve two years and eight months in a penal colony for violating his parole in a 2014 case. In August, Western officials say, Russian agents tried to assassinate Navalny by poisoning him with the nerve agent Novichok.

After recovering in Germany, Navalny returned home and over the past few weeks inspired some of the biggest anti-government protests of the Putin era. Navalny's return despite the threat of imprisonment raised his profile nationwide, and his sentencing was a pivotal moment that looks likely to further rally opposition to the Russian leader.

The Navalny team's strategy is to build its reach and visibility while chipping away at Putin's legitimacy through corruption investigations and election campaigns against the Kremlin. His allies say they will also call for more street protests.

"Our strategy is to be the best-organized political force when things start to change," Vladimir Ashurkov, one of Navalny's top allies, said in a telephone interview from London. "We don't know when that will happen."

He said he had discussed plans with Navalny to call for sanctions against Russian officials, state media figures and business tycoons close to Putin —which Ashurkov did in a letter to President Joe Biden last week.

"We have a plan for how we are going to organize our work and how we will constantly pressure the authorities for his release," Ashurkov said of Navalny.

Navalny has repeatedly embarrassed Putin and his allies with investigative reports about corruption that were viewed many millions of times on YouTube. The authorities previously tried to contain Navalny with jail terms of a few weeks to avoid turning him into a political martyr.

"We are entering a new period of instability and uncertainty," Ashurkov said. "But no one knows how close we are to the period we are preparing for —when liberalization begins."

Late into the night after Navalny's sentencing, the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg resounded with sirens, chants of protesters and screams. On social media and in independent news outlets, Russians voiced outrage over harrowing scenes of police violence overnight.

Police officers were filmed swinging batons at pro-Navalny protesters who had their hands up, clubbing a journalist twice on the head and dragging people out of passing cars.

The authorities have made more than 10,000 arrests in the past few weeks, according to OVD-Info, an activist group that tracks detentions at protests.

The harsh tactics against protesters by a large deployment of riot police officers, and the uncompromising stance of top Russian officials and the state media in depicting Navalny and his supporters as criminals, signaled that the Kremlin had shifted to a tougher line against domestic dissent.

But there was no sign that the Kremlin would change course.

"There must not be any unsanctioned protest activity," Putin's spokesman, Dmitri Peskov, told reporters on Wednesday. "Unsanctioned protests are cause for concern, confirming that the police are justified in their tough, legal actions."

Ivan Zhdanov, the director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, wrote in an Instagram post to opposition supporters: "Don't panic and don't lose heart."

Others in the movement acknowledged that there is a long struggle ahead.

Ashurkov, the top Navalny ally, said his team had long understood that Russia's pro-democracy groups were too weak to force political change on their own timetable. But he said they were confident that change would come, with dissatisfaction building in the general public and among the elite.

The authorities have made it clear that they will respond with strength. At least 1,408 protesters were detained on Tuesday, including about 1,145 in Moscow, according to OVD-Info.

In what appeared to be a carefully choreographed operation, hundreds of riot police officers fanned out across

Moscow's posh city center even before Navalny's sentencing was announced and the opposition leader's team called for protests. The police prevented a large crowd from forming and trapped protesters in courtyards and alleyways before marching them into buses to take them away.

Tatiana Stanovaya, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center, described in a commentary the crackdown as the mark of a new phase in the Kremlin's treatment of the anti-Putin opposition.

In years past, the Kremlin's goal was to delegitimize the opposition in the eyes of the public and keep it out of official politics. Now, she said, it is being criminalized and cast as a national security threat.

At the same time, Putin's critics are for the first time uniting around a single figure — Navalny.

"A time of great confrontation has arrived," Stanovaya wrote.

DETAILS

Subject:	Riot control; Criminal sentences; Police; Political activism; Demonstrations &protests; Corruption; Social networks
Business indexing term:	Subject: Social networks
Location:	Russia New York
People:	Navalny, Alexei Biden, Joseph R Jr
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Identifier / keyword:	World Science And Technology Computers And The Internet Conflict, War And Peace Environment Hazardous And Toxic Substances International Relations Crime, Law And Justice Crime And Criminals Disasters, Security And Safety Accidents And Safety St Petersburg (Russia) Russia Moscow (Russia) London (England) Germany YoutubeCom Instagram Inc Anti Corruption Foundation Zhdanov, Ivan Y Putin, Vladimir V Peskov, Dmitri S Navalny, Aleksei A Biden, Joseph R Jr Social Media Embargoes And Sanctions Traffic Accidents And Safety Poisoning And Poisons United States International Relations Demonstrations, Protests And Riots Corruption (Institutional) Politics And Government
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Prison Sentence Stifles the Voice Of a Putin Critic

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]03 Feb 2021: A.1.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

A Moscow court found that President Vladimir Putin's loudest critic violated his parole. "You cannot lock up the whole country," Aleksei A. Navalny told the court after large protests in support of him recently.

MOSCOW – A Russian court sentenced Aleksei A. Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, to more than two years in prison on Tuesday, a decision likely to send him for a lengthy term in a far-flung penal colony for the first time.

Tuesday's sentencing represented a pivotal moment for President Vladimir V. Putin's Russia. Mr. Navalny, one of the main challengers of the Kremlin, has inspired some of the biggest street protests of the Putin era and repeatedly embarrassed the president and his close allies with investigative reports about corruption that were viewed many millions of times on YouTube.

The authorities previously tried to contain him with short jail terms of a few weeks to avoid making Mr. Navalny into a political martyr. In August, Western officials say, Russian agents tried to assassinate Mr. Navalny by poisoning him. Now, the decision to send him to prison removes his direct voice from Russia's political landscape, but it could energize his supporters and further rally Russian opposition to Mr. Putin around the figure of Mr. Navalny.

"Hundreds of thousands cannot be locked up," Mr. Navalny said during the hearing before he was sentenced. "More and more people will recognize this. And when they recognize this -- and that moment will come -- all of this will fall apart, because you cannot lock up the whole country."

Mr. Navalny, 44, may seek to appeal the ruling, which held that he repeatedly violated parole by failing to report properly to the authorities in person -- in some cases while he was in Germany recovering from being poisoned, and in others because he did so on the wrong day of the week. But the Russian authorities have signaled that they will

not be swayed by public pressure to release Mr. Navalny. They have put several of his top allies under house arrest, and on Tuesday night they deployed a huge riot police force in the streets of Moscow to quell angry protests over Mr. Navalny's sentencing.

Toward the end of the hearing, Mr. Navalny delivered a fiery speech to the courtroom in which he blamed Mr. Putin for trying to lock him away. He said the Russian president was angry that Mr. Navalny had survived after being poisoned with the military-grade nerve agent Novichok in August, in what he and Western officials have described as a state assassination attempt.

Mr. Navalny has accused Russia's domestic intelligence agency of trying to kill him on orders from Mr. Putin by applying Novichok to the opposition leader's underwear. The Kremlin has denied involvement in the poisoning. "His main resentment against me now is that he will go down in history as a poisoner," Mr. Navalny said of Mr. Putin. "There was Alexander the Liberator and Yaroslav the Wise. Now we'll have Vladimir the Poisoner of Underpants."

Hundreds of riot police officers in body armor descended on central Moscow Tuesday evening, forming a menacing human cordon that blocked access to Red Square and other spaces near the Kremlin. Despite the show of force, hundreds of people spilled into the streets, with chants like "Let him go!" and "Putin is a thief!"

At least 1,377 people were arrested, the OVD-Info activist group said. Video footage showed police officers beating some protesters viciously with their batons.

"This is lawlessness," said Daniil Styukov, a 19-year-old warehouse worker who came to protest. "It's clear that those in power do whatever they want, caring nothing for any limits."

The court ruled in favor of the prosecution's accusation that Mr. Navalny had violated parole on a three-and-a-half-year suspended prison sentence that he received in 2014. He and his brother were convicted of stealing about \$ 500,000 from two companies, a conviction that the European Court of Human Rights called "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable."

The judge, Natalia Repnikova, accepted the prosecution's request to convert Mr. Navalny's suspended sentence to a real prison term. About nine months' house arrest served by Mr. Navalny related to the case will be subtracted from the sentence, meaning that he was effectively sentenced to just over two-and-a-half years in prison.

Under the terms of his earlier sentence, the authorities say Mr. Navalny was supposed to check in with the prison authorities at least twice a month. But prosecutors charge that he repeatedly failed to do so last year, including after being released from a Berlin hospital in September while recovering from his poisoning.

"Despite the preventive and explanatory measures taken with Navalny, he repeatedly failed to appear at the inspection for registration for unacceptable reasons," Ms. Repnikova, said in her ruling, accepting the prosecution's contention that Mr. Navalny did not fulfill the terms of his parole.

The ruling brought swift international condemnation. The Council of Europe, a human-rights body that counts Russia as a member, said it "defies all credibility and contravenes Russia's international human rights obligations." Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States was "deeply concerned" and called for Mr. Navalny's "immediate and unconditional release." President Emmanuel Macron of France said imprisoning Mr. Navalny was "unacceptable" because "political disagreement is never a crime."

Mr. Navalny's associates have said that only street protests can force the Kremlin to change course, and tens of thousands of people have rallied for Mr. Navalny each of the last two weekends in cities across Russia.

Leonid Volkov, a top aide, said on Facebook that Mr. Navalny's group would continue to organize protests, investigate corruption, and support Kremlin critics in elections. "We know that everything is only beginning," Mr. Volkov wrote. "We're in a moment of enormous moral superiority. The whole country saw how Putin is afraid."

Early in the hearing, Mr. Navalny -- confined to a glass box for defendants, as is typical in Russia -- smiled often and maintained his sense of humor.

When Ms. Repnikova asked for his current address, he deadpanned: "Pretrial Detention Facility No. 1."

Mr. Navalny, in slacks and a dark hoodie, at times paced back and forth in his box. Before the judge read her ruling, he used both hands to flash a heart sign to his wife Yulia Navalnaya, seated in the front row of the visitors' area.

[Video: Watch on YouTube.]

Mr. Navalny sparred repeatedly with the prosecutor, Yekaterina Frolova, calling her "an honorable daughter of the regime," but then adding, "You lie in every word." He said he was being prosecuted to scare millions of other Russians out of rising up against Mr. Putin.

The choreography of the hearing appeared designed to portray due process being granted to Mr. Navalny. Officials moved the hearing from a courtroom outside Moscow to a bigger one in the city -- in order, they said, to allow more journalists to be present.

Two sculpted judicial scales flanked the Russian double-headed eagle above the robed judge, Ms. Repnikova, who peppered the prosecution with pointed questions, probing its arguments. Mr. Navalny was allowed to give his speech, and criticize the judge and prosecutor, with few interruptions. Journalists were barred from filming the proceedings or taking pictures -- until television cameras were brought in to record Ms. Repnikova reading the verdict.

The prosecution's case for sending Mr. Navalny to prison relied heavily on technicalities. A prison service official, Aleksandr Yermolin, read in a soft voice from a stack of papers detailing Mr. Navalny's alleged parole violations. The prosecution said the violations had begun before Mr. Navalny's poisoning last August.

Mr. Navalny and his lawyers, in a lengthy back-and-forth with the prosecution, insisted that they had properly notified parole officials of his inability to report in person because of his poisoning. Mr. Navalny noted that even Mr. Putin had publicly referred last year to Mr. Navalny's being in treatment in Germany.

Mr. Navalny was confined to house arrest for much of 2014 and served repeated jail terms of several weeks at a time. Until now, though, he has never served a lengthy prison sentence.

Analysts say the Kremlin's calculus has long been that Mr. Navalny could be more of a liability behind bars -- as Russia's most prominent political prisoner -- than walking free as an often-controversial opposition activist.

That thinking appears to have changed as the Russian public's frustration with Mr. Putin has increased, along with Mr. Navalny's prominence.

After his poisoning, Mr. Navalny was airlifted in a coma to Berlin, where he recovered. He returned to Moscow last month, even though the Russian authorities made it clear that he would face years in prison.

He was jailed upon arrival, after which his team released a report by Mr. Navalny that described a purported secret palace built for Mr. Putin. The report has been viewed more than 100 million times on YouTube, energized the pro-Navalny protests and underscored the opposition leader's ability to reach a huge audience on Russia's mostly free internet.

The Kremlin on Tuesday again sought to minimize the significance of Mr. Navalny's case, issuing a veiled warning to the European Union's top foreign policy official, Josep Borrell Fontelles, who plans to visit Moscow this week.

"We hope that there will not be something as silly as tying the future of Russian-European relations to the case of this pretrial detention center inhabitant," the Kremlin spokesman Dmitri S. Peskov said, according to the Tass state news agency.

Ivan Nechepurenko contributed reporting.

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Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny was given a term of more than two years.V(A1); Aleksei A. Navalny accused Russia's domestic intelligence agency of trying to kill him. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY MOSCOW CITY COURT, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS) (A9)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; House arrest; Pretrial detention; Politics; Riot control; Criminal sentences; Presidents; Court hearings &proceedings; Convictions; Demonstrations &protests; Prosecutions; Human rights; Judges &magistrates; Political activism; Political dissent
Location:	Russia
People:	Navalny, Alexei Putin, Vladimir
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Russian Activist Navalny Sentenced to More Than 2 Years in Prison

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[!\[\]\(75f5fa6c53ae03e669fc3d7e4af55ae1_img.jpg\) ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

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time.

Navalny may seek to appeal the ruling, but Russian authorities have signaled that they will not be swayed by public pressure to release Navalny, the 44-year-old anti-corruption activist. They have put several of his top allies under house arrest, and Sunday they deployed a huge police force in cities across Russia to quell protests over the past couple of weeks calling for his freedom.

"Hundreds of thousands cannot be locked up," Navalny said during the hearing before he was sentenced. "I really hope that more and more people will recognize this. And when they recognize this —and that moment will come —all of this will fall apart, because you cannot lock up the whole country."

In anticipation of more protests Tuesday, a heavy presence of riot police officers in body armor, camouflage and black helmets cordoned off the Moscow neighborhood surrounding the courthouse. Officers stood in front of entrances to the nearest subway station and checked people's documents, and parking lots around the station were filled with police vans carrying reinforcements. Police detained at least 237 people, according to the activist group OVD-Info.

The court weighed the prosecution's accusation that Navalny had violated parole on a 3 1/2-year suspended prison sentence that he received in 2014. He and his brother were convicted of stealing about \$500,000 from two companies, a conviction that the European Court of Human Rights called "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable." Navalny and his allies, along with many independent analysts, see his prosecution as an effort by President Vladimir Putin to silence his loudest critic.

Under the terms of that earlier sentence, authorities say Navalny was supposed to check in with the prison authorities at least twice a month. But prosecutors charge that he repeatedly failed to do so last year, including after being released from a Berlin hospital in September while recovering from an assassination attempt by poisoning.

Toward the end of the hearing, Navalny delivered a fiery speech to the courtroom in which he blamed Putin for trying to lock him away. He said the Russian president was angry that Navalny had survived after being poisoned with the military-grade nerve agent Novichok in August, in what he and Western officials have described as a state assassination attempt.

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"There was Alexander the Liberator and Yaroslav the Wise. Now we'll have Vladimir the Poisoner of Underpants."

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Early in the hearing, Navalny —confined to a glass box for defendants, as is typical in Russia —smiled often and maintained his sense of humor. When the judge, Natalia Repnikova, asked him to introduce himself, he replied, "Your honor, you forgot to introduce yourself."

When Repnikova asked for his current address, he deadpanned: "Pretrial Detention Facility No. 1."

During a break in the proceeding, Navalny, in slacks and a dark hoodie, paced back and forth in his box. At one point he looked up at the depiction of the French philosopher Montesquieu and other luminaries on the grand courtroom's wood-paneled wall.

The prosecution called for 3 1/2 years in prison for Navalny, minus the amount of time he spent under house arrest related to the case, which was about a year. The prosecutor, Yekaterina Frolova, said Navalny was guilty of "systematic violations of obligations placed on him by the court."

Navalny sparred repeatedly with Frolova, calling her "an honorable daughter of the regime," but then adding, "You lie in every word." He said he was being prosecuted to scare millions of other Russians out of rising up against Putin.

The choreography of the hearing appeared designed to portray due process being granted to Navalny. Officials moved the hearing from a courtroom outside Moscow to a bigger one in the city —in order, they said, to allow more

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Two sculpted judicial scales flanked the Russian double-headed eagle above the robed judge. Repnikova peppered the prosecution with pointed questions, probing its arguments. Navalny was allowed to give his fiery speech, and criticize the judge and prosecutor, with few interruptions. But journalists were barred from filming the proceedings or taking pictures.

The prosecution's case for sending Navalny to prison relied heavily on technicalities. A prison service official, Alexander Yermolin, read in a soft voice from a stack of papers detailing Navalny's alleged parole violations. The prosecution said the violations had begun before Navalny's poisoning in August.

At one point Yermolin cited online posts showing that Navalny was moving freely across Germany while not reporting for his parole last year. At another point, Frolova responded to an argument from Navalny's lawyers by taking issue with the day of the week on which the defendant had contacted parole authorities.

"Jan. 9 was a Thursday, which has nothing at all do to with a Monday," the prosecutor said.

Navalny and his lawyers, in a lengthy back-and-forth with the prosecution, insisted that they had properly notified parole officials of his inability to report in person because of his poisoning. Navalny noted that even Putin had publicly referred last year to Navalny's being in treatment in Germany.

Navalny was confined to house arrest for much of 2014 and served repeated jail terms of several weeks at a time. Until now, though, he has never served a lengthy prison sentence.

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DETAILS

Subject:	Violations; Poisoning; Activists; House arrest; Riot control; Criminal sentences; Court hearings &proceedings; Convictions; Police; Prosecutions; Assassinations &assassination attempts; Judges &magistrates
Location:	Russia New York Germany
People:	Navalny, Alexei Biden, Joseph R Jr
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
Identifier / keyword:	World Speeches And Statements Defense And Military Forces Economy, Commerce And Industry Real Estate And Home Buildings (Structures) Science And Technology Murders And Attempted Murders Environment Hazardous And Toxic Substances Crime, Law And Justice Crime And Criminals Conflict, War And Peace Ussr (Former Soviet Union) Russia Germany France Europe Berlin (Germany) YoutubeCom European Union European Court Of Human Rights Putin, Vladimir V Na valny, Aleksei A Borrell Fontelles, Josep Stations And Terminals (Passenger) Finances Philosophy Assassinations And Attempted Assassinations Corruption (Institutional) Human Rights And Human Rights Violations Probation And Parole Poisoning And Poisons Demonstrations, Protests And Riots Prisons And Prisoners Politics And Government
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Russian Activist Appears in Court for Decision on Prison Sentence

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MOSCOW — Alexei Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, appeared in court Tuesday at a hearing that could send him to a lengthy prison term in a far-flung penal colony for the first time.

Russian authorities have signaled that they will not be swayed by public pressure to release Navalny, the 44-year-old anti-corruption activist. They have put several of his top allies under house arrest, and Sunday they deployed a huge police force in cities across Russia to quell protests over the past couple of weeks calling for his freedom. "Hundreds of thousands cannot be locked up," Navalny said during the hearing. "I really hope that more and more people will recognize this. And when they recognize this —and that moment will come—all of this will fall apart, because you cannot lock up the whole country."

In anticipation of more protests Tuesday, a heavy presence of riot police officers in body armor, camouflage and black helmets cordoned off the Moscow neighborhood surrounding the courthouse. Officers stood in front of entrances to the nearest subway station and checked people's documents, and parking lots around the station were filled with police vans carrying reinforcements. Police detained at least 237 people, according to the activist group OVD-Info.

The court weighed the prosecution's accusation that Navalny had violated parole on a 3 1/2-year suspended prison sentence that he received in 2014. He and his brother were convicted of stealing about \$500,000 from two companies, a conviction that the European Court of Human Rights called "arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable." Navalny and his allies, along with many independent analysts, see his prosecution as an effort by President Vladimir Putin to silence his loudest critic.

Under the terms of that earlier sentence, authorities say Navalny was supposed to check in with the prison authorities at least twice a month. But prosecutors charge that he repeatedly failed to do so last year, including after being released from a Berlin hospital in September while recovering from an assassination attempt by poisoning.

Toward the end of the hearing, Navalny delivered a fiery speech to the courtroom in which he blamed Putin for trying to lock him away. He said the Russian president was angry that Navalny had survived after being poisoned with the military-grade nerve agent Novichok in August, in what he and Western officials have described as a state assassination attempt.

Navalny has accused Russia's domestic intelligence agency of trying to kill him on orders from Putin by applying Novichok to the opposition leader's underwear. The Kremlin has denied involvement in the poisoning.

"His main resentment against me now is that he will go down in history as a poisoner," Navalny said of Putin.

"There was Alexander the Liberator and Yaroslav the Wise. Now we'll have Vladimir the Poisoner of Underpants."

Navalny's associates have said that only street protests can force the Kremlin to change course, and tens of thousands of people have rallied for Navalny each of the last two weekends in cities across Russia.

Early in the hearing, Navalny —confined to a glass box for defendants, as is typical in Russia—smiled often and maintained his sense of humor. When the judge, Natalia Repnikova, asked him to introduce himself, he replied, "Your honor, you forgot to introduce yourself."

When Repnikova asked for his current address, he deadpanned: "Pretrial Detention Facility No. 1."

During a break in the proceeding, Navalny, in slacks and a dark hoodie, paced back and forth in his box. At one point he looked up at the depiction of the French philosopher Montesquieu and other luminaries on the grand courtroom's wood-paneled wall.

The prosecution called for 3 1/2 years in prison for Navalny, minus the amount of time he spent under house arrest related to the case, which was about a year. The prosecutor, Yekaterina Frolova, said Navalny was guilty of "systematic violations of obligations placed on him by the court."

Navalny sparred repeatedly with Frolova, calling her "an honorable daughter of the regime," but then adding, "You lie in every word." He said he was being prosecuted to scare millions of other Russians out of rising up against Putin.

The choreography of the hearing appeared designed to portray due process being granted to Navalny. Officials moved the hearing from a courtroom outside Moscow to a bigger one in the city—in order, they said, to allow more journalists to be present.

Two sculpted judicial scales flanked the Russian double-headed eagle above the robed judge. Repnikova peppered

the prosecution with pointed questions, probing its arguments. Navalny was allowed to give his fiery speech, and criticize the judge and prosecutor, with few interruptions. But journalists were barred from filming the proceedings or taking pictures.

The prosecution's case for sending Navalny to prison relied heavily on technicalities. A prison service official, Alexander Yermolin, read in a soft voice from a stack of papers detailing Navalny's alleged parole violations. The prosecution said the violations had begun before Navalny's poisoning in August.

At one point Yermolin cited online posts showing that Navalny was moving freely across Germany while not reporting for his parole last year. At another point, Frolova responded to an argument from Navalny's lawyers by taking issue with the day of the week on which the defendant had contacted parole authorities.

"Jan. 9 was a Thursday, which has nothing at all do to with a Monday," the prosecutor said.

Navalny and his lawyers, in a lengthy back-and-forth with the prosecution, insisted that they had properly notified parole officials of his inability to report in person because of his poisoning. Navalny noted that even Putin had publicly referred last year to Navalny's being in treatment in Germany.

Navalny was confined to house arrest for much of 2014 and served repeated jail terms of several weeks at a time. Until now, though, he has never served a lengthy prison sentence.

Analysts say the Kremlin's calculus has long been that Navalny could be more of a liability behind bars — as Russia's most prominent political prisoner — than walking free as an often-controversial opposition activist. That thinking appears to have changed as the Russian public's frustration with Putin has increased, along with Navalny's prominence.

After his poisoning, Navalny was airlifted in a coma to Berlin, where he recovered. He returned to Moscow last month, even though Russian authorities made it clear that he would face years in prison.

He was jailed upon arrival, after which his team released a report by Navalny that described a purported secret palace built for Putin. The report has been viewed more than 100 million times on YouTube, energized the pro-Navalny protests and underscored the opposition leader's ability to reach a huge audience on Russia's mostly free internet.

The Kremlin on Tuesday again sought to minimize the significance of Navalny's case, issuing a veiled warning to the European Union's top foreign policy official, Josep Borrell Fontelles, who plans to visit Moscow this week.

"We hope that there will not be something as silly as tying the future of Russian-European relations to the case of this pretrial detention center inhabitant," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, according to the Tass state news agency.

DETAILS

Subject:	Violations; Poisoning; Activists; House arrest; Criminal sentences; Riot control; Court hearings &proceedings; Convictions; Police; Assassinations &assassination attempts; Prosecutions; Judges &magistrates
Location:	Russia New York Germany
People:	Navalny, Alexei Biden, Joseph R Jr
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Identifier / keyword:	World Speeches And Statements Defense And Military Forces Economy, Commerce And Industry Real Estate And Home Buildings (Structures) Science And Technology Murders And Attempted Murders Environment Hazardous And Toxic Substances Crime, Law And Justice Crime And Criminals Conflict, War And Peace Ussr (Former Soviet Union) Russia Germany France Europe Berlin (Germany) YoutubeCom European Union European Court Of Human Rights Putin, Vladimir V Na valny, Aleksei A Borrell Fontelles, Josep Stations And Terminals (Passenger) Finances Philosophy Assassinations And Attempted Assassinations Corruption (Institutional) Human Rights And Human Rights Violations Probation And Parole Poisoning And Poisons Demonstrations, Protests And Riots Prisons And Prisoners Politics And Government
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Navalny Appears in Court for Decision on Prison Sentence

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FULL TEXT



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Russian authorities have signaled that they will not be swayed by public pressure to release Navalny, the 44-year-old anti-corruption activist. They have put several of his top allies under house arrest, and on Sunday they deployed a huge police force in cities across Russia to quell protests over the past couple of weeks calling for his freedom.

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Under the terms of that earlier sentence, authorities say Navalny was supposed to check in with the prison authorities at least twice a month. But prosecutors charge that he repeatedly failed to do so last year, including after being released from a Berlin hospital in September while recovering from an assassination attempt by poisoning.

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"Jan. 9 was a Thursday, which has nothing at all do to with a Monday," the prosecutor said.

Navalny and his lawyers, in a lengthy back-and-forth with the prosecution, insisted that they had properly notified parole officials of his inability to report in person because of his poisoning. Navalny noted that even Putin had publicly referred last year to Navalny's being in treatment in Germany.

"Say, dear comrade captain, do you respect the president of Russia, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin?" Navalny asked

the prison official, Yermolin.

Poking at the glass in front of him, Navalny added: "On what grounds do you say you didn't know about my location?"

Navalny was confined to house arrest for much of 2014 and served repeated jail terms of several weeks at a time. Until now, though, he has never served a lengthy prison sentence.

Analysts say the Kremlin's calculus has long been that Navalny could be more of a liability behind bars —as Russia's most prominent political prisoner —than walking free as an often-controversial opposition activist. That thinking appears to have changed as the Russian public's frustration with Putin has increased, along with Navalny's prominence.

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He was jailed upon arrival, after which his team released a report by Navalny that described a purported secret palace built for Putin. The report has been viewed more than 100 million times on YouTube, energized the pro-Navalny protests and underscored the opposition leader's ability to reach a huge audience on Russia's mostly free internet.

But Putin seems poised to outlast the uproar over his treatment of Navalny. No signs have emerged of support for the protesters within the government, parliament, big business or the security services, which all remain firmly in Putin's grasp.

Fissions within the elite, nowhere to be seen at least on the surface in Russia, have been pivotal in the success of street movements in other former Soviet states.

The Kremlin on Tuesday again sought to minimize the significance of Navalny's case, issuing a veiled warning to the European Union's top foreign policy official, Josep Borrell Fontelles, who plans to visit Moscow this week.

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Show of Force Fails to Deter Second Week of Russia Protests

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FULL TEXT

Tens of thousands took to the streets across Russia to show support for the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny. The police were out in force and reports of brutality flared.

MOSCOW – The Kremlin mounted Russia's most fearsome nationwide police operation in recent memory on Sunday, seeking to overwhelm a protest movement backing the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny that swept across the country for a second weekend in a row.

But the show of force -- including closed subway stations, thousands of arrests and often brutal tactics -- failed to smother the unrest. People rallied for Mr. Navalny on the ice of a Pacific bay and in the thousands in cities from Siberia to the Ural Mountains to St. Petersburg. In Moscow, protesters evaded a warren of checkpoints and lines of riot police officers to march in a column toward the jail where Mr. Navalny is being held, chanting, "All for one and one for all!"

By late Sunday evening in Moscow, more than 5,000 people had been detained in at least 85 cities across Russia, an activist group reported, though many were later released. Previously unseen numbers of riot police officers in black helmets, camouflage and body armor essentially locked down the center of the metropolis of 13 million people, stopping passers-by miles from the protest to check their documents and ask what they were doing outside.

"I don't understand what they're afraid of," a protester named Anastasia Kuzmina, a 25-year-old account manager at an advertising agency, said of the police. Referring to the peak year of Stalin's mass repression, she added, "It's like we're slipping into 1937."

The large-scale police response signaled anxiety in the Kremlin over Mr. Navalny's ability to unite Russia's disparate critics of President Vladimir V. Putin, from nationalists to liberals to many with no particular ideology at all.

But the show of force also made it clear that Mr. Putin has no plans to back down. Shortly after the American secretary of state, Antony Blinken, condemned "the persistent use of harsh tactics against peaceful protesters and journalists," Russia's Foreign Ministry released a statement accusing the United States of backing the protests as

part of a "strategy to contain Russia."

The next test for both sides will come on Tuesday, when Mr. Navalny faces a court hearing over alleged parole violations related to a six-year-old embezzlement case that could send him to prison for several years. Mr. Navalny's allies -- some of whom helped steer the rallies from outside the country via Twitter, Telegram and YouTube -- declared Sunday's demonstrations a success and quickly called for more protests outside the courthouse on Tuesday.

"Russia's citizens again showed their power and strength, and there's no question that Putin understands this," Leonid Volkov, a top aide to Mr. Navalny coordinating the protests from abroad, said Sunday in a live YouTube broadcast.

But the police sought to project their strength not only in numbers but also with more fear-inducing tactics. Video footage taken in Moscow and St. Petersburg showed people who did not appear to be resisting arrest screaming after the police used taser-like devices against them -- weapons not reported to have been used at previous protests. There were also reports of tear gas having been used in St. Petersburg.

The crackdown on protesters showed that Mr. Putin -- who has maintained a modicum of freedoms in the country, including an open internet and some independent news media -- is ready to ratchet up authoritarianism in order to avert a possible threat to his power. The question is whether more Russians will actively resist such an authoritarian turn, especially as images of police brutality course through social media in the coming days.

"The bolts are tightening," said Nikolai Babikov, 31, a computer systems analyst in Moscow, gazing apprehensively at the riot police and at the chunky gray police vans that hold detainees. "Freedom is being eliminated, and bit by bit we are becoming the Soviet Union again."

Mr. Putin has faced growing discontent in the general public for several years amid a decline in real incomes and the dissipation of the patriotic fervor that accompanied his annexation of Crimea in 2014. Mr. Navalny has long been the Kremlin's loudest critic, and he accused Mr. Putin of trying to kill him via a nerve-agent attack last summer.

Mr. Navalny put a match to that built-up discontent two weeks ago when he flew home to Moscow after five months of recovering in Germany from the poisoning, despite facing near-certain arrest upon arrival. Then, with Mr. Navalny in jail, his team released a two-hour-long video accusing Mr. Putin of having a secret palace built for him on the Black Sea.

The video was seen more than 100 million times on YouTube and energized the protests calling for Mr. Navalny's release. On Sunday, footage from across the country showed some protesters brandishing toilet brushes and chanting, "Aqua disco" -- references to an \$850 toilet brush and elaborate fountain detailed in Mr. Navalny's report. The Kremlin has denied the report about the palace and scrambled to contain the public outrage over it. On Saturday, state television broadcast an interview with a friend of Mr. Putin, Arkady Rotenberg, who said he was in fact the owner of the property and was planning to turn it into a hotel.

"I am for honesty, nothing else," said Lyudmila Mikhailovna, an 83-year-old retired pediatric doctor in Moscow who declined to give her last name.

She said she was no great fan of Mr. Navalny but had come out to protest after watching his video about the palace.

Sunday's protests began around noon on Russia's Pacific coast and rolled across the nation, with its 11 time zones, from east to west. In Vladivostok, a port city on the Sea of Japan, protesters avoided a city center blocked by riot police officers and descended onto the ice covering Amur Bay. Clasping hands, videos showed, they formed chains and danced as they chanted, "Putin is a thief!" and "Russia will be free!"

Riot officers, initially hesitant to follow on the frozen water, decided to give chase. But it seemed to be a slow-motion chase, with each side moving gingerly on the snow-covered expanse of ice under a gray late-afternoon sky. It was just one of many remarkable scenes that played out on Sunday in eastern Russia, where large-scale protests are rare. In the Siberian city of Irkutsk, where temperatures approached minus 20 Fahrenheit, the turnout was significantly smaller than the thousands who protested last weekend -- and the police presence even more

imposing.

Aleksei Zhemchuzhnikov, a civic activist, said chains of riot police officers with full body armor and shields were deployed for the first time, cordoning off sections of the city center. Mobile internet access was cut off, he said. "For Irkutsk, this was a first," Mr. Zhemchuzhnikov said of the police response. "They were scared."

Still, no signs have emerged of support for the protesters within the government, the Parliament, big business or the security services, which all remain firmly in Mr. Putin's grasp. Fissions in the elite, nowhere to be seen at least on the surface in Russia, have been pivotal in the success of street movements in other former Soviet states.

In Moscow, Mr. Navalny's team guided protesters on an evasive, zigzagging route to avoid police barricades. It encouraged them to stay together, in larger and harder-to-arrest crowds. Well before the protests began, the police sealed off much of the city center to pedestrians and shut down subway stops around the Kremlin -- a crowd-control tactic used for the first time in recent years.

"Try not to leave the major streets and stay in large groups," Mr. Navalny's team instructed the protesters, using the messaging app Telegram. "Remember, the more of us there are, the more difficult it is for police to do anything."

The mainly young protesters, following the Navalny social-media accounts on their phones, in many cases turned and followed the team's directions -- which led them toward the jail where Mr. Navalny was being held. The police, wielding shields and batons, tried to break the crowd into smaller groups and detain protesters after pushing them into walls and fences.

In chaotic scenes, police officers arrested people trying to hide in backyards and in the entryways to apartment buildings. By early evening, the Tass state news agency reported that the police were checking courtyards and apartment buildings for stragglers.

The harsher tactics were redolent of the protests in Belarus, where President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko used fierce police might to put down demonstrations after fraudulent elections last summer. The Russian police on Sunday did not use Mr. Lukashenko's toughest methods -- which included stun grenades and rubber bullets -- but they seemed to echo his strategy of defusing dissent not by dialogue, but by brute force.

In St. Petersburg, a reporter for the newspaper Novaya Gazeta posted a video of police officers dragging an unconscious protester into a police van after a "harsh detention." Reports of officers in plain clothes beating protesters surfaced in two provincial cities, Kursk and Volgograd.

On Moscow's grand Garden Ring, the city center's main circular thoroughfare, Lyudmila Mikhailovna, the retired pediatrician, glowered at the phalanx of burly officers in front of her.

She said that she had been going to protests since the Gorbachev era, but that, despite repeated disappointment, would continue to "so that my children and grandchildren don't have to live in a greedy police state." She added, "Things now are just intolerable."

Oleg Matsnev and Sophia Kishkovsky contributed research.

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Photograph

Officers removing a protester Sunday in Moscow. A column of demonstrators marched near the jail where the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny is being held.; A Moscow rally. Protests were held in at least 85 Russian cities. Over 5,000 people were detained.; Moscow and St. Petersburg officers used taser-like devices. Tear gas was reported in St. Petersburg. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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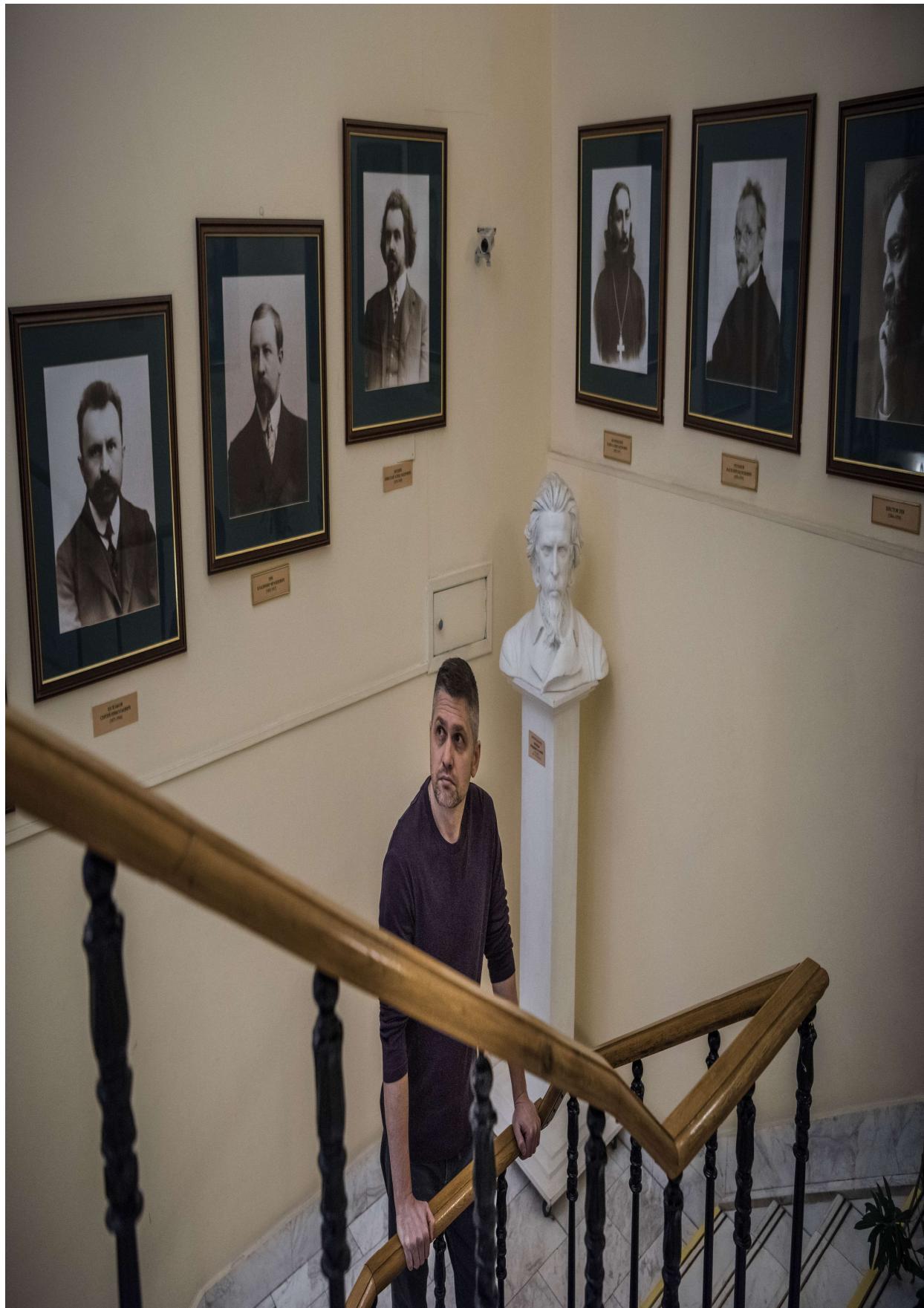
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Crowds of Police Couldn't Quell Russia's Pro-Navalny Protests

Ponomarev, Sergey . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]31 Jan 2021.

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FULL TEXT



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Tens of thousands of people turned out across Russia on Sunday for a second consecutive weekend rally in support of a jailed opposition leader, Alexei Navalny. But where the protesters went, so did the police, meeting

them in sometimes brutal clashes.

The protests started in Russia's far east and swept across the vast nation, although crowds in some cities appeared to be smaller than last weekend. Demonstrators numbering in the thousands turned out in St. Petersburg, the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk in Siberia, Moscow and elsewhere. More than 4,000 people were detained.

Even before Russians gathered, the Kremlin made it clear that police officers would be out in great numbers. Officers mostly responded with arrests. But by early Sunday afternoon, reports of police brutality against protesters had surfaced in several cities —including the possible use of electric shock devices on demonstrators and the beatings of others.

In Moscow, more than 1,200 protesters were detained, the OVD-Info activist group reported. The police shut down subway stations and paralyzed much of the city center as they scrambled to prevent protesters from gathering in one place.

The show of force —and Kremlin anxiety —in Moscow was unlike any seen in recent years. "All for one and one for all!" a column of protesters, which numbered in the thousands, chanted as they marched through the city toward the jail where Navalny was being held.

Protesters scattered across the northern part of Moscow's city center played an hourslong game of cat and mouse with riot police officers in body armor and camouflage. Using Twitter and Telegram, Navalny's supporters directed protesters farther north toward the city's main train hub, sending columns of police trucks speeding in that direction.

Navalny's arrest has given a new focus to opposition to President Vladimir Putin, which had remained disparate even as his popularity fell.

Protesters young and old came out in the capital. Among them was Lyudmila Mikhailovna, an 83-year-old retired pediatric doctor who declined to give her last name. She said she was no great fan of Navalny. But she had watched his video about a palace on the Black Sea he said was built for Putin and decided to join the protest because "I am for honesty, nothing else."

Navalny's return to Russia on Jan. 17 shifted the political landscape facing the Kremlin —both at home and abroad. Inside the country, Russians unhappy with their president suddenly have a clear leader around whom to rally.

The appeal of Navalny's case for those who do not share his political views is that he is perceived as a symbol of the main source of the anger that many Russians feel toward the Kremlin: injustice.

Authorities had made it clear that a strong police response was coming. In recent days, Navalny's brother, Oleg Navalny, and Maria Alyokhina, of the punk band Pussy Riot, were placed under house arrest. Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, was among those detained Sunday.

Navalny's allies were not deterred by the police presence Sunday and called for more protests Tuesday, when Navalny faces a court hearing over alleged parole violations related to a six-year-old embezzlement case that could send him to prison for several years.

DETAILS

Subject:	Alliances; Injustice; Riot control; Court hearings &proceedings; Presidents; Police; Demonstrations &protests; Politicians; Cities
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People:	Navalny, Alexei Putin, Vladimir
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
Identifier / keyword:	World Social Conditions And Trends Death And Dying Crime And Criminals Conflict, War And Peace Crime, Law And Justice Criminal Justice Police Yekaterinburg (Russia) St Petersburg (Russia) Siberia Russia Novosibirsk (Russia) Moscow (Russia) Black Sea Twitter Pussy Riot Putin, Vladimir V Putin, Lyudmila A Navalny, Oleg A Navalny, Aleksei A Alyokhina, Maria Embezzlement Politics And Government Police Brutality, Misconduct And Shootings Political Prisoners Death s (Fatalities)
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Document 22 of 72

Navalny Inspires Critics Of Putin to Rally as One

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]31 Jan 2021: A.12.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

While many at the protests are critical of Aleksei A. Navalny, the Kremlin's treatment of the opposition leader has united a disparate group of Putin's opponents who say they can no longer tolerate official injustice.

MOSCOW – Aleksandr Pasechnik, a socialist, sees the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny as part of the "liberal intelligentsia." Mikhail Svetov, Russia's best-known libertarian, recoils from Mr. Navalny's economic populism. Olga Nikiforova, a monarchist, long refused to believe that Mr. Navalny was poisoned.

Yet despite their misgivings, all three risked arrest to join the protests that swept across Russia last weekend calling for Mr. Navalny's release -- and were considering doing so again on Sunday.

"Entering a phase of intense crisis is a lesser evil than this slow degradation of the country," Mr. Pasechnik, 42, said. "We need this catalyst, now."

Opposition to President Vladimir V. Putin has long come in many hues -- from Stalinists who dream of resurrecting the planned economy, to nationalists who want to restrict migration and annex more of Ukraine, to urban liberals who long for democracy and closer ties with the West. Rarely have these disparate groups come together as they have in the last week around Mr. Navalny -- because the moment has arrived, more and more Russians say, when they can no longer abide passive acceptance of Mr. Putin.

"Navalny has, for the first time, sparked a Russian protest movement against the president," said Konstantin Gaaze, a sociologist at the Moscow School for Social and Economic Sciences. "It is a historic moment for the country."

Mr. Putin is in position to ride out the protests, as he has in the past, using a sprawling security apparatus adept at stifling discontent while avoiding large-scale repression that could inflame passions further. Even many of the protesters themselves said it would take far bigger crowds to persuade the Kremlin to change course.

Still, the latest flash of discontent is notable because it unites right and left, old and young; and the protesters, rather than vaguely targeting government officials, are unabashedly attacking Mr. Putin himself.

That means Mr. Putin faces an unusually volatile moment -- as evidenced by the extraordinary spectacle recently of the president personally denying Mr. Navalny's accusation that he had built himself a secret palace on the Black Sea.

Mr. Putin's usually atomized critics have come together around the figure of Mr. Navalny, 44, not for his political views but because he is perceived as a symbol of the main source of the anger that many Russians feel toward the

Kremlin: injustice.

Ms. Nikiforova, the monarchist, who is 37 and works as a screenwriter in Moscow, initially went along with the narrative of a Russia rising from its knees under Mr. Putin that is piped out constantly by state TV. She remembered the broken street lamps of the post-Soviet 1990s, the used needles discarded by drug addicts cracking underfoot on Moscow's sidewalks. She saw the possibility of wealth and hopes of a revival under Mr. Putin, who took power in 1999.

Years later, after she became a parent, she saw the failings of Russia's schools, courts and hospitals. But she still believed that Mr. Putin's government could improve. And she refused to accept that the state he ruled had something to do with the atrocities attributed to it in the West – like the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine in 2014 or the poisoning of Mr. Navalny in Siberia last summer.

Things changed after she saw the investigations that Mr. Navalny published in December about his own botched poisoning, in which the opposition leader worked with journalists using phone and flight records to show that a team of chemical weapons specialists from the domestic intelligence agency had followed him for years. Then came Mr. Navalny's dramatic return to Russia from Germany, his immediate arrest, and his report on Mr. Putin's purported palace, which has been viewed 100 million times on YouTube.

"He won't stop on his own," Ms. Nikiforova wrote on Facebook on Jan. 23, in a post that has since garnered 6,600 "likes," comparing Mr. Putin to an abusive husband. "This is a moment when a great number of people just can't take it anymore."

So last Saturday, Ms. Nikiforova packed tangerines in a shopping bag and made a dentist's appointment, so as to have two alibis when she went to the protest, which the authorities declared illegal. She said she personally would like Russia to be a constitutional monarchy, like Britain, but said that Mr. Navalny's precise political views were now beside the point.

"We simply don't have any other real opposition," Ms. Nikiforova said. "There is no choice. We have Navalny, who has truly shown that he can resist those in power."

Vladimir Milov, a former deputy energy minister and now an adviser to Mr. Navalny, said the opposition leader's team did not view ideology as an important factor in mobilizing protesters.

"The vast majority of people who come out are not partisans of any ideology or have specific views -- they just want change in the country," Mr. Milov said. "Most people who participate in protest movements are just tired of corruption."

Mr. Navalny made a name as an anticorruption blogger in the early 2000s, but also engaged in nationalist politics, turning off many liberals. Three-quarters of the viewers of his "Navalny Live" YouTube channel were men, its director, Lyubov Sobol, told The New York Times last May. Ms. Sobol attributed that phenomenon to Mr. Navalny's brusque, radical style.

Yet last weekend, about 45 percent of those at Mr. Navalny's rally in Moscow were women, and 42 percent said they had never protested before this year, according to a group of sociologists who surveyed the crowd.

"The madness and the lawlessness have reached an utterly colossal scale," said Zalina Marshenkulova, a feminist activist, explaining why she supports the protests even though Mr. Navalny has been accused of sexism in the past. "It's rather hard to talk about women's rights when we don't have human rights."

Among those who had never attended a Navalny rally before was Mr. Pasechnik, a blogger and filmmaker who wants Russia to be a socialist democracy in which the means of production belong to the state.

When Mr. Navalny led major protests in Moscow in the winter of 2012, Mr. Pasechnik saw him as part of a subversive "fifth column" planted inside Russia by the West. Like most Russians, he celebrated Mr. Putin's annexation of Crimea two years later. But he was disappointed that the Kremlin did not bring eastern Ukraine into the fold as well.

He says he finds Mr. Navalny just about as distasteful as he finds Mr. Putin, seeing both as beholden to the capitalist West. But he sees the current protests as the best chance to try to bring change, offering an opening for movements such as his own. And he called for solidarity with Mr. Navalny over his persecution by the state,

cautioning that "what happened to him could happen to any of us."

"People understand that this is Russia's Politician Number One," he said of Mr. Navalny. "If he calls for going into the streets, we all understand that people will come out, and other forces must make use of this."

Mr. Navalny reiterated his support for protests in a cinematic courtroom speech on Thursday. He faces another hearing next Tuesday, when he could be sentenced to several years in prison for alleged parole violations related to a suspended sentence for embezzlement he received in 2014. Europe's top human rights court has ruled that his conviction was politically motivated.

"I'm happy that more and more people now understand the law and the truth are on our side," Mr. Navalny told the court by video link from jail on Thursday. "We are the majority, and we will not allow small bunches of villains to force their ways upon our country."

The Kremlin counters that Mr. Navalny's backers make up a small minority of the country, and his true support remains hard to measure. Even many Russians who agree with Mr. Navalny's description of the ruling elite as corrupt still fear that chaos would ensue were Mr. Putin forced to give up power.

Mr. Svetov -- a 36-year-old nationalist libertarian inspired by former President Donald J. Trump -- is among Mr. Putin's most prominent critics on the Russian right. He says Mr. Putin's image as a defender of conservative, Christian values is a figment of Kremlin propaganda, belied by the president's openness to immigration from Central Asia and his close ties with Ramzan Kadyrov, the brutal leader of the predominantly Muslim Russian republic of Chechnya.

Mr. Svetov says 29 members of his Libertarian Party of Russia have been arrested in connection with last Saturday's pro-Navalny rallies. Speaking over an encrypted connection while in hiding from the police, Mr. Svetov said that the protests were "more angry than ever before in Putin's Russia" but that the crowds appeared insufficient to persuade the Kremlin to free Mr. Navalny.

"My forecast is not very optimistic, unfortunately," Mr. Svetov said. "I think a lot of people came out -- but not in numbers that will be able to achieve something."

Photograph

Clockwise from top: The jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny appearing on video in court last week; Zalina Marshenkulova, a feminist activist who supports the protests for Mr. Navalny; Aleksandr Pasechnik, a socialist who called the unrest a vital "catalyst." (PHOTOGRAPHS BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Presidents; Convictions; Poisoning; Demonstrations &protests; Human rights
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Document 23 of 72

Court Turns Down Navalny's Appeal, Signaling Kremlin Wants Him Muted

Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]29 Jan 2021: A.11.

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FULL TEXT

The opposition leader, speaking by video link, called the decision politically motivated. Tens of thousands of people calling for his release protested across Russia last weekend.

MOSCOW – A Russian court on Thursday ordered the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny to stay in jail, days after tens of thousands of people demanding his release filled streets and squares of cities across Russia last weekend. The court rejected Mr. Navalny's appeal of a lower court's ruling to keep him in custody for 30 days over parole violations, which he has denied. Mr. Navalny was detained on Jan. 17 after flying back to Moscow from Berlin, where he was recovering after being poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent in August. He accused President Vladimir V. Putin of ordering the poisoning, calling it an attempted political assassination.

The court's decision signaled the Kremlin's intention to go as far as it can to remove Mr. Navalny, who has turned into Mr. Putin's most vociferous and effective opponent in the past few years, from the Russian political scene. It came one day after police officers raided the apartments and offices of Mr. Navalny and his key allies and before another series of protests planned by his team across Russia for this weekend.

Russia's prison service claims that Mr. Navalny repeatedly violated the terms of a suspended sentence stemming from a financial-crime case brought against him that the European Court of Human Rights said was unwarranted. On Tuesday, Mr. Navalny will face another hearing over parole violations, which could result in the suspended sentence being converted into prison time. If the court approves the petition, Mr. Navalny could spend more than two and a half years behind bars.

Appearing in court on a video link on Thursday for the first time since the mass protests against his incarceration, Mr. Navalny ridiculed the proceedings as a politically driven campaign to silence him and scare his supporters. "I have an answer to why this is happening," Mr. Navalny said. "This blatant lawlessness is done to scare me and everyone else. The judges do not do it; they are just obedient slaves here -- it is done by the people who have robbed our country."

In official statements, the Kremlin has dismissed Mr. Navalny as an immature and power-hungry charlatan, ready to stir up the public, especially the young, to raise his political profile. Mr. Putin, who usually prefers not to mention Mr. Navalny by name, described him as an asset of Western intelligence services.

Asked at a news conference in December to respond to Mr. Navalny's accusations that he was poisoned on direct orders from the Kremlin, Mr. Putin scoffed: "Who cares about him?"

"If they really wanted to, they would have, most likely, carried it through," Mr. Putin said.

Despite the Kremlin's dismissal of Mr. Navalny and his supporters as part of a misguided minority, the opposition leader has demonstrated an ability to grab the attention of millions of people in Russia.

Shortly after his return to Moscow, Mr. Navalny's team published an investigation describing a secret palace on the shores of the Black Sea, which they said was built for Mr. Putin and paid for by state-run companies. The video version of the investigation has been viewed by more than 100 million people on YouTube, with 70 percent watching from Russia, according to Lyubov Sobol, Mr. Navalny's ally. On Monday, Mr. Putin dismissed Mr. Navalny's accusations, calling the video investigation "boring."

While in jail, Mr. Navalny has been unplugged from daily political life, said Olga Mikhailova, his lawyer. For instance, he wasn't aware that several members of his team had been arrested and his apartment searched by police.

Over the past week, Russian authorities have detained more than 4,000 people across the country at protests calling for Mr. Navalny's release, according to OVD-Info, an activist group that tracks arrests at protests. At least seven criminal cases have been opened against protesters, the Moscow police said in a statement, warning people against taking part in protests that were not sanctioned.

As his supporters are facing mounting pressure from the authorities, speaking from jail by the video link on Thursday, Mr. Navalny tried to lift their spirits.

"They aren't the masters of our country and will never be," Mr. Navalny said, referring to Mr. Putin and his government.

"Many people, tens of millions, agree with me," he said. "And we will never allow for these people to capture and rob our country."

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny at his hearing. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Criminal investigations; Demonstrations &protests; Politics
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Document 24 of 72

Russian Court Orders Navalny Kept in Jail

Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]28 Jan 2021.

 [ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

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The court rejected Navalny's appeal of a lower court's ruling to keep him in custody for 30 days over parole violations, which he has denied. Navalny was detained Jan. 17 after flying back to Moscow from Berlin, where he was recovering after being poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent in August. He accused President Vladimir Putin of ordering the poisoning, calling it an attempted political assassination.

The court's decision signaled the Kremlin's intention to go as far as it can to remove Navalny, who has turned into Putin's most vociferous and effective opponent in the past few years, from the Russian political scene. It came one day after police officers raided the apartments and offices of Navalny and his key allies and before another series of protests planned by his team across Russia for this weekend.

Russia's prison service claims Navalny repeatedly violated the terms of a suspended sentence stemming from a financial-crime case brought against him that the European Court of Human Rights said was unwarranted.

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DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Court hearings &proceedings; Police; Criminal investigations; Demonstrations &protests; Politics
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Document 25 of 72

Navalny Allies and Offices Targeted in Raids as Kremlin Turns Up Pressure

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]28 Jan 2021: A.12.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The authorities appeared to gear up for a new legal strike against the opposition leader after demonstrations last weekend drew tens of thousands to the streets.

MOSCOW – Police officers raided the apartments and offices of the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny and of his allies on Wednesday, increasing pressure on the Kremlin's loudest critic ahead of more protests planned this weekend in his support.

The raids signaled that the authorities are gearing up for a new legal strike against Mr. Navalny's team after demonstrations last weekend drew tens of thousands of Russians to the streets of more than 100 cities. At least some of Wednesday's raids involved allegations that coronavirus restrictions had been violated at the rallies, Mr. Navalny's allies said.

Mr. Navalny himself remains in jail after being arrested upon his return to Russia on Jan. 17, facing a court hearing next week on alleged parole violations that could result in a yearslong prison sentence.

He had spent the previous five months recovering in Germany from a poisoning that he described as an assassination attempt by the Russian state -- and his return helped precipitate the biggest anti-Kremlin protests in years.

His supporters hope that public pressure will lead the Kremlin to release Mr. Navalny, but Wednesday's raids suggested that it had no intention of doing so. Raids were conducted at Mr. Navalny's apartment and that of his wife, his YouTube studio, his foundation's office and the homes of at least four close associates.

The Kremlin denies having anything to do with Mr. Navalny's poisoning.

On Wednesday, police officers came to the home of Mr. Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, and forced their way into her apartment despite her insistence that they wait for her lawyer to arrive, according to video from the scene.

"They've broken my door and entered the apartment," Ms. Navalnaya yelled down to journalists outside her Moscow high-rise. "They won't let my lawyer in."

Two other associates of Mr. Navalny -- his spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, and a member of his investigations team, Georgy Albuров -- were taken from jail to be present at their apartments as they were searched, their supporters said. Mr. Navalny's brother, Oleg, was reported detained for 48 hours.

The apartment of Anastasia Vasilieva, who leads a medical workers group allied with Mr. Navalny, was also searched. Her spokeswoman posted a video of Dr. Vasilieva playing the piano while being confronted by a police officer.

The head of Mr. Navalny's anti-corruption foundation, Ivan Zhdanov, posted surveillance-camera footage to Twitter showing a stream of police officers crowding the corridor at the organization's office. The police also searched the office of Navalny Live, his YouTube channel, and took the channel's director, Lyubov Sobol, to her home to continue their search there, according to her lawyer, Vladimir Voronin.

It was not clear what the officers were looking for, though Mr. Zhdanov said the searches were connected to allegations of health code violations. Moscow health authorities said that phone location data showed that 19 people sick with Covid-19 had attended the unauthorized pro-Navalny rally in central Moscow last Saturday.

In all, more than 3,000 people were arrested on Saturday amid one of the most striking displays of discontent that Mr. Putin has faced in 21 years in power. Mr. Navalny's supporters plan another nationwide protest on Sunday, and have called on people in Moscow to gather in front of the headquarters of the domestic intelligence agency, the F.S.B.

The protests have rattled the Kremlin, with state television devoting extensive broadcast time to attacking Mr. Navalny in recent days, after years of ignoring him. But Dmitri S. Peskov, Mr. Putin's spokesman, insisted on Wednesday that the president was unmoved.

"There are incomparably more of those who support Putin than those who don't," Mr. Peskov told reporters. "The majority, of course, makes more of an impression."

Photograph

A Russian police officer at the entrance to the office of Aleksei A. Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation in Moscow on Wednesday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY YURI KOCHETKOV/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; Police; Raids; Demonstrations &protests; Coronaviruses; Apartments
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[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

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People:	Navalny, Alexei
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
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E.U. Condemns Arrest of Navalny and Supporters, but Takes No Action

Erlanger, Steven; Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]26 Jan 2021: A.11.

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FULL TEXT

European foreign ministers disagree about how to respond, but a diplomatic visit to Moscow will go ahead early in February, after the fate of Aleksei A. Navalny is clearer.

BRUSSELS – Despite pressure from some European Union countries on Monday to sanction Russia further after the arrest of the Kremlin critic Aleksei A. Navalny and thousands of his supporters, the bloc's top foreign policy official will go ahead with a visit to Moscow early next month and meet with Russian officials first.

The official, Josep Borrell Fontelles, will press the Russian government to release Mr. Navalny, according to diplomats in Brussels, and if not, new sanctions are possible. The decision came during a rare, in-person meeting of the European Union's 27 foreign ministers in Brussels.

Mr. Borrell's trip to meet with his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov, is expected after Feb. 2, when Mr. Navalny faces a court hearing that could send him to prison for several years. His supporters have called for people to take to the streets again on Sunday, two days before the hearing.

In a news conference, Mr. Borrell said the foreign ministers had condemned the Russian crackdown on Mr. Navalny and his supporters and called for their release. He said he would be pleased to meet Mr. Navalny, and his situation would be a topic of discussion during his visit, but the trip was primarily to discuss strategic relations with Russia before a summit of European leaders in March.

European leaders are "ready to react" and to act "according to circumstances," Mr. Borrell said. While the foreign ministers differed about how to respond to Moscow, there were no concrete proposals made, so there was no need to take decisions now, he said.

Tens of thousands of Russians rallied for Mr. Navalny in the streets of more than 100 Russian cities last Saturday in the biggest demonstrations the country had seen since at least 2017. Several thousand were arrested and sometimes beaten, bringing protests from the new Biden administration as well as from European countries.

The European diplomats discussed imposing fresh sanctions on Russia on Monday after pressure from several capitals for a tough line, but decided to wait to see what happens to Mr. Navalny and the outcome of Mr. Borrell's visit.

In October, the European Union imposed sanctions on six Russian officials and a state research institute over the

poisoning of Mr. Navalny in August with Novichok, a deadly nerve agent created in Russia during the Soviet era. In the latest sign of how Mr. Navalny's campaign has shaken the Kremlin, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday took the unusual step of responding personally. Mr. Putin denied an extensive report by Mr. Navalny and his team that was released last week, after he was jailed, about the president's purported "palace" on the Black Sea. The video has been viewed more than 86 million times on YouTube, underscoring the Kremlin's vulnerability on the internet, which is mostly uncensored in Russia.

"Nothing that is described as my property there ever belonged to me or my close relatives, and never did," Mr. Putin said in a televised video conference with university students. The video alleged that the vast, lavish property, said to include vineyards and an underground hockey rink, was controlled by friends and close associates of Mr. Putin who were holding it for him.

Mr. Putin said he had no time to watch Mr. Navalny's 113-minute film in full, but had viewed excerpts. He dismissed it by quoting a line from "The Twelve Chairs," an early Soviet novel: "Girls, this is boring." Mr. Putin has used the line at least once before -- to dismiss U.S. allegations of a chemical weapons attack by the Syrian government in 2017.

Threats of new sanctions are sure to be used by Russia's state media to describe Mr. Navalny as a plant or tool of the West. Over the weekend, television news reports prominently featured tweets by Mr. Borrell and other Western officials as evidence that Mr. Navalny was working against Russian interests.

On Monday, the Russian Foreign Ministry summoned the United States ambassador to Moscow, John Sullivan, to criticize the American response to the pro-Navalny protests. Maria Zakharova, the Foreign Ministry's spokeswoman, said that the support that the State Department had voiced for Mr. Navalny amounted to "direct interference in the domestic affairs of our country."

The new attention on Russia extends to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline between Russia and Germany, owned by the Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom and 94 percent finished, that the United States is trying to stop through sanctions imposed on companies helping to lay the last miles of pipes. The Biden administration has confirmed Washington's opposition to the pipeline on the grounds that it benefits the Russian state, hurts the income of Ukraine and Poland and makes Germany more dependent on Russian natural gas.

The Russians are preparing to lay pipes near Denmark with Russian-owned ships, while Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany continues to insist that the pipeline is a commercial venture and will go ahead, despite the poisoning and arrest of Mr. Navalny.

Berlin is hoping to resolve the problem with Washington through negotiations with the Biden administration, but it is possible that a solution will include at least a temporary suspension of the project.

The European foreign ministers are also under pressure to further sanction Turkey for its violation of waters claimed by Greece and Cyprus with warships and a ship designed to explore for natural gas. They have held off as Germany has tried to get talks going between Turkey and Greece on the dispute, which became dangerously heated last summer and remains volatile.

As the European ministers met on Monday, diplomats from Greece and Turkey were also meeting in Istanbul for the first talks in five years aimed at resolving their longstanding dispute over sea borders. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, who had a good relationship with former President Donald J. Trump, is also seeking to establish better relations with the Biden administration.

Even as they sit down to talks, officials disagree on what they will be discussing. Greece wants the conversation limited to the delineation of the countries' continental shelves and corresponding energy rights -- the focus of last summer's dispute.

But Turkey wants other areas of disagreement on the table, too, including the status of some islands in the Aegean and the rights of Greece's Muslim minority in Thrace.

At his news conference, Mr. Borrell also said the ministers expected Britain to grant full diplomatic status to E.U. representatives and that they looked forward to working with the new Biden administration.

"Be sure we will coordinate much, much better than in the past," he said.

Steven Erlanger reported from Brussels and Anton Troianovsky from Moscow. Reporting was contributed by Melissa Eddy from Berlin and Niki Kitsantonis from Athens.

Photograph

Above, Aleksei A. Navalny, second from right, being escorted in handcuffs after a court hearing in Moscow last week. Tens of thousands of Russians rallied for Mr. Navalny in more than 100 Russian cities, including in Moscow, left, on Saturday. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAVEL GOLOVKIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS; SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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Not Just Another Day of Dissatisfaction in Russia

Kovalev, Alexey . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]26 Jan 2021: A.23.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Crackdown and coercion are no longer enough to stop people protesting.

MOSCOW – It's hard to pin down the exact moment when it became clear the protests on Saturday in Russia – where tens of thousands of people, stretching across the country, called for the release of the jailed opposition leader Aleksei Navalny – were something special.

It definitely wasn't the violence doled out to protesters and even bystanders -- like a woman in St. Petersburg being casually kicked in the gut by a police officer in riot gear -- or the deliberate targeting of reporters. Such occurrences are sadly commonplace. It wasn't even the people coming out to protest in the unlikeliest corners of Russia, like Yakutsk, where the temperatures dipped to minus-60 Fahrenheit. Extreme cold and remoteness have never before stopped Russians from expressing their displeasure.

No, if there was one incident that suggested the significance of Saturday's protests, it was probably the footage of the riot police in Moscow looking lost and disoriented as a crowd blitzed them with snowballs. Or perhaps another video of young men charging at the fully clad riot police so ferociously that the officers, who clearly didn't expect to meet such resistance, almost backed down.

These acts of defiance and escalation – in the past, people have been convicted of throwing plastic cups and bottles in the general direction of police officers -- underscored the depth of popular dissatisfaction with life under President Vladimir Putin. These protests, summoned by an imprisoned opposition leader and undertaken against the government's warnings, are a significant development. After years of relative calm, Russia is restive once more.

To judge by the government's response, it knows it has trouble on its hands. The crackdown is breaking records. On July 27, 2019, in what was one of the largest roundups of protesters in decades, 1,373 people were detained. On

Saturday, around 3,100 were hauled in. At times the process was almost mechanical: In one exchange caught on video, a protester, realizing that a police officer wants only to fulfill an arrest quota, offers himself in place of another -- and is duly led away.

The calm manner of that arrest -- far from common on Saturday, which saw many ugly displays of heavy-handed policing -- harked back to the precursors of today's protest movements. During the Strategy 31 movement, named after the article of the Russian Constitution that guarantees freedom of assembly, from 2009 to late 2011, protesters gathered in Moscow on the last day of every 31-day month. Though never permitted by the authorities, the protests were orderly and pointedly legalistic.

The habit stuck. Before holding a demonstration, protesters over the past decade have tended to seek permission from the authorities. Some of the biggest rallies for fair elections in late 2011 and 2012 were sanctioned by Moscow's city government; so was the "Digital Resistance" protest in April 2018 against the government's attempt to ban Telegram, a popular messaging app.

Not this time. If, permit or not, you are at risk of being beaten, detained and forced to face absurd charges, why bother with the paperwork? The lack of central organization on Saturday -- instead of confining themselves to one central square or street, crowds moved across cities and towns -- is a notable feature. It also makes counting heads difficult. For Moscow alone, estimates of the number of protesters vary from 4,000 to 10 times that.

Several factors have led to this point. The obvious one is Aleksei Navalny himself. A decade of anti-corruption activism long ago elevated him to a position of authority among those who oppose the president. By the time of his poisoning in August, which he claimed was undertaken at Mr. Putin's behest, he effectively embodied the opposition. His brave return to Russia this month, knowing he would be arrested immediately, won him more acclaim. That thousands of people, all across the country, defied the government's order to stay home testifies to the strength of his appeal.

What's more, while Mr. Navalny was in jail last week, staff members at his nonprofit organization, the Anti-Corruption Foundation, released a nearly two-hour video that claimed to reveal the details of an opulent mansion on the shore of the Black Sea -- complete with spa, hockey rink and casino hall -- owned by Mr. Putin through a network of intermediaries. (Mr. Putin denies the allegations.)

While it's hard to know what effect the revelations had on the protests, some suggested that the video, which has been watched well over a hundred million times, played a role in turning people out all over the country, especially in regions not normally considered to be hotbeds of protest activity.

But the protests also emerged from -- and revealed -- the impotence of the government. To its discontented citizens it fails to offer anything but crude force and conspiracy theories. (Mr. Navalny is often depicted as a foreign agent, and protests as financed by "the West.") There's no vision of the future and little effort in the present to improve people's lives, now worsened by the pandemic.

Tellingly, state propaganda is failing on platforms where it's attempting to compete with independent voices. On Saturday, 10 times more people watched coverage of the protests on TV Rain, a small independent channel, than the live-streamed show on RT, the government-controlled network.

More protests may be coming, as Leonid Volkov, a close ally of Mr. Navalny, has promised. It would be foolish, however, to think they are going to lead to significant political changes or concessions from the state. If anything, as with the mass protests nearly a decade ago, they will probably just lead to more criminal cases and more repressive laws.

Yet what happened on Saturday matters. Crackdown and coercion are no longer enough to discourage Russians from protesting: According to sociologists who studied Saturday's demonstrations, at least 42 percent of all participants were first-time protesters. Mr. Navalny has clearly struck a chord well outside his regular circle of supporters. The Kremlin, its room for compromise limited, is likely to respond with further escalation.

What that might lead to, no one can say. But one thing's certain: It doesn't bode well for anyone.

Alexey Kovalev (@Alexey_Kovalev) is the investigations editor at Meduza, an independent Russian news outlet.

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or any of our articles. Here are some tips . And here's our email: letters@nytimes.com .

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Photograph

Protesters on Saturday in Moscow with banners reading "Freedom to Alexsei Navalny! Freedom to Russia!" in support of the jailed opposition leader. After years of relative calm, the country is restive. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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A Foreign Policy Doctrine for the Biden Administration

Stephens, Bret . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]26 Jan 2021: A.22.

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FULL TEXT

A dissident is to a dictatorship what a bald fact is to an edifice of lies, the revelation of which causes the whole thing to crumble.

Thirty years from now, what will historians consider the most consequential event of January 2021 -- the storming of the U.S. Capitol by an insurrectionist mob, or Aleksei Navalny's heroic return to Moscow, followed by his immediate arrest?

In a broad sense, the two events are about the same thing: the future of freedom. In one version of the future, the assault on the Capitol marks the point at which the forces of illiberalism, mob violence and disinformation, much of it stoked and financed by the Russian government, reached critical mass in the West. In another version, the assault will be remembered as a historical anomaly when compared with the recovery of freedom in places where it once seemed lost -- not just Russia but also China, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela.

How can Joe Biden move history toward the second version? By pursuing a foreign policy that puts dissidents first.

A common view of dissidents is that they are a humanitarian problem, but one that gets in the way of more important issues. Hillary Clinton gave voice to this view when, on her way to Beijing as secretary of state in 2009, she insisted that human rights questions "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis and the security crisis." This isn't cynicism, but rather a version of the utilitarian idea that doing the greatest good for the greatest number always takes precedence over the immediate interests of a handful of people.

But that's wrong, and not just philosophically. Dissidents matter to the U.S. strategically. The dictatorships that most threaten the free world are too powerful to be brought down militarily. Nor are they likely to moderate their behavior thanks to economic prosperity or reformers working within the system. Anyone in doubt on this score need only look at China's recent trajectory as an ever richer and ever more repressive regime.

What can bring dictatorships down is a credible domestic opposition that galvanizes public indignation through acts of exposure, mockery and heroic defiance. That defiance highlights the hypocrisies of the regime while demonstrating the possibilities of challenging it.

International pressure alone was not sufficient to bring down the apartheid government in South Africa. It took Nelson Mandela. Economic decay alone was not sufficient to bring down the Communist regimes in Poland and Czechoslovakia. It took Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel. The Soviet Union might be standing today had it not been for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov and Natan Sharansky.

What is happening to Navalny is of a piece with that history. After barely surviving a brazen assassination attempt in August, Navalny duped one of his alleged would-be killers and extracted an unwitting confession. He followed up with an investigative video on the lavish lifestyle of Russian President Vladimir Putin, complete with a billion-dollar palace on the Black Sea, that's been viewed north of 70 million times.

That Putin felt compelled to publicly deny owning the palace -- while facing nationwide protests over Navalny's arrest -- is a reminder of how much more he has to fear from one man with courage than from any other form of pressure. A dissident is to a dictatorship what a bald fact is to an edifice of lies, the revelation of which causes the whole thing to crumble.

What's true of Navalny in Russia is true of Jimmy Lai and Joshua Wong in Hong Kong. It's true of Ilham Tohti and Xu Zhiyong in mainland China. It's true of Nasrin Sotoudeh and Alireza Alinejad in Iran. It's true of José Daniel Ferrer in Cuba and Leopoldo López of Venezuela. Those, among many others, are names that should mean something to any reader of The Times who cares about the recovery of freedom in the world.

These should also be names that President Biden, his secretary of state nominee, Antony Blinken, and his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, should make inextricable parts of American statecraft. Should China want U.S. tariffs eased? Negotiable -- but not while Lai faces trial and Tohti is in prison. Would Russia like to see U.S. sanctions eased on Kremlin-favored oligarchs like Oleg Deripaska? Conceivable -- but not while Navalny is under arrest and has to fear for his life. Would Iran like to resume nuclear negotiations? Then let Sotoudeh, Alinejad and every other political case in Evin Prison go.

In that connection, it beggars belief that the White House is reportedly considering former diplomat Robert Malley as a special envoy for Iran. Malley is widely seen as one of Tehran's premier apologists in Washington; in November 2019 he went so far as to suggest that massive public protests in Iran justified Tehran's paranoia about an Israeli-Saudi-U.S. plot. A Malley appointment would signal that, on the things that matter most, Biden's foreign policy will be coldly transactional.

It needn't be that way. A dissidents-first foreign policy would immediately revive America's moral leadership after its squandering under Trump. It would force our adversaries to choose between their material interests and their habits of repression. And it would provide a margin of safety and maneuver for the dissidents we'd one day like to see in power. As foreign policy doctrines go, it's more than decent. It's smart.

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Photograph

By pursuing a foreign policy that puts dissidents like Aleksei Navalny of Russia first, the United States can revive its moral leadership. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Kirill Kudryavtsev/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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Navalny Gets Lift in Status As Russians Hit the Streets

 ProQuest document link

FULL TEXT

A stark shift by the government shows its uncertainty as Aleksei A. Navalny's dramatic return gives disgruntled Russians a clear leader to rally around.

MOSCOW – For years, the Kremlin tried to ignore the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny, right down to avoiding the very mention of his name.

But by Sunday, Russian officials had drastically reversed course.

President Vladimir V. Putin's spokesman appeared on a prime-time show on state television and denied Mr. Navalny's assertion that Mr. Putin had a secret palace on the Black Sea. On another marquee program, the host devoted 40 minutes to Mr. Navalny, who was described as engaging in "political pedophilia." And the evening newscast showed tweets by Western officials in support of Mr. Navalny as proof that he was working against Russian interests.

The tightly scripted, all-hands attack on Mr. Navalny on Sunday underlined how the opposition leader's dramatic return to Russia a week earlier and his arrest have changed the landscape of Russian politics.

Mr. Putin remains in firm control of the levers of power. But Russians unhappy with their president -- long a weak, diverse and atomized group -- suddenly have a clear leader around whom to rally, and the government appears unsure about how to fight back.

On Saturday, tens of thousands of Russians took to the streets in support of Mr. Navalny in more than 100 Russian cities -- protest on a scale unseen in the country in years. Quiet Siberian cities saw crowds in the thousands, while in Moscow, a survey showed that more than one-third of the participants had never protested before.

"People are tired of this authoritarian regime, of the chaos, of the corruption," said Viktor F. Rau, a liberal activist in one of those Siberian cities, Barnaul. "Navalny was the spark."

With more protests planned for next weekend, and a court hearing that could send Mr. Navalny to prison for years scheduled for Feb. 2, a new crackdown on the opposition and a harsh prison sentence for its leader might backfire, sending yet more people into the streets.

Either way, analysts say, the standoff between the Kremlin and its critics seems poised to intensify, injecting new volatility into a country in which Mr. Putin now has a clear main adversary in the political arena.

Mr. Navalny had been a gadfly for years, but his poisoning last summer in what Western officials say was a state assassination attempt, followed by his daring return to Russia, sharply raised his stature. The Kremlin denies any involvement in the poisoning.

"For me, this is basically a revolution," said Tatiana Stanovaya, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center, referring to the new breadth of Mr. Navalny's support. "We're going to see a long period of confrontation between the opposition and the authorities, and it's very hard to say how it will end."

Saturday's protests brought together the often-feuding elements of Russia's opposition: pro-Western urban liberals, leftists, libertarians and nationalists.

In Vologda, about 300 miles north of Moscow -- one of the many far-flung cities that saw surprisingly large crowds -- the roughly 1,000 protesters rallying for Mr. Navalny included Communists and coronavirus deniers, according to a journalist there. Some people spray-painted "Putin is a thief" and an obscenity on the walls of the regional administration.

The journalist, Sergey Gorodishenin, explained the large turnout by people's accumulated resentments over injustices in the judicial system, local parks being built over and the hardships of the pandemic.

"I think the next protest will see more people, not fewer," Mr. Gorodishenin said. "We've never seen anything like this in Vologda."

Mr. Putin has outlasted protest movements before.

In 2012, more than 100,000 people demonstrated in Moscow. In 2017, Mr. Navalny spawned another wave of nationwide unrest. In 2019, the contested run-up to Moscow City Council elections set off a summer of protest in the capital. And last summer, thousands of people rallied weekly in the Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk in support of a popular governor who had been arrested after falling out with the Kremlin; more than six months later, the governor remains behind bars.

Analysts are closely watching how prominent figures in Russian culture and business react to the protests. Last week, for instance, social networks were abuzz that the Russian pop star Alla Pugacheva had unfollowed her pro-Putin ex-husband on Instagram and followed Mr. Navalny.

Ms. Stanovaya said that the size of Saturday's protests had given Mr. Navalny the sort of political legitimacy that could lead more people in the Russian elite to support him, at least privately. A more violent response to future protests – on Saturday, the police clubbed protesters but refrained from intense methods like tear gas – could have further unintended consequences.

"People are expecting an increase in violence on the part of the regime," Ivan Kurilla, a historian at the European University of St. Petersburg. "The optimistic scenario is that such things provoke some kind of crack in the elites." Signaling that they would follow a hard line, the Russian authorities announced a series of criminal cases against protesters, including for the crime of blocking streets.

Playing in Mr. Navalny's favor is that his blunt, populist, anti-corruption message has struck a chord with a cross-section of society. His investigation published last week into Mr. Putin's supposed secret palace – complete with details like an \$850 toilet brush – has been viewed more than 80 million times on YouTube, and the Kremlin seemed forced to take note.

"Putin is definitely not fixated on toilet brushes," the state television host Dmitri Kiselyov intoned Sunday evening in a rebuttal of sorts. "He is a person of a completely different scale."

On Saturday, a team led by Aleksandra Arkhipova, a Moscow social anthropologist, polled a random sample of 359 protesters in the capital and found that 42 percent of them had not attended a demonstration before this year.

When the team surveyed the 2019 Moscow protests, that figure was 17 percent, she said.

Mr. Navalny, she said, makes Russians think twice about problems such as corruption that they might otherwise simply take for granted.

"Navalny says things that practically every resident of Russia knows to be true in the depths of his soul," Ms. Arkhipova said. "He says we should not accept this – that this is not the natural order of things."

One of Saturday's first-time protesters in Moscow was Maria Zhuravlyova, a 29-year-old manager at a technology company. She had come out with her friend Grigory Orlov, 25, to oppose censorship and rights violations under Mr. Putin.

"A lot has piled up for people," she said. "I think we have a long road ahead of us."

Ivan Nechepurenko contributed reporting from Moscow. Oleg Matsnev and Sophia Kishkovsky contributed research.

Photograph

Protesters confronting officers in Moscow on Saturday, when rallies attracted tens of thousands of people in over 100 Russian cities. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES); Aleksei A. Navalny, right, may be given prison time at a court hearing scheduled for Feb. 2. (PHOTOGRAPH BY PAVEL GOLOVKIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

DETAILS

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Document 31 of 72

Thousands Are Detained as Pro-Navalny Protests Sweep Russia

Troianovski, Anton; Higgins, Andrew . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]24 Jan 2021: A.10.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The protests moved across time zones and more than 3,000 people were arrested in at least 109 cities, signaling widespread fatigue with the corruption-plagued political order presided over by President Vladimir V. Putin.

MOSCOW – From the frozen streets of Russia's Far East and Siberia to the grand plazas of Moscow and St. Petersburg, tens of thousands of Russians rallied in support of the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny on Saturday in the biggest nationwide showdown in years between the Kremlin and its opponents.

The demonstrations did not immediately pose a dire threat to President Vladimir V. Putin's grip on power. But their broad scope, and the remarkable defiance displayed by many of the protesters, signaled widespread fatigue with the stagnant, corruption-plagued political order that Mr. Putin has presided over for two decades.

The protests began to unfold in the eastern regions of Russia, a country of 11 time zones, and they moved like a wave across the nation despite a heavy police presence and a drumbeat of menacing warnings on state media to stay away.

On the island of Sakhalin, just north of Japan, hundreds gathered in front of the regional government building and chanted, "Putin is a thief!" The protests spread to the sub-Arctic city of Yakutsk, where it was minus 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and to rallies attended by thousands in cities across Siberia. Hours later, as night fell in Moscow, people pelted the police with snowballs and kicked at a car belonging to the domestic intelligence agency.

By late evening in Moscow, more than 3,000 people had been arrested in at least 109 cities, according to OVD-Info, an activist group that tracks arrests at protests.

Mr. Navalny's supporters claimed success and promised more protests next weekend -- even though many directors of his regional offices had been arrested.

"If Putin thinks the most frightening things are behind him, he is very sorely and naïvely mistaken," Leonid Volkov, a top aide to Mr. Navalny, said on a live broadcast to YouTube from an undisclosed location outside Russia.

The protests came six days after Mr. Navalny, a 44-year-old anti-corruption activist, was arrested upon his arrival in Moscow on a flight from Germany, where he had spent months recovering from poisoning by a military-grade nerve agent. Western officials and Mr. Navalny have described the poisoning, which took place in Siberia in August, as an assassination attempt by the Russian state. The Kremlin denies this.

Mr. Navalny, who now faces a yearslong prison term, called on his supporters across the country to take to the streets this weekend, even though officials did not authorize protests. Russians responded with the most widespread demonstrations that the nation has seen since at least 2017 – numbering in the tens of thousands in Moscow and St. Petersburg and in the thousands in each of several cities to the east, including Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Omsk and the Pacific port of Vladivostok.

"There was this heavy feeling that Russian public opinion had hardened in cement, as though it was stuck in a dead, hidebound ball," said Vyacheslav Ivanets, a lawyer in the Siberian city of Irkutsk who took part in the protests. "Now I feel that the situation has changed."

Mr. Navalny, long Mr. Putin's loudest domestic critic, has used his populist touch on social media and humorous, tough and simple language to emerge as Russia's only opposition leader commanding a following across a broad cross-section of society. His status among Putin critics rose further in recent months when he survived the nerve-agent attack and then returned home to Russia even though he was facing near-certain arrest.

That arrest on Sunday, protesters said, helped unleash pent-up discontent over economic stagnation and widespread official corruption under Mr. Putin.

But Mr. Putin's Kremlin has outlasted protests before -- and there was little immediate indication that this time would be different. Russia's state media quickly made it clear that there was no chance the Kremlin would buckle under pressure, condemning the protests as a nationwide "wave of aggression" that could lead to prison terms against some participants.

"Attacking a police officer is a criminal offense," a state television report said. "Hundreds of videos were shot. All the faces are on them."

In Washington, the State Department said on Saturday that it "strongly condemns the use of harsh tactics against protesters and journalists" in Russia. The Russian Foreign Ministry countered by claiming that the United States had helped "incite radical elements" to join the unauthorized protests and that American officials were "facing a serious talking-to" by Russian diplomats.

Some protesters acknowledged that, despite the significance of Saturday's protests, it would take far greater numbers to change the course of the nation's politics. In neighboring Belarus, many more people protested for weeks last year against the authoritarian president, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko -- a close ally of Mr. Putin's -- without unseating him.

"I'm a bit disappointed, honestly," said Nikita Melekhin, a 21-year-old a nurse in Moscow. "I was expecting more."

On the streets, the police presented a monumental show of force, but largely refrained from large-scale violence. At Pushkin Square in central Moscow, the focal point of the rally in the capital, baton-wielding riot police repeatedly rushed the crowd to try to disperse it, but avoided using tear gas or other more violent crowd-control methods.

They arrested most of Mr. Navalny's top associates beforehand and detained his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, at a protest on Saturday before releasing her hours later.

Still, videos circulating on social media captured remarkable clashes between protesters and the police -- an indication of a new fearlessness among some Russians and of the uncertainty of what lies ahead. In several cases, protesters could be seen pelting the police with snowballs, even though prosecutors have in the past sought yearslong prison sentences for people who threw objects at officers.

Chanting "shame" protesters in Moscow also threw snowballs at a passing government car. After it came to a stop, people rushed at the car, which belongs to Russia's domestic intelligence agency, and started kicking it. The driver suffered an eye injury in the attack, the state news media reported later.

The state news media reported that at least 39 Moscow law-enforcement officers were injured in Saturday's events. There were also videos of officers viciously beating and kicking individual protesters, including outside the Moscow jail where Mr. Navalny has been confined.

The question now is whether the intensity of the clashes will further galvanize Russians -- or end up dissuading them from heeding the Navalny team's call for more protests.

Opinion polls in recent months -- of uncertain value in a country saturated by state propaganda and where people are often fearful of speaking out -- have indicated that Mr. Putin faces no grave challenge to his popularity from Mr. Navalny, whose name has never been allowed to appear on a presidential ballot. Mr. Putin refuses to utter his name in public.

A November survey by the Levada Center, an independent and highly respected polling organization, found that only 2 percent of respondents named Mr. Navalny as their first choice when asked whom they would choose if a

presidential election were to be held the following Sunday. Fifty-five percent named Mr. Putin. Nevertheless, Mr. Navalny's dramatic return to Russia last Sunday -- and his video report about Mr. Putin's purported secret palace, which has been viewed more than 70 million times on YouTube -- have raised the opposition leader's prominence across the country.

"I was never a big supporter of Navalny, and yet I understand perfectly well that this is a very serious situation," Vitaliy Blazhevich, 57, a university teacher, said in a telephone interview about why he had gone out to rally for Mr. Navalny in the city of Khabarovsk on the Chinese border.

"There's always hope that something will change," Mr. Blazhevich said.

Vasily Zimin, a 47-year-old partner in a Moscow law firm, trudged through slush and said he had come to protest the rampant corruption during Mr. Putin's time in power.

"How can you say, 'I can't take any more of this' while sitting on your couch?" he said.

Ivan Nechepurenko and Andrew E. Kramer contributed reporting from Moscow. Oleg Matsnev and Sophia Kishkovsky contributed research.

Photograph

Above, riot police officers attempted to break up a rally in Moscow in support of the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny, who had called on Russians across the country to take to the streets on Saturday. Left, protesters in Moscow held banners that read, "Don't be afraid, don't be silent."; A protester being detained in Moscow. More than 3,000 people were arrested in at least 109 cities. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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Document 32 of 72

Navalny's Return to Russia Ignites Interest of Youth

Troianovski, Anton; Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]23 Jan 2021: A.14.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Schools have scheduled exams and officials asked families to engage in nonpolitical activities like walks in the woods in an effort to keep young people away from demonstrations set for Saturday.

MOSCOW – A ninth grader in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg asked his classmates this week why it was that they did not like President Vladimir V. Putin.

According to their teacher, Irina V. Skachkova, they responded by citing the jailed opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny: "Putin has a palace that was built with stolen money, and Putin is himself a thief."

Mr. Navalny's dramatic return to Russia from Germany on Sunday and his immediate arrest, followed by his

release of a video documenting Mr. Putin's purported secret palace on the Black Sea, has captivated many young Russians and prompted the authorities to scramble to keep them away from protests planned across the country on Saturday.

Ms. Skachkova, like many teachers across Russia, said she was told by her superiors to come up with counterprogramming for her students on Saturday and to plead with parents that they keep young people from taking to the streets.

"Chasing media attention, THEY are putting KIDS in DANGER!" said the message she said she was told to send out to parents' chat groups.

Some universities threatened students with expulsion if they were caught attending the protests calling for Mr. Navalny's release, which are being organized in dozens of cities across Russia even though local officials have not authorized them.

The Education Ministry urged families to spend the weekend doing nonpolitical activities like "taking a walk in a park or a forest." Russia's telecommunications regulator said it had ordered social networks to take down posts promoting the Saturday protests, and the country's top investigative body said it had started a criminal investigation into the alleged incitement of minors to join.

But it was far from clear that the government's push to dissuade young people from protesting would have much of an impact. And there were indications it has raised even more awareness about the planned demonstrations. On YouTube, Mr. Navalny's 113-minute-long report about Mr. Putin's palace -- which the Kremlin has denied -- remained among the top trending videos in Russia for the fourth day in a row, with a total of more than 57 million views. On the social network TikTok, which is popular with young people, the hashtag dedicated to Saturday's protests remained accessible, and videos tagged with it had been viewed more than 125 million times.

"I know for certain that there are many good people outside my prison, and that backup is on its way," Mr. Navalny said in a message from jail that was posted on his Instagram page on Friday.

Mr. Navalny's supporters say the scale of Saturday's protests will be crucial in determining his fate. The 44-year-old opposition leader fell into a coma after a near-fatal poisoning in Siberia last August and was airlifted to Germany for treatment. Western officials say he was poisoned by a military-grade nerve agent in an assassination attempt by the Russian state.

Russian authorities denied the assertion and promised to arrest Mr. Navalny if he returned to Russia for violating the parole terms of a suspended sentence he received in 2014.

Nevertheless, Mr. Navalny flew home to Moscow on Sunday, and as expected, he was detained at passport control. He now faces a prison sentence. His supporters say only street protests can deter the Kremlin from locking him up for years.

Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin press secretary, told reporters Friday that it was "unacceptable" that unauthorized street protests were being planned and that "young people, kids and so on" were being invited to take part. Mr. Navalny's supporters said they were not specifically calling on children to join the protests.

Ahead of the protests, the police have also detained Mr. Navalny's supporters across Russia. Kira Yarmysh, Mr. Navalny's press secretary, was ordered jailed for nine days on Friday.

But the seemingly Sisyphean scramble by the Russian authorities to get social networks to remove pro-Navalny content highlighted what is increasingly emerging as a major vulnerability for the Kremlin: the availability of low-cost, high-speed, mostly uncensored internet access in almost every populated corner of the country's 11 time zones.

The government has tried and largely failed to rein in the internet. Last year, for example, it dropped a two-year-long effort to block the messaging network Telegram, a ban that users quickly found ways to circumvent.

On Friday, Russia's telecommunications regulator, Roskomnadzor, said YouTube, Instagram and the Russian social network VKontakte had begun following an order from Russia's prosecutor-general that they remove "calls for children to participate in illegal mass events."

Facebook, which owns Instagram, denied that it had removed any content.

"We've received requests from the local regulator to restrict access to certain content that calls for protest," Facebook said in a statement. "Since this content doesn't violate our community standards, it remains on our platform."

The other social networks did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The biggest problem, the regulator said, was TikTok, the Chinese-owned app that hosts seconds-long viral videos, often musically themed. Videos marked with the #Navalny hashtag on the network had been viewed more than 800 million times by Friday.

In one clip "liked" more than 500,000 times, a young woman who provides pithy English lessons offered tips on how to sound like an American -- "I'm gonna call my lawyer!" -- if detained at the protests.

"The highest level of activity continues on the social network," Roskomnadzor said in a statement, referring to TikTok. "New appeals are appearing, in some cases being disseminated in an artificial manner."

The regulator said TikTok had removed 38 percent of illegal content. TikTok did not respond to a request for comment.

Across the country, according to local news media reports, schools and universities were scheduling exams or festivities on Saturday to prevent students from attending the protests. A state university in the city of Kostroma north of Moscow warned students that by participating in protests, "you will destroy your reputation and cast a shadow on your university."

That prompted outraged responses on social media and, according to one student, only served to encourage others to consider attending.

"I know people who didn't plan on going anywhere, and then when they heard about these bans, they decided to find out what it was they were being prohibited from doing and then said they wanted to participate in the protests," said Kirill Prokofiev, a master's student in history.

Adam Satariano contributed reporting from London.

Photograph

Supporters of Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, say significant street protests will be key to determining his fate. (PHOTOGRAPH BY SERGEI ILNITSKY/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK)

DETAILS

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Russia Seeks to Divert Youths From Lure of Navalny Protests

Troianovski, Anton; Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]22 Jan 2021.

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FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

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DETAILS

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The Exceptional Courage of Aleksei Navalny

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FULL TEXT

After a near-fatal poisoning, Russia's top dissident steps back into the bear's den.

Aleksei Navalny knew he would be arrested as soon as he stepped foot on Russian soil, and he had no illusions about what this could mean.

Mr. Navalny had been abroad since August, after all, because President Vladimir Putin's political goons had poisoned him, and had failed to kill him only because a pilot had diverted his Moscow-bound flight to Omsk, where doctors kept him alive until he could be evacuated to Germany. Ironically, his flight was diverted again on Sunday -- this time by Russian authorities afraid of the welcoming crowd gathering at the Moscow airport where his flight was supposed to land.

Mr. Navalny knew he would be arrested, because he was arrested several times before. Repression is the only way Mr. Putin knows. But he is also learning that, in the era of social media, every arrest on a trumped-up charge only broadens Mr. Navalny's following and amplifies his indictment of the corruption of Russia's rulers.

Mr. Navalny knew what awaited him, because he knows as well as the dissidents of the Soviet era knew that the one thing a corrupt and authoritarian regime cannot abide is the truth. "I am not afraid. I know that I am in the right," Mr. Navalny told supporters at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport before he kissed his wife goodbye and was hustled off by police officers who warned that they would use force if he disobeyed their orders. "All the criminal cases against me are fabricated."

The charge used to seize him was violation of a suspended sentence imposed for a phony charge of embezzlement in 2014. He had failed, declared Russia's federal prison service, to make his mandated bimonthly report to authorities. That he was recuperating from an assassination attempt by the government was not noted by the prison service, any more than his return and arrest were noted by the state-controlled media.

But Russians know. The internet has given Mr. Navalny, 44, a platform that Mr. Putin and his political police have not been able to silence. His populist, hard-hitting and often humorous videos deriding the "crooks and thieves" among the elite have been viewed millions of times, increasingly touching on a growing discontent among Russians over brazen corruption and a stagnant economy. Though repeatedly barred from challenging Mr. Putin directly at the polls, Mr. Navalny and his supporters around Russia campaigned to win seats on local and regional councils, with an unexpected measure of success.

Finally, in August, came the outrageous attempt on Mr. Navalny's life. Poisoned on a trip to Siberia, he barely survived. Only international pressure compelled the authorities to allow his evacuation to Germany. There, the poison was identified as Novichok, a nerve agent developed by Soviet and Russian chemists and infamously used in an attempt on the life of a former Russian double agent in Britain. More revelations followed: In December, independent researchers used leaked phone records to show that Russian agents had trailed Mr. Navalny on his fateful journey to Siberia, and Mr. Navalny himself placed a telephone call to one of them pretending to be a senior security official, extracting what amounted to a detailed confession.

Mr. Putin, of course, dismissed the evidence, accusing Mr. Navalny of working for American intelligence agencies and claiming -- with a smirk -- that had Russian agents wanted to kill him, "they would have probably finished the job."

They did not, and succeeded instead in turning a nettlesome gadfly into an international hero. If Mr. Putin decides to imprison Mr. Navalny, he will have a celebrated political prisoner on his hands. If he sets Mr. Navalny free, he will appear weak to his lieutenants and followers, and will be under constant assault from the Navalny-led opposition. The option Mr. Putin is least likely to consider is to confront Mr. Navalny openly and fairly at the ballot box, say, in the parliamentary elections looming in September.

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Credit: By The Editorial Board

Photograph



Aleksei Navalny, Russia's opposition leader, on a plane in Berlin. He was detained by police shortly after he arrived in Moscow on Sunday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Kirill Kudryavtsev/Agence France-Presse -- Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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Navalny, From Jail, Issues Report Describing an Opulent Putin 'Palace'

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]19 Jan 2021.

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FULL TEXT



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MOSCOW — A team led by Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny published a sprawling investigation on Tuesday describing a secret palace built for President Vladimir Putin on the Black Sea, with the report's release

coming less than 24 hours after Navalny had been ordered jailed

The report was the latest swipe in Navalny's dramatic battle with Putin that is playing out before an online audience of millions, and it arrived as the opposition leader's supporters seek to energize street protests planned for this weekend.

The investigation —complete with floor plans, financial details and interior photographs of a compound Navalny says cost more than \$1 billion —appeared to offer the most comprehensive accounting yet of a huge residence the president is said to have built for himself on southern Russia's verdant seashore.

The Kremlin denied the findings in the report, which went online Tuesday as a 113-minute YouTube video and a lengthy, illustrated text version that also invited users to post pictures of Putin's purported luxury to Facebook and Instagram. The video has been viewed more than 4 million times on YouTube.

"They will keep on stealing more and more, until they bankrupt the entire country," Navalny says in the video, referring to Putin and his circle. "Russia sells huge amounts of oil, gas, metals, fertilizer and timber —but people's incomes keep falling and falling, because Putin has his palace."

Navalny —who flew home Sunday after being treated in Germany for a near-fatal poisoning in Siberia in August —was arrested at passport control in full view of Russians watching live broadcasts of his arrival. On Monday, Navalny was ordered jailed for 30 days during a proceeding in a makeshift courtroom at a Moscow-area police station, a portrait of a Stalin-era secret police chief on the wall behind him.

Before being led away, Navalny called on Russians to "take to the streets" against Putin in videos his staff posted online. And on Tuesday, his staff posted the palace investigation, which Navalny recorded while he was in Germany. Text in the video's opening frames exhorts viewers to join demonstrations at 2 p.m. Saturday in "the central streets of your cities."

"Navalny has been fighting for our rights for many years," the text says. "It is now our turn to fight for him."

Reports of a palace being built for Putin near the Black Sea resort town of Gelendzhik first emerged more than a decade ago. Satellite images show an imposing, rectangular building, a grand alley, a helipad and other structures connected by a winding road on a remote section of hilly coastline.

The project has long been cloaked in secrecy, and Putin's spokesman on Tuesday repeated his denials that Putin had a palace there. His official Black Sea residence is a more humble compound in the city of Sochi, a 150-mile drive away.

"We already explained years ago that Putin has no palace in Gelendzhik," the spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, was quoted as saying by Russian media.

Navalny presented financial records and other evidence that he said points to the palace having been built for Putin by associates and called it "the biggest bribe in history."

Some details had previously appeared in Russian news reports, but Navalny presented them in his trademark, populist style. His past investigative reports of the Russian elite's wealth had propelled him to prominence as an anti-corruption activist and opposition leader.

His team found that nearly 30 square miles of land around the palace was controlled by Russia's domestic intelligence agency, that the airspace above it was restricted and that the coast guard did not allow boats within 1 mile.

There were also new, eye-popping depictions of what the report said was Putin's lavish lifestyle.

A contractor, Navalny said, had leaked detailed floor plans, and his team used them to create interactive, three-dimensional models of the interior. The ground floor includes a spa, a movie theater, a wine cellar and an outdoor area with fountains described as an "aqua disco." The next floor up, according to the report, has a larger theater, a casino hall and a windowless hookah lounge with a pole-dancing stage.

The report also describes an underground hockey rink, a church, a tunnel to the seaside and a 260-foot-long bridge leading to a teahouse.

"We are publishing the blueprints of his palace," Maria Pevchikh, who heads Navalny's investigative unit, wrote on Twitter, referring to Putin. "Alas, the grandpa crazy about his own security won't be able to use it anymore."

In remarks made to journalists before the report's release, Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, brushed aside Western calls for Navalny to be freed.

"We hear these calls, but in this case we cannot and will not take these statements into consideration," Peskov said. "This is an absolutely domestic issue, and we will not allow anyone to interfere in it."

Navalny himself spent Monday in a high-security section of a notorious Moscow jail, Matrosskaya Tishina. In a message to his supporters that he passed along to his lawyers and that was posted on Instagram, Navalny said he had no regrets about returning to Russia, despite having been arrested.

Of the special jail in which he was being held, Navalny wrote: "I read about it in books, and now here I am myself. That's Russian life for you."

DETAILS

Subject:	Court hearings &proceedings; Airports; Video recordings; Trials; Police stations
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People:	Navalny, Alexei Putin, Vladimir
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
Identifier / keyword:	World Space And Astronomy Economy, Commerce And Industry Media Crime, Law And Justice Crime And Criminals Science And Technology Sochi (Russia) Siberia Russia Germany Black Sea Twitter Facebook Inc YoutubeCom Instagram Inc Stalin, Joseph Putin, Vladimir V Navalny, Aleksei A News And News Media Satellites Corruption (Institutional) Prisons And Prisoners Social Media Computers And The Internet Video Recordings, Downloads And Streaming Po litics And Government
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Navalny Calls for Protests as His Freedom Hangs in Balance

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FULL TEXT

Mr. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, was arrested at a Moscow airport after five months in Germany, recovering from a near-fatal poisoning.

MOSCOW – A judge ordered the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny to be jailed for 30 days, ahead of a decision that could put him behind bars for years, after an extraordinary, rushed court hearing on Monday held inside a police station within a day of his return from Germany.

Moments after the judge announced her decision, Mr. Navalny called for protests in a video message to his supporters. One of his top aides, Leonid Volkov, said Mr. Navalny's nationwide network was preparing to organize demonstrations across Russia on Saturday.

"Do not be afraid," Mr. Navalny said in the video, which he had recorded in a makeshift courtroom set up in a police station meeting room. "Take to the streets. Don't do it for me, do it for yourselves and for your future."

The fast-paced events came the day after Mr. Navalny, who spent months abroad recovering from a near-deadly poisoning, was arrested at a Moscow airport on accusations of violating the terms of an earlier suspended prison sentence. He spent the night at a nearby police station without access to a lawyer.

President Vladimir V. Putin has long sought to minimize Mr. Navalny's significance – down to not uttering his name -- but the decision on how harshly to crack down on Mr. Navalny and his supporters in the coming weeks could have far-reaching implications for the Kremlin. On Monday, condemnation of Mr. Navalny's arrest poured in from the United Nations and just about every major Western capital, but the Russian government breezily dismissed the criticism.

"We are not a lady coming out to a ball," Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov said during a news conference, responding to a question about the damage done to Russia's international image.

As international pressure mounted, Mr. Navalny faced a judge not in a regular courtroom, but inside the police station in Khimki, a city bordering Moscow, where he was being held. A lawyer for Mr. Navalny, Vadim Kobzev, said he was notified of the hearing minutes before it started.

Several hours after the hearing began, Mr. Kobzev said that Mr. Navalny had been ordered jailed until Feb. 15, pending another hearing on charges of violating the terms of a three-and-a-half-year suspended prison sentence he received in 2014. Europe's top human rights court said Mr. Navalny was unfairly convicted of financial crimes in that case.

Russia's prison service claims that Mr. Navalny repeatedly violated parole, and it has petitioned to convert the suspended sentence into real jail time. If the court approves the petition, Mr. Navalny could remain in prison until July 2024 – after Russia's next presidential election – although the sentence could be reduced because he spent most of 2014 under house arrest in the case.

Russia's judicial system is not independent, but it usually aims to preserve the veneer of procedural impartiality in cases against opposition figures. On Monday, however, the authorities seemed to be doing all they could to keep Mr. Navalny's supporters off-balance by processing his case at breakneck speed.

Images from inside the makeshift courtroom showed a judge in a black robe sitting at a simple table with a microphone, with a messy bulletin board behind her and a copy machine off to one side.

"What is happening here is impossible," Mr. Navalny said in the video. "This is the highest degree of lawlessness – I can't call it anything else."

Olga Mikhailova, another lawyer for Mr. Navalny, said that his legal team would file a formal complaint about Monday's decision. The lawyers also said that he would be held in a high-security prison in central Moscow.

Mr. Navalny, long one of Mr. Putin's most prominent critics, collapsed and fell into a coma in August, and was airlifted to Germany for treatment. Laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden determined he had been poisoned by a military-grade nerve agent from the Novichok family, which was developed in the Soviet Union and Russia. The opposition leader vowed to return to Russia once he recovered, and last week announced his plans to fly to Moscow, despite the threat of arrest upon arrival.

That is exactly what happened Sunday evening: After Mr. Navalny's flight landed at Sheremetyevo Airport, police officers met him at passport control and took him into custody. He spent the night at Police Station No. 2 in Khimki, near the airport, and was denied access to his lawyer. Mr. Kobzev was not allowed into the police station until Monday morning.

"It seems that the grandpa in the bunker is so afraid of everything that they demonstratively ripped apart the code of criminal procedure and threw it in the trash," Mr. Navalny said, using one of his epithets for Mr. Putin.

Most journalists gathered outside the police station were not being let in, but at least three pro-Kremlin news outlets were allowed to enter. The police cited Mr. Navalny's lack of a recent coronavirus test as the reason the hearing was not held in a regular courtroom and said attendance was restricted for reasons of "sanitary-epidemiological safety."

"I demand that this procedure be as open as possible so that all media outlets have the possibility to observe the incredible absurdity of what is happening here," Mr. Navalny told the judge, according to another video posted by his spokeswoman.

As Mr. Navalny faced the judge inside, several hundred journalists and supporters stood in the bitter cold outside the barbed-wire fence ringing the police station, which is in a residential neighborhood of Soviet-era buildings.

Some of his backers chanted "Freedom!" and "Let him go!"

Handcuffed, Mr. Navalny flashed a victory sign as he was led out of the police station after the hearing.

Some supporters of Mr. Navalny who arrived at the scene took refuge in the stairwells of nearby buildings. Irina Fokina and Sergei Fokin, a couple in their mid-30s, said they had been glued to online live-streams all Sunday evening as the drama of Mr. Navalny's arrival unfolded.

Mr. Navalny was detained minutes after he arrived in Russia for the first time since August, when he was flown to Berlin in a coma. Russia's prison service said that while recuperating in Germany, he had violated the terms of his suspended sentence, which require him to check in with the authorities twice a month.

"What an enormous embarrassment for the whole judicial system," Ivan Zhdanov, the director of Mr. Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, posted on Twitter. "This is simply something incredible."

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany called for the immediate release of Mr. Navalny and for Russia to examine the causes of his poisoning, her spokesman said. In the United States, both the departing and incoming administrations also called for Mr. Navalny's release, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo writing that "confident political leaders do not fear competing voices."

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, the European Union's executive branch, said in a statement, "The Russian authorities must immediately release him and ensure his safety."

"Detention of political opponents is against Russia's international commitments," she added.

Russian officials dismissed the criticism. Mr. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, said that Western officials simply saw the case as a welcome distraction from their own problems.

"We are seeing how they've grabbed onto yesterday's news about Navalny's return to Russia -- one can really feel how happily they're commenting on it," Mr. Lavrov said. "They are happy because it lets Western politicians think that they can thus distract attention from the global crisis in which the liberal model of development has ended up."

As is often the case in Russia, historical symbolism loomed over the events on Monday. Photographs from inside the makeshift courtroom showed a portrait just behind Mr. Navalny of Genrikh Yagoda -- a director of the Soviet secret police who supervised Stalin's show trials in the 1930s and expanded the prison-camp system known as the Gulag.

On Russian state television's marquee news show on Sunday night, the host Dmitry Kiselyov drew a different comparison, underscoring the government line that Mr. Navalny was working for Western intelligence agencies. He likened Mr. Navalny's flight from Berlin to the sealed train that took Lenin from Switzerland, via Germany, to St. Petersburg in 1917, setting the stage for the Russian Revolution.

"The assault force isn't quite on the same scale, but the Germans are in their repertoire," Mr. Kiselyov said. "And everything is set up to show that they're up to something special."

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny, above center, after his court hearing in Khimki, Russia, on Monday. He is to be jailed for the next 30 days. Left, some of Mr. Navalny's supporters outside the police station where he was held after Sunday's arrest. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY EVGENY FELDMAN/MEDUZA, VIA REUTERS; MAXIM SHMETOV/REUTERS)

DETAILS

Subject:	Criminal sentences; Court hearings &proceedings; Airports; Poisoning; Criminal procedure; Police stations; Judges &magistrates
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Russian Court Orders Navalny Held for 30 Days

Troianovski, Anton; Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]18 Jan 2021.

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FULL TEXT



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In Battle of Wills With Putin, Navalny Is Jailed in Moscow Return

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FULL TEXT

Aleksei Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, landed in Russia Sunday night five months after he was poisoned with a nerve agent.

MOSCOW – Aleksei A. Navalny returned to his home country Sunday, five months after a near-fatal nerve-agent attack, and was arrested at the border, a show of fearlessness by Russia's most prominent opposition leader and of anxiety by President Vladimir V. Putin.

In hours of live-streamed drama that played out in Berlin, in the air and at two Moscow airports, Mr. Navalny careened headlong into near-certain detention after deciding to leave the relative safety of Germany, where he had been recovering from last summer's poisoning.

Hundreds of people braved the bitter cold outside Moscow's Vnukovo Airport to greet Mr. Navalny, but the low-cost Russian airline he was flying was diverted just before landing to a different Moscow airport. There, at passport control, Mr. Navalny was confronted by uniformed policemen in black masks.

He embraced his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, before being led away.

"I am not afraid," Mr. Navalny told reporters just before he was detained, standing in front of a neon sign at the airport that portrayed the Kremlin. "I know that I am in the right and that all the criminal cases against me are fabricated."

Mr. Navalny's arrest had been expected, but the day offered some of the most dramatic images of recent years underlining both Russia's rising domestic discontent and the Kremlin's jitters over it.

Scores of riot police officers in camouflage uniforms and shiny black helmets swarmed the arrival halls of

Vnukovo, detaining dozens. Other officers, some in plainclothes, swooped in on some of Mr. Navalny's top associates as they dined at an airport cafe and led them away.

Russia's independent media offered nonstop live coverage, freely accessible on Russia's mostly uncensored internet, from the moment German police officers escorted Mr. Navalny to the tarmac in Berlin. Dozhd, an online television channel, reported that its live feed Sunday evening was viewed six million times.

Ever mindful of the social-media optics back home, Mr. Navalny responded in Russian to questions lobbed at him in English as he stepped on the plane in Berlin. Just before takeoff, he posted a video to Instagram showing his wife delivering a line from a popular Russian crime movie: "Bring us some vodka, boy. We're flying home."

His style -- tough, populist and humorous all at the same time -- are what helped make Mr. Navalny, 44, Russia's best-known opposition leader. An online audience of millions watch for his YouTube videos, which allege widespread corruption in the ruling elite.

But his followers are not the only ones watching.

In August, Mr. Navalny was poisoned in Siberia by a military-grade nerve agent, in what he and Western officials say was an assassination attempt by the Russian state.

In December, following up on an investigation by the research group Bellingcat, Mr. Navalny pretended to be a Russian official and called a security-service agent he said was part of the unit that tried to kill him, extracting what sounded like a confession.

Last Wednesday, however, Mr. Navalny said he was coming home, despite the threat of arrest. "Russia is my country," he said. "Moscow is my city. And I miss them."

The question now is whether Mr. Navalny will be jailed for only a few days or weeks -- as has happened to him repeatedly in recent years -- or for much longer.

Soon after his detention Sunday evening, Russia's state penitentiary service said Mr. Navalny would remain behind bars pending a court hearing for violating the terms of a suspended sentence he initially received in 2014. The sentence grew out of a financial-crime case brought against him and his brother that the European Court of Human Rights later declared unwarranted.

The penitentiary service says that while recuperating in Germany last year, Mr. Navalny failed to report to it twice a month, as required by the court. In the days before his trip back home, the service warned that it would have him arrested on those grounds.

Mr. Navalny's fate could depend in part on the intensity of the backlash to his arrest at home and abroad. In Russia, his backers called for protests in the coming days, and noted that his lawyer was not being allowed access to the opposition leader.

"Aleksei Navalny has been kidnapped, he is in danger," a senior adviser to Mr. Navalny, Leonid Volkov, posted on Telegram several hours after the arrest. "He is in the hands of people who have already tried to kill him."

In the United States, Jake Sullivan, the designated national security adviser to President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr., called for Mr. Navalny's immediate release in a posting on Twitter: "The Kremlin's attacks on Mr. Navalny are not just a violation of human rights, but an affront to the Russian people who want their voices heard."

The departing secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, also condemned the arrest. "Aleksei Navalny is not the problem," he said in a statement. "We demand his immediate and unconditional release."

Mr. Putin, who has ruled for 21 years, continues to retain tight control of the television airwaves, domestic politics and a sprawling security apparatus. But his popularity with the Russian public has ebbed in recent years amid stagnant incomes and widespread disgust with official corruption.

Mr. Navalny has taken advantage of the discontent, building up a nationwide network of local offices and using social media to highlight the elite's hidden wealth and the struggles of regular Russians.

Among the supporters hoping to greet him Sunday at Vnukovo Airport was Vladimir Murzin, a 50-year-old legal consultant. Mr. Murzin, said he and several others had traveled from Tambov -- a 300-mile drive -- to be there. The opposition leader's poisoning, he said, had only intensified his "years-long fury at the unfairness of what is happening in our country under the Putin regime."

"This is a man whom the masses will follow," Mr. Murzin said of Mr. Navalny. "Every citizen who disagrees with the current regime needs each other's support."

But Mr. Navalny's flight on the state-owned Russian airline Pobeda -- meaning "Victory" -- never did make it to Vnukovo.

As the Boeing 737 approached Moscow, air traffic controllers radioed the flight's pilots and said the plane could not land because of a blocked runway. The flight -- and three others -- was diverted to another Moscow airport, Sheremetyevo.

An official statement later blamed a stalled snowplow for the diversions. But it appeared to be a transparent ploy by the Russian authorities to defuse protests by the Navalny supporters gathered at Vnukovo.

"This once again shows what is happening in Russia," Mr. Navalny said after his flight was diverted, apologizing to his fellow passengers for the inconvenience. "Those in power are not just disgusting thieves, they are also totally pathetic people who are spending their time on complete nonsense."

The scale of the operation to manage the opposition leader's return belied Mr. Putin's insistence that Mr. Navalny is of minor importance. In December, denying that the state had anything to do with Mr. Navalny's poisoning, Mr. Putin said: "Who needs him?"

Mr. Navalny -- himself barred from running for president in 2018 -- has exhorted Russians to use elections to chip away at Mr. Putin's power by voting for the best-positioned opposition candidate, even though the votes are not free and fair. The next test of that strategy will come in September, when nationwide parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place.

Last year, Mr. Putin gave himself the ability to rule until 2036 by pushing through constitutional amendments that allow him to run for two additional terms. At the Moscow airports where Sunday's drama played out, some of his opponents acknowledged that achieving political change in their country looked increasingly to be a long, dangerous and potentially bloody road.

"It will be necessary to sacrifice many lives," Svetlana A. Utkina, a 52-year-old Russian teacher and Navalny supporter, said in an interview at Sheremetyevo soon after the opposition leader was detained there.

"I am a pessimist and an idealist," she said. "Because, if they keep on squeezing people for long, people's fear will eventually be squeezed out as well."

Mr. Navalny's wife was not arrested, and the arrivals hall erupted in chants of "Yu-li-a!" as she emerged from customs without her husband.

A scrum of journalists followed her into the subzero Fahrenheit Moscow night outside the airport. Just before getting into a car, she said, according to video footage from the scene: "The most important thing that Aleksei said today is that he is not afraid. I also am not afraid, and I call on you all not to be afraid."

Oleg Matsnev and Sophia Kishkovsky contributed research.

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny before his flight left Berlin on Sunday. He had been in Germany since August. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MSTYSLAV CHERNOV/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (A1); Aleksei A. Navalny at Sheremetyevo Airport. Officials rerouted his flight, citing a blocked runway at Vnukovo Airport, where supporters of Mr. Navalny had gathered. (PHOTOGRAPH BY KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES); Yulia Navalnaya, center right, Mr. Navalny's wife, moments after he was arrested and taken away by Russian officials Sunday. Above, a Navalny supporter being detained at Vnukovo Airport. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A12)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; Human rights; Corruption in government; Opposition parties; Biological &chemical weapons; Arrests; Political dissent
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Location:	Russia
People:	Navalny, Alexei; Putin, Vladimir
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LINKS

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Navalny Returns to Moscow and Is Arrested on Arrival

Troianovski, Anton; Nechepurenko, Ivan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]17 Jan 2021.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

MOSCOW — Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who recuperated in Germany from a near-deadly poisoning, returned to Moscow on Sunday and was arrested shortly after leaving his plane.

The arrest of Navalny could set off an international backlash and protests at home. He has accused the Kremlin of trying to murder him in YouTube videos viewed more than 40 million times.

Russia's penitentiary service, which has said that Navalny was wanted for violating the terms of a prior suspended sentence, released a statement saying that Navalny had been detained pending a court hearing.

Navalny was detained at passport control at Sheremetyevo Airport in Moscow by police officers in black surgical-type masks. Video footage from the scene showed him embracing his wife just before he was led away.

His spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, posted on Twitter that his lawyer had not been allowed to accompany Navalny because the lawyer had crossed through passport control before he did.

"Alexei has been taken away by police officers at the border. Without an explanation why," Yarmysh said. "They did not let his lawyer accompany him because she had 'crossed the border' a second earlier."

Before he was detained at passport control, Navalny gave an impromptu statement to journalists. He stood in the transit area of the airport's Terminal D, before a lit-up screen showing a photo of the Kremlin, and apologized to air travelers inconvenienced by the air-traffic tumult surrounding his arrival.

"I am not afraid," he said in remarks carried by Russian news media livestreams from the scene. "I know that I am right. I know all the criminal cases against me are fabricated."

Just before his plane took off from Berlin, Navalny posted a video to Instagram in which his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, who was seated next to him, quoted from a popular Russian crime drama: "Bring us some vodka, boy. We're flying home."

Navalny's flight on the low-cost, Russian state-owned carrier Pobeda —meaning "Victory" —landed just after 8 p.m. Moscow time, or noon in New York. The flight was delayed departing from Berlin and then was diverted from Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, where his supporters had gathered, to Sheremetyevo Airport.

At Vnukovo, scores of journalists and Navalny supporters had gathered in the arrivals hall, where the international arrivals area had been sectioned off with a tall screen. Police officers in uniform and plainclothes at one point walked up to Lyubov Sobol, a prominent ally of Navalny, as she dined at an airport cafe.

They took her by the arms and led her away, along with several associates.

Riot police officers in shiny black helmets and camouflage, using the cordoned-off underground passageway below the arrivals hall as a staging area, soon ascended from below and filed into the hall. They pushed the crowd waiting to pass through metal detectors outside and detained some people, leading them outside or down the stairs.

Vladimir Murzin, a 50-year-old legal consultant, was turned away by police when he tried to enter Vnukovo because he did not have a plane ticket. He said he and several others traveled from Tambov —a 300-mile drive —to greet Navalny. The opposition leader's poisoning in August, he said, had raised his "yearslong fury at the unfairness of what is happening in our country under the Putin regime."

"This is a man whom the masses will follow," Murzin said of Navalny. "Every citizen who disagrees with the current regime needs each other's support."

Even before the trip, authorities were laying groundwork for Navalny's arrest and increasing pressure on his backers.

A camera operator who works with Navalny, Pavel Zelensky, was jailed Saturday on suspicion of "inciting extremism" in a 3-month-old tweet, according to his lawyer. An activist in the St. Petersburg region who planned to drive to Vnukovo reported that the van he was going to take to Moscow —bearing the slogan "Say no to Putin!" —was seized by police. Sobol earlier tweeted that plainclothes agents were trailing her and her child from aisle to aisle at the grocery store.

Russia's federal prison service released a lengthy statement Thursday accusing Navalny of "malicious violations" of a suspended prison sentence he initially received in 2014. While recuperating in Germany last year, the service said, Navalny failed to report to it twice a month as required by his sentence.

"The Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in Moscow is obliged to take all actions to detain the violator A.A. Navalny pending a court decision to replace the suspended sentence with a real one," the statement said.

But analysts said that despite the bureaucratic drumbeat, the final decision over Navalny's fate would be made in the Kremlin. In years past, authorities have avoided locking Navalny up for longer than a few weeks at a time, apparently to avoid allowing him to become a locus of opposition to President Vladimir Putin while in prison. Still, his prominence rose, along with Russians' discontent. Navalny's populist and tough-talking style, slick and humorous YouTube videos, and relentless derision of the "crooks and thieves" in the ruling class all struck a chord with Russians frustrated by corrupt officials and stagnant incomes.

The government barred him from running for president in 2018. But Navalny, who is 44, built up a nationwide network of regional offices and drew an online audience of millions for his video exposes of the hidden wealth and the foreign real estate holdings of the Russian elite. He exhorted Russians to use regional and local elections —even though they are not free and fair—to chip away at Putin's power by supporting opposition candidates who had the best chance of winning.

Navalny fell ill from the poisoning in August, while returning from a trip to Siberia before elections there. He could be heard screaming in the airplane bathroom before he collapsed. The pilot's quick emergency landing, and Navalny's immediate treatment on the ground in the city of Omsk, most likely saved his life, his doctors later said. After a standoff, Putin agreed to let the comatose Navalny be flown to Berlin for treatment.

In Germany, a military laboratory determined that Navalny had been poisoned by a chemical from the Soviet- and Russian-developed Novichok family of nerve agents. Navalny regained consciousness and pledged to return to Russia, while blaming Putin for the attempt on his life.

In December, evidence emerged to back up that version. The research group Bellingcat, working with the Russian news outlet The Insider, used leaked phone records to show that officers from a secret Russian spy unit with expertise in poisonous substances trailed Navalny for years and were nearby when he was presumably poisoned. Navalny then placed a call to a man he said was a member of the unit assigned to assassinate him and pretended to be a senior Russian official seeking to debrief him. In a video viewed more than 20 million times on YouTube, Navalny can be seen extracting a confession from the man, who describes a plot to plant the poison on the inside seam of the crotch area of the opposition leader's underwear.

Putin denied the accusations. He told journalists that Navalny was working for U.S. intelligence agencies and that if Russian agents had truly wanted to kill him, "they would have probably finished the job."

Navalny returned to Russia earlier than many expected. Some analysts had speculated that he would wait until closer to parliamentary elections in September. Moscow's winter weather —the forecast for Sunday evening is minus 4 Fahrenheit —tends to discourage mass protests.

On Saturday, Navalny returned to Instagram to thank his German hosts. Chancellor Angela Merkel had helped arrange his treatment in Germany and visited him in the hospital. He convalesced at a village in the Black Forest, where local news reports described bodyguards, unmarked police cars and even a helicopter ensuring Navalny's security.

"Do you hear 'the kindest, helpful, friendly people' and not immediately think of Germans?" he wrote. "Then you are wrong. That's exactly who they are."

One of Navalny's main associates, Leonid Volkov, said in a YouTube video Wednesday that Navalny's imminent return to Russia had put Putin in a bind.

"If Putin decides to arrest him on arrival, he'll certainly become the world's Political Prisoner No. 1 —as with Nelson Mandela," Volkov said of Navalny. "The second alternative for Putin isn't any better. Leaving Navalny free would mean showing weakness in the eyes of his inner circle."

DETAILS

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Navalny Says He'll Return To Moscow On Sunday

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]14 Jan 2021: A.9.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The opposition leader has been recovering in Germany from a poisoning attack widely attributed to the Russian state.

MOSCOW – Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who has been in Germany for months recovering from a nerve-agent attack that Western officials say was carried out by the Russian state, said on Wednesday that he would return to Russia this weekend despite the threat of being jailed upon arrival.

Mr. Navalny said in social-media posts that he had bought a ticket for a flight to Moscow this Sunday. His announcement that he will return came just two days after Russia's prison authority petitioned a court to imprison Mr. Navalny for what it said was violating the terms of an earlier suspended prison sentence.

"They are doing everything they can to scare me," Mr. Navalny said in an Instagram post on Wednesday, referring to the Russian authorities. "But I don't much care about what they are doing. Russia is my country, Moscow is my city, and I miss them."

Mr. Navalny was poisoned by a military-grade nerve agent in Siberia in August in what he and Western officials say was an assassination attempt by the Russian government. He fell into a coma, and was flown to Berlin for treatment.

He said on Wednesday that he now believed he was well enough to return to Russia. He said he planned to travel on the low-cost airline Pobeda -- Russian for "victory" -- and that he would arrive in Moscow on Sunday.

"Come meet me!" he said.

Within days of emerging from a medically induced coma at the Charité hospital in Berlin in September, Mr. Navalny pledged to return to Russia. But his surprise announcement on Wednesday about the timing of that return jolted Russian politics -- setting up a high-stakes decision for the Kremlin on how to respond.

Last month, working with the open-source investigative organization Bellingcat, Mr. Navalny released two YouTube videos documenting an elaborate plot by Russia's domestic intelligence service, the F.S.B., to kill him. The videos have been viewed a total of 45 million times.

At the same time, the Kremlin raised the pressure on Mr. Navalny, signaling that he would end up in jail if he returned to Russia. President Vladimir V. Putin described Mr. Navalny as a C.I.A. asset and quipped that if Russian

agents had wanted to kill the opposition leader, "they would have probably finished the job."

But imprisoning the opposition leader would carry risks for the Kremlin because the move could set off protests, and, by announcing his imminent return, Mr. Navalny appears to be calling Mr. Putin's bluff. An ally of Mr. Navalny, Lyubov Sobol, was jailed in Moscow for 48 hours in December, then released.

"The Kremlin has gone so far in its game of raising the stakes, sharply increasing expectations that Navalny will be arrested, that not arresting him will be seen by conservatives and security officials as a show of weakness," Tatiana Stanovaya, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center, said in a post on Telegram. "They expected that he would not return."

There was no public reaction Wednesday from the Kremlin to Mr. Navalny's announcement that he planned to return. Last month, Mr. Putin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, said the opposition leader was free to return to Russia like any Russian citizen.

Polls show that Mr. Navalny is Russia's most prominent opposition figure -- with an online audience in the tens of millions, well beyond the liberal strongholds of Moscow and St. Petersburg -- and mass protests in Russia's Far East and in Moscow in the last two years have underscored society's pent-up discontent.

"I ended up in Germany, having arrived in an intensive-care box, for one reason: they tried to kill me," Mr. Navalny wrote on Instagram. "Putin, having ordered my killing, is screeching in his bunker and ordering all his servants to do everything to prevent me from returning."

After Mr. Navalny's announcement, his team created a Facebook page urging people to greet him at Moscow's Vnukovo airport on Sunday evening. Within hours, some 3,000 people responded that they might go.

Aleksei A. Navalny

DETAILS

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LINKS

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Document 41 of 72

Claim of Killer Underwear Brings Protest in Moscow, But It Is Lightly Attended

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]24 Dec 2020: A.13.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Aleksei Navalny, the top critic of President Putin, has aired evidence that he was poisoned by his own government. Russians have responded with fear, disbelief and a lot of apathy.

MOSCOW – Vitaly Mansky, a filmmaker, posed in front of the headquarters of Russia's domestic intelligence agency brandishing a pair of checkered blue boxers. He was immediately detained by the police.

It was a one-man protest in response to mounting evidence of a crime that, even in a country used to government abuse, stunned many Russians. The opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny says the state tried to assassinate him by planting a deadly chemical on his underpants.

But Mr. Mansky, who walked free a few hours after his detention on Tuesday, later voiced disappointment with his compatriots. For all the online anger and underwear-related memes generated in recent days by Mr. Navalny's revelations about his poisoning -- not all of which have been independently verified -- there was almost no one protesting in the streets.

Mr. Navalny's evidence of a state-organized assassination attempt "should have changed everything in this country," Mr. Mansky told Echo of Moscow, a popular liberal radio station, on its morning show Wednesday. "I was disappointed that I was there alone. I think that even 100,000 people would have been too few. But no one came." Russians are living through one of the most turbulent times in recent history and yet for the most part, between the holidays and the pandemic, they are putting their heads down. Many are scared to voice any outrage, fearing they have too much to lose. Others may not believe that Mr. Navalny was poisoned by their government.

Only one-third of Russians believe Mr. Navalny was poisoned, an independent pollster, the Levada Institute, found in September, before Mr. Navalny's most recent revelations, and only one-third of those believed the government was involved.

"He's such small fry," said Valentin Leontyev, an 81-year-old retired oil engineer in Moscow, dismissing the idea that Mr. Navalny was poisoned. "What would be the point?"

Mr. Navalny is continuing to recuperate in Germany and vows to return to Russia. While in Germany, he worked with Bellingcat, an open-source investigative group, to produce a report and a video showing how leaked telephone records establish that Russian agents had sought to poison him. On Monday, he released a new video that shows him masquerading as a Russian official and extracting a confession over the phone by a man that Mr. Navalny says was part of the assassination squad.

In the video, the man can be heard saying that the poison was planted inside Mr. Navalny's underwear and that he had survived because he received swift medical care. Mr. Navalny says the man was Konstantin Kudryavtsev, a chemical warfare specialist at the Federal Security Service, known as the F.S.B., a successor to the K.G.B.

There was no independent confirmation that Mr. Navalny had indeed spoken to Mr. Kudryavtsev. The F.S.B. has said Mr. Navalny's video was a forgery, enabled by Western intelligence.

The question for Russia and President Vladimir V. Putin is whether the poisoning of Mr. Navalny will have longer-term consequences by further discrediting the government in the eyes of the public -- or by heightening the fear of those who would otherwise speak out.

"This is going into the piggy bank of actions that the state has undertaken against us," said Anastasia Nikolskaya, a psychologist who conducts regular focus groups across the country, describing the reaction of many to the Navalny case. "At some point this will explode."

The Kremlin seems to be gearing up for tensions: this week, Parliament rushed to pass bills imposing new restrictions on protests and free speech and giving the government new powers to block foreign social-media sites like Facebook and YouTube. On Wednesday, a Moscow court handed down a 2-year suspended prison sentence to Yuliya Galyamina, a Moscow district councilwoman, for violating public assembly rules in her campaign against Mr. Putin's constitutional amendments earlier this year.

Though few Russians have taken to the streets to protest Mr. Navalny's poisoning, his attempted assassination has already become a noted event. The opposition leader's two videos laying out his case have already been viewed a total of 38 million times on YouTube. Yandex, Russia's main search engine and internet company, described his poisoning as one of the year's most searched-for news events.

"The patient is suffering from a clearly pronounced persecution mania," Mr. Putin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, told journalists this week in his latest effort to dismiss Mr. Navalny's allegations. "One can also definitively identify certain elements of a delusion of grandeur -- they are saying he is even comparing himself to Jesus."

The Kremlin says it is not clear that Mr. Navalny was poisoned at all, and that if he was, it could have been a ruse by Western intelligence agencies to undermine Mr. Putin. Mr. Navalny collapsed on a domestic flight in August in Siberia, fell into a coma, and was later flown to Germany for treatment. A German military lab determined he had been poisoned by a Russian-developed, military-grade nerve agent.

At a Moscow food court called Central Market, which serves oysters and truffle-topped burgers, most people interviewed said they had watched Mr. Navalny's videos within hours of their release. They said they believed the politician had been poisoned but were at a loss as to what to do about it -- and universally declined to give their last names, out of fear of the consequences.

Lena, a 37-year-old woman working in marketing at a fitness club, said she respected Mr. Navalny even though she had little interest in politics. His recent videos confirmed the dominance of the police and intelligence agencies in Russian society, she said, adding, "I am simply afraid."

"You have to survive in these conditions," she said. "At least the water is clean."

Some Russians have spoken up. A smattering of local politicians across the country have signed letters calling for a criminal investigation.

"Let's be honest: killing people is not good," said Vadim Alekseyev, a district councilman in the city of Samara, in southern Russia. . "We need to draw attention to this in every possible way."

But new laws cracking down on freedom of speech seem to be designed to intensify the fear of people like Lena, though the government says they are necessary to combat Western interference in Russian domestic politics. The national election for the State Duma, the lower house of Parliament, is expected to take place next fall.

One new law passed by the Duma Wednesday criminalizes blocking traffic. Another gives the government the power to block social-media sites under certain conditions. A third makes online libel punishable by up to five years in prison.

Dmitri Vyatkin, the lawmaker behind the new libel law, said, according to the Interfax news agency: "The very threat of such a punishment might sober some people up."

Oleg Matsnev and Ivan Nechepurenko contributed reporting.

Oleg Matsnev and Ivan Nechepurenko contributed reporting.

Photograph

A supporter of the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny outside the headquarters of the domestic intelligence agency in Moscow on Monday. His sign says in part, "Someone's getting a prison term soon." A similar protest by the filmmaker Vitaly Mansky led to his detention for a few hours (PHOTOGRAPH BY DIMITAR DILKOFF/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE – GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

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LINKS

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Document 42 of 72

Navalny Says Agent Confessed to Poison Plot

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[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, published a recording of a phone call in which he says he tricked a security official into exposing the plot.

MOSCOW – Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader recovering from a nerve agent attack, has made a

career of needling his country's sprawling security establishment.

On Monday, he produced perhaps his most brazen move yet: a video which he said shows him phoning a Russian intelligence officer and tricking him into confessing to a plot to kill Mr. Navalny by planting poison on his underpants.

"The priority was maximum secrecy," the man can be heard telling Mr. Navalny over the phone. "So that no one could record it, no one saw anything they didn't need to see, and so on."

Mr. Navalny and Bellingcat, the open-source investigative outlet that published a report on Monday alongside the video, identified the man as Konstantin Kudryavtsev, a chemical weapons specialist at Russia's domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Security Service, or F.S.B.

There was no independent confirmation that Mr. Navalny had indeed spoken to Mr. Kudryavtsev. The F.S.B., in a statement, called Mr. Navalny's video a forgery, according to the RIA Novosti state news agency. His investigation was a "planned provocation aimed at discrediting the F.S.B.," the statement said, "which could not have been carried out without the organizational and technical support of international intelligence agencies."

Still, Mr. Navalny's video of a purported 49-minute call with his own would-be assassin inside one of Russia's most secretive and powerful intelligence agencies jolted the Russian internet, drawing more than seven million views on YouTube within hours. It was the latest episode to puncture the aura of power and professionalism of Russia's spy services, a marked contrast to the news of a large-scale cyber intrusion in the United States attributed to Russian hackers.

And it put the Kremlin on the defensive yet again over Mr. Navalny's poisoning, an event emerging as a pivotal moment for President Vladimir V. Putin as he enters his 22nd year in power.

Last week, Bellingcat published an investigation with a Russian news outlet, The Insider, that used leaked phone records to show that F.S.B. officers with expertise in poisons had trailed Mr. Navalny for years and were nearby at the time he was exposed to the military-grade nerve agent that nearly killed him in Siberia last summer.

In response, Mr. Putin denied that he was behind the near-deadly poisoning of his most prominent political opponent, telling journalists with a laugh that if Russian agents had wanted to kill Mr. Navalny, "they would have probably finished the job."

The F.S.B., a successor agency to the K.G.B. that Mr. Putin ran before becoming president, has become a dominant behind-the-scenes force in Russian politics and business. The call Mr. Navalny released Monday added to the trove of evidence suggesting that the agency had organized -- and botched -- an assassination attempt against the country's most prominent opposition politician.

According to last week's Bellingcat report, three F.S.B. officers followed Mr. Navalny to Siberia in August where he was meeting with supporters in preparation for local elections. They trailed him to the Siberian city of Tomsk where, just after midnight on Aug. 20, telephone metadata showed one of the operatives near the hotel where Mr. Navalny and his team were staying, the report said.

Hours later, shortly after taking off on a flight from Tomsk to Moscow, Mr. Navalny was heard screaming in the airplane bathroom before collapsing. The pilot made an emergency landing in Omsk, another Siberian city. By the time Mr. Navalny arrived at a hospital there, he was in a coma.

Days later, another F.S.B. officer -- Mr. Kudryavtsev -- flew to Omsk from Moscow and stayed there for just 10 hours, according to Bellingcat.

Mr. Navalny called the man he said was Mr. Kudryavtsev last Monday, hours before he and Bellingcat released the investigation identifying Mr. Kudryavtsev and seven other members of the F.S.B. team that reportedly tried to poison Mr. Navalny.

Mr. Navalny used caller-I.D.-spoofing software to make it look as if he were calling from an F.S.B. landline, and introduced himself as an aide to a senior Russian security official preparing an urgent report on what went wrong in the mission.

Mr. Navalny first similarly tried to trick another F.S.B. officer on the team, who responded, "I know exactly who you are," and hung up, according to Bellingcat. But Mr. Kudryavtsev apparently took the bait.

Under questioning from Mr. Navalny, who pretends to be a no-nonsense official rushing to meet a deadline, the man identified as Mr. Kudryavtsev acknowledges that the mission's aim was to kill Mr. Navalny. He says that Mr. Navalny was saved by the commercial airline pilot who made an emergency landing and by the ambulance workers who treated Mr. Navalny on the tarmac in Omsk.

"So you believe that this person of interest survived only because they landed the plane too soon?" Mr. Navalny asks on the video.

"I believe so, yes," the man identified as Mr. Kudryavtsev responds, heard on speakerphone in the video. "If it had taken just a little bit longer then, possibly, everything would have ended differently. You see, this is where coincidence is the worst factor we can have in our work."

Mr. Kudryavtsev did not plant the poison himself, but according to the phone call was charged with helping remove its traces from Mr. Navalny's clothing. The man identified as Mr. Kudryavtsev tells Mr. Navalny in the call that he twice flew to Omsk to retrieve Mr. Navalny's clothes from the local authorities so that they could be treated to remove any trace of poison.

German military scientists determined in September that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with one of the Russian-made Novichok family of nerve agents. In the video released Monday, Mr. Navalny coaxes out a new detail: that the poison was planted on the inside of Mr. Navalny's blue underpants.

"On the groin area of the underpants?" Mr. Navalny asks.

"Well, the so-called codpiece," the man responds. "There are seams there, it was along the seams."

Mr. Navalny remains in Germany, where he was flown for treatment after the August attack, but last week he renewed his vow to return to Russia once he recovers.

Late Monday, a top ally of Mr. Navalny, Lyubov Sobol, tried to visit Mr. Kudryavtsev at his home in Moscow. She was detained by the police and faced a charge of disobeying a police officer, her staff said on Twitter.

The Kremlin has long tried to minimize Mr. Navalny's significance, while insisting he is backed by American intelligence agencies; Russian officials avoid mentioning his name in public. Last week, Mr. Putin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, said he would no longer comment on "the patient."

But Monday's video was sure to renew questions about Mr. Navalny, while undermining the image of the F.S.B. as one of the world's premier spy agencies.

"I'm sorry, I have a question," the man identified as Mr. Kudryavtsev says at the end of the phone call with Mr. Navalny. "Is it OK that we talked on a normal phone line?"

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny says he tricked a Russian intelligence officer into a 49-minute phone conversation about the attempt to kill Mr. Navalny last summer. (PHOTOGRAPH BY OLIVIER HOSLET/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK);

Emergency workers taking Mr. Navalny to an airport after his poisoning. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MAXIM

KARMAYEV/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK); Telephone metadata showed a Russian agent near the hotel where Mr. Navalny was staying hours before he collapsed. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MAXIM SHEMETOV/REUTERS)

DETAILS

Subject:	Metadata; Security services; Poisoning; Assassinations &assassination attempts; Intelligence services
Location:	Siberia Russia
People:	Navalny, Alexei
Company / organization:	Name: Environmental Protection Agency--EPA; NAICS: 924110; Name: Bellingcat; NAICS: 519130

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Putin Denies Any Role In Poisoning of Navalny, Noting It Didn't Kill Him

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia laughed off a question about the opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny at a marathon news conference, where he praised his country's Covid-19 response and President Trump.

MOSCOW – President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia denied on Thursday that he was behind the near-deadly poisoning of his most prominent political opponent, telling journalists with a laugh that if Russian agents had wanted to kill Aleksei A. Navalny, "they would have probably finished the job."

But Mr. Putin also made a startling admission: He confirmed that Russian intelligence agents had been tracking Mr. Navalny's movements across the country.

Mr. Navalny, a 44-year-old opposition leader with an online audience of millions, was poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent in Siberia in August. He fell ill on a commercial flight and survived thanks to the pilot's emergency landing and the ambulance crew that met him on the airport tarmac.

Mr. Putin, speaking at his annual, hourslong news conference, insisted that American intelligence was behind the uproar over the attempted poisoning. He said an investigation by an international group of journalists published on Monday that uncovered apparent involvement by Russian intelligence had also been engineered by the United States.

"This patient in the Berlin clinic has the support of American intelligence agencies," Mr. Putin said, referring to Mr. Navalny while pointedly refusing to say his name. Mr. Navalny was flown to Germany after the poisoning, where he has remained while recovering. "The intelligence agencies of course need to keep an eye on him. But that does not mean that he needs to be poisoned – who needs him? If they had really wanted to, they would have probably finished the job."

Mr. Putin's comments at one of his highest-profile television events of the year showed how mounting evidence that the Russian state had tried to assassinate Mr. Navalny was putting the Kremlin on the defensive, in full view of the Russian public. They also showed that Mr. Putin was resorting to a tried-and-true method of deflecting blame: When in doubt, it's the Americans' fault.

"The proof is so ironclad that it's impossible to argue with them," Mr. Navalny said in a post on Facebook about Mr. Putin's comments. "We are now in the zone of a confession."

German military scientists determined in September that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with one of the Russian-made Novichok family of nerve agents. Those results were confirmed by labs in France and Sweden as well as by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, a global watchdog.

The investigation by the journalists of Bellingcat, a research group that specializes in open-source investigations, used leaked telecommunications data to show that officers from a Russian spy unit with expertise in poisons had trailed Mr. Navalny for years and were nearby when he was poisoned. By Thursday, a YouTube video by Mr. Navalny describing the investigation had drawn more than 13 million views.

"This is not an investigation, this is the legalization of material from American intelligence agencies," Mr. Putin said. "What, do we not know that they track location? Our intelligence agencies understand that well."

Voluminous databases of private information, including cellphone records, are widely available on the black market in Russia. Bellingcat has said that such records -- as opposed to data from intelligence agencies -- allowed its reporters to track the movements of Russian spies.

"A few hundred euros could -- and does -- provide you with months of phone call data for an F.S.B. or G.R.U. officer, allowing investigators to trace the intelligence services' operations, identify the colleagues of research targets, and

follow the physical tracks of spies across Russia and abroad," Bellingcat said in an article about the methodology of its Navalny investigation.

Russia has consistently denied any involvement in Mr. Navalny's poisoning, at one point alleging that he could have been poisoned in Germany. On Thursday, Mr. Putin suggested the attack could have been an elaborate ruse to increase Mr. Navalny's prominence.

"The trick is to attack a leading figure," Mr. Putin said. "It is well known that this trick of political battle is used around the world."

The marathon news conference –this one lasted four-and-a-half-hours – is a longtime tradition for Mr. Putin, a way for the Kremlin to put his stamina, his accountability and his authority on display. The event typically has a circuslike atmosphere, with journalists from across the country packing a Moscow conference hall in their region's traditional dress or with colorful signs in the hope of drawing the president's attention.

This time around, because of the pandemic, journalists asked questions by video link from conference rooms across the vast country, as far east as the port city of Vladivostok, more than 5,500 miles away on the Pacific. Mr. Putin spoke remotely from a studio at his residence outside Moscow, in keeping with his practice since the start of the pandemic of avoiding virtually all physical contact with others.

The few journalists who got to be in the same room as Mr. Putin during the news conference all spent two weeks in quarantine in a Kremlin-run hotel, under the watch of Russia's version of the Secret Service. They were barred from leaving their rooms without an agent's permission and received their food in single-use containers placed on a chair outside their door, the state run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

The questions, as always, alternated between geopolitics and local matters such as the water supply in Crimea. A 10-year-old boy asked why other countries did not like Russia, even though "we don't do them any harm." Sergei Shnurov, a rock star turned journalist, asked Mr. Putin why Russian hackers did not help President Trump win this year's American election and whether Mr. Putin planned to offer Mr. Trump a job in Russia.

"I don't think Trump needs any help finding employment," Mr. Putin said. "He has quite a large base of support inside the United States, and as far as I understand he does not plan to depart from the political life of his country." American officials said in recent days that the State Department and parts of the Pentagon were among the government entities compromised by a sophisticated Russian hack, but Mr. Putin did not comment on the matter. Instead, he said Russian-American relations had become "hostage to domestic politics" in the United States, referring to Democrats' criticism of Mr. Trump as being too soft on Russia.

"We expect that the new president-elect of the United States will understand what is going on," Mr. Putin went on, referring to Joseph R. Biden Jr. "He is an experienced man, both in domestic politics and in foreign policy, and we expect that all the problems that have arisen – if not all, then at least some – will be solved by the new administration."

Questions throughout the news conference focused on the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed 49,151 people in Russia, according to official statistics that are widely viewed as understating the toll. Mr. Putin, echoing a common refrain of Russian officials and the state media, acknowledged that Russia was hit hard but insisted that things were even worse elsewhere. He floated the possibility that the government could give members of the public just one dose of Russia's main coronavirus vaccine, instead of two, to get the vaccine quickly to more people.

"One possibility is to create a 'light' version of the vaccine," Mr. Putin told reporters after the news conference. "It would be shorter-lasting, the level of protection would be smaller -- but still up to 85 percent -- but we would be able to produce tens of millions right away."

The country is now in the midst of its fiercest wave of the coronavirus so far, recording more than 500 deaths a day. Vaccination is proceeding slower than expected, hobbled both by production problems and mistrust. And the medical system is still struggling to cope, a fact that journalists and regular Russians who submitted their own questions online asked the Russian leader to address.

"People are calling me from the regions and saying that it is very hard to live right now, horribly hard, harder than

it's ever been in Russia," a journalist from the Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid told Mr. Putin.

Photograph

Journalists in Moscow as President Vladimir V. Putin, from a studio at his home, gave his annual news conference on Thursday. (PHOTOGRAPH BY NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Journalists; Poisoning; Coronaviruses; Intelligence services; COVID-19
Location:	Russia United States--US Germany
People:	Trump, Donald J Navalny, Alexei Putin, Vladimir
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Russian Agents Were Close During Navalny Poisoning, Report Says

Schwartz, Michael . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]15 Dec 2020: A.16.

[!\[\]\(41929d36b3f4cbe97db3cb93e5778e9f_img.jpg\) ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The agents, from a unit with poisonous chemicals expertise, were tracked by their telephones, the Bellingcat investigative group said, the strongest evidence of Moscow's involvement in the nerve agent attack.

Officers from a secret Russian spy unit with expertise in poisonous substances trailed the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny for years and were nearby at the time he was exposed to a highly toxic nerve agent that almost killed him last summer, according to a report by Bellingcat, a research group that specializes in open-source investigations.

The report, which involved an analysis of telephone metadata produced by operatives from the spy unit together with flight information obtained by Bellingcat, provides the strongest evidence to date that the Russian government was behind the assassination attempt against its most vociferous and well-known critic.

According to the report, three officers from the Federal Security Service, Russia's domestic intelligence agency, followed Mr. Navalny to Siberia in August where the opposition leader was meeting with supporters in preparation for local elections. They trailed him to the Siberian city of Tomsk where, just after midnight on Aug. 20, telephone metadata showed one of the operatives not far from the Xander Hotel, where Mr. Navalny and his team were staying.

Hours later, shortly after taking off on a flight from Tomsk to Moscow, Mr. Navalny was heard screaming in the airplane bathroom before collapsing, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing. By the time he arrived at a hospital in Omsk, another Siberian city, he was in a coma.

Bellingcat's report, which was published together with the Russian news outlet, The Insider, and in conjunction with reports from CNN and Der Spiegel, also uncovered links between the spy unit and a broader program to use chemical weapons in assassinations that is run by the Federal Security Service, known as the F.S.B.

A senior German security official with knowledge of the matter confirmed the accuracy of the details in the Bellingcat report. "It covers everything that we knew," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence matters.

The German government, the official said, has known for months exactly who was involved in the poisoning.

There was never any doubt that the Russian government was behind the poisoning, according to Western security officials. Mr. Navalny's political activism, together with his extensive investigations into corruption by the Russian leadership, has long rankled the Kremlin. After initially preventing Mr. Navalny's team from taking him abroad for treatment, Russian officials eventually allowed him to be flown to Berlin. He spent almost a month in a coma but survived.

In Germany, officials with assistance from Western spy agencies quickly surmised what had occurred. German military scientists determined that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with a Russian-made toxin from the Novichok family of nerve agents. Those results were confirmed by labs in France and Sweden as well as by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the global chemical weapons watchdog. Two years earlier, Russian operatives traveled to England where they used a similar substance in an assassination attempt against Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer who for years had spied for the British government.

Shortly after Mr. Navalny's arrival in Berlin, representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency and Britain's Secret Intelligence Service provided members of the German government with details about the poisoning, including the identities of the Federal Security Service officers involved, that directly implicated the Russian government, according to the senior German security official with knowledge of the matter.

The Kremlin did not immediately comment on the report. In the past, Russian officials have strenuously denied that the government had any role in poisoning Mr. Navalny and have spun a series of outlandish alternative theories, including that it was the German government that was somehow responsible.

Mr. Navalny, who remains in Germany recuperating, released a 52-minute video to correspond with the publication of the report. In it, he directly accused President Vladimir V. Putin of using the security services to murder political opponents, while abetting massive corruption. But he also taunted the Kremlin for expending enormous resources to kill him and failing.

"There is no reason to be surprised here," he said. "After 20 years of Putin's leadership everything is degrading." "If for example the health care system is at such a level that people are dying in hospital corridors," he continued, "then the same thing is happening in the sphere of secret operations."

Since at least January 2017, around the time Mr. Navalny started a campaign to challenge Mr. Putin in national elections, operatives from the F.S.B.'s Research Institute -- 2, also known as military unit 34435, have trailed the opposition leader closely, according to Bellingcat. Between 2017 and 2020, telephone metadata and travel booking information shows that members of the unit followed him on 37 trips by plane or train throughout Russia. They typically traveled in groups of two or three, sometimes buying tickets under their own names, sometimes under aliases.

Bellingcat obtained the data used in the report from caches of leaked Russian databases of personal information. As Mr. Navalny pursued his ultimately failed bid for the presidency in 2017, only once did members of the F.S.B. team trailing him take a trip that did not overlap with his campaign. On April 27, Mr. Navalny had planned to travel to the southern Russian city of Astrakhan, but canceled the trip at the last minute because of an eye injury he suffered when someone threw green antiseptic liquid in his face. The sudden cancellation appeared to have caught two members of the spy unit off guard, and they flew to Astrakhan without Mr. Navalny, according to flight records.

Telephone data obtained by Bellingcat indicates that the Federal Security Service unit operates out of a facility located at a Moscow address, Akademika Vargi 2, which appears to be the same location of a secret K.G.B. laboratory that specialized in the development of poisons. In 2004, the former K.G.B. general Oleg Kalugin described the facility in an interview with the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta as "one of the agency's most secretive sites." Years later, Russian government documents leaked to the news media indicated that the facility might have been used to store the radioactive isotope, Polonium-210, that was used in the 2006 murder of Alexander V. Litvinenko, a former Federal Security Service officer living in exile in London.

It is not clear when the Russian government decided to try to poison Mr. Navalny, though in its investigation Bellingcat uncovered evidence of at least one earlier attempt. Two months before Mr. Navalny was poisoned in

Siberia, he and his wife, Yulia, took a vacation to a spa-hotel in the Kaliningrad Region, an island of Russian territory wedged between Poland, Lithuania on the Baltic Sea. There, his wife suddenly became ill with symptoms similar to those later experienced by Mr. Navalny, but quickly recovered. Bellingcat determined that three members of the Federal Security Service poison unit had traveled with them.

On Aug. 12 this year, three members of the spy unit purchased one-way tickets on flights for the following morning to the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, where Mr. Navalny planned to meet with supporters involved in upcoming local elections, according to Bellingcat. One of them, Vladimir Panyaev, who traveled under his own name, is registered as living in an apartment in the same building as Mr. Navalny, according to Bellingcat. The two others, Alexey Alexandrov and Ivan Osipov, both medical doctors by training, traveled under aliases.

Though the operatives made a series of calls to their Moscow headquarters in the hours before they departed to Siberia, the calls stopped after their flights took off. Bellingcat suspects they switched to different phones for additional security while the operation to poison Mr. Navalny was underway.

But one of the operatives, Dr. Alexandrov, made an operational mistake, according to Bellingcat. On two occasions, he briefly switched on his personal cellphone, allowing Bellingcat researchers, armed with telephone metadata, to pinpoint his location. The first time, on Aug. 14, showed him in the vicinity of the hotel in Novosibirsk Mr. Navalny planned to check into later that day. The second time, on Aug. 19, indicated that he was near the hotel in Tomsk where Mr. Navalny was likely poisoned. His phone exchanged a single byte of data with the local cellphone network at 12:58 a.m.

That morning, Mr. Navalny departed Tomsk on a flight to Moscow. He began to feel the effects of the poison 30 minutes after takeoff.

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny continues to recover in Germany. A report details how Russian operatives trailed him until the August attack. (PHOTOGRAPH BY OLIVIER HOSLET/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK)

DETAILS

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Putin's Leading Rival Was Poisoned, Affirm World's Top Experts

Schwartz, Michael . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]07 Oct 2020: A.15.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons bolstered the assessments of European countries that a form Novichok sickened Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmed on Tuesday that the substance used to poison the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny had "similar structural characteristics" to the Novichok family of highly potent nerve agents.

The finding from the world's leading chemical weapons body adds additional weight to the conclusions of laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, and increases the likelihood that Russia, which has been accused of using a similar poison in at least one previous assassination attempt, will be punished, likely with targeted financial sanctions.

"These results constitute a matter of grave concern," the organization said in a statement. "The use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances," it said, is "reprehensible and wholly contrary to the legal norms established by the international community."

Mr. Navalny, the most prominent figure in Russia's political opposition, fell ill on a flight from Siberia on Aug. 20 and slipped into a coma. The Russian authorities initially prevented his family from transporting him abroad for treatment, but he was eventually brought to Berlin, where he was treated at the Charité hospital. He was discharged on Sept. 23 and has vowed to return to Russia to continue his work after a period of rehabilitation in Germany.

The German authorities said they never doubted the conclusions of military scientists in Germany, who had reported discovering traces of Novichok in biological samples taken from Mr. Navalny, as well as on a plastic water bottle from his hotel that was smuggled out of Russia by his aides.

But the findings of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons add an authoritative and independent assessment that the Germans could use as ammunition in the pursuit of punishment, most likely in the form of financial sanctions against Russian officials.

By doing so, Germany would be following a playbook used in 2018, when the British government relied on the chemical weapons body to bolster its conclusions that Russian operatives had used a Novichok poison in an attempt to murder Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer who had spied for Britain. In that case, the organization's findings helped assure Britain's allies and justify a mass expulsion of Russian officials in the weeks after the poisoning.

Steffen Seibert, the spokesman for the German government, said in a statement Tuesday that "in the coming days" the countries of the European Union together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons would discuss "next steps."

"The German government renews its call on Russia to explain what has happened," Mr. Seibert said. "Any use of chemical weapons is a serious process and cannot be without consequences."

Separately, forty-four signatories of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including the United States, Britain and every country of the European Union issued a joint statement on Tuesday calling on Russia to investigate the poisoning and cooperate with technical experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. "We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon in the Russian Federation on 20 August," the statement said.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 for its efforts to whittle away the world's stocks of chemical weapons, but its record as the world's watchdog for such weapons has become clouded in recent years.

In 2017, an official from the organization traveled to Moscow to certify that Russia had fulfilled its obligations as part of the Chemical Weapons Convention and destroyed its remaining declared stocks of chemical weapons. Less than six months later, a pair of Russian operatives traveled to Britain, armed with a Novichok-class chemical weapon that had apparently been produced secretly, under the noses of weapons inspectors, according to the British government. The operatives used it to poison Mr. Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, in southern England. Three other people in Salisbury were also poisoned, and one of them, Dawn Sturgess, died. Two years after that, it was used on Mr. Navalny.

Russian officials have denied involvement in both attacks. On Sept. 15, the head of Russia's foreign intelligence

service, Sergei Naryshkin, gave a rare news conference in which he said that all stocks of Novichok had been destroyed in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

"To say that on the territory of Russia there is production or stocks of military-grade poisons is of course disinformation," Mr. Naryshkin said.

Western intelligence services say otherwise, though Mr. Naryshkin's comment, even if inaccurate, was revealing -- a rare acknowledgment that Russia had, at least at one time, possessed stocks of Novichok. The nerve agent was developed in the Soviet Union and Russia in the 1980s and '90s and was so highly classified that before the Skripal attack it was not even listed as a banned substance under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Before Mr. Naryshkin's comment, Russian officials had denied that the Novichok program existed, though some of the Russian scientists involved in it had spoken about it publicly.

Despite Russian denials, a small group of Western countries have known about the Kremlin's Novichok program for decades, including where the substance is produced and stored, said Andrew Weber, a senior fellow at the Council on Strategic Risks.

Western officials pressed their Russian counterparts on several occasions to cease production of the weapons, though for years the West resisted including the Novichok class on the Chemical Weapons Convention list of banned substances, Mr. Weber said.

The weapons were considered so dangerous that publicly acknowledging them was judged a proliferation risk, said Mr. Weber, who was an assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programs during the Obama administration.

Russia never possessed large stockpiles of Novichok, but was able to produce small amounts on demand, he said. Even low quantities, he added, would be sufficient to kill thousands of people.

It was only after the Salisbury poisonings that Western officials accused the Russians publicly and successfully pushed to have three forms of Novichok nerve agent added to the list of banned substances, though not all of them.

The nerve agent used on Mr. Navalny, according to the German authorities, is a novel form of Novichok that until now was unknown to Western experts.

In an interview posted Monday on a popular Russian YouTube channel, Mr. Navalny struggled to explain what it felt like to be poisoned with Novichok, saying it was like nothing he had ever experienced.

"Normally when you're not feeling well, you can assess yourself and figure out what's happening -- my heart hurts, my stomach hurts, my leg hurts, or I've got a cold," he told the interviewer, Yuri Dud. "But in this case you can't understand it."

He said it was something like being kissed by a dementor, the ghoulish soul-sucking monsters from the Harry Potter series.

"It doesn't hurt," he said, "but life escapes you."

Photograph

The Russian opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, posted a photograph with his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, at a Berlin hospital. (PHOTOGRAPH BY EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK)

DETAILS

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People:	Navalny, Alexei

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No Tough Response on Navalny Is Expected

Eddy, Melissa . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]30 Sep 2020:
A.14.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The poisoning of Aleksei A. Navalny could be a chance for Berlin to take a tougher stance against Moscow. But experts remain skeptical.

BERLIN – Chancellor Angela Merkel's bedside visit to Aleksei A. Navalny after he emerged from a coma while recovering from a poisoning was not a secret, her office insisted. Nor was it official.

Ms. Merkel's meeting with Mr. Navalny, Russia's leading opposition figure, was a purely private affair, her spokesman said.

Neither Mr. Navalny's full military police escort to the Charité hospital upon his arrival in Berlin by air ambulance in August nor the dispatching of a security detail that has watched over him ever since is any indication of official favor, Steffen Seibert, the chancellor's spokesman said.

"From the first day, the German government has made it clear that Mr. Navalny was here in Germany on humanitarian reasons," Mr. Seibert said.

But the public and official attention surrounding Mr. Navalny's arrival and treatment in Germany after his poisoning has raised this question: Will Berlin now take a tougher stance against Moscow amid ongoing opposition protests in Belarus and fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia?

"Of course, one always thinks that a new low point in German-Russian relations has been reached, then it gets even worse, and the next thing happens," said Dr. Stefan Meister, head of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's South Caucasus Office.

"With every point the pressure grows, also from the public, for the German government to harden its stance toward Russia."

Still, experts are skeptical that either Berlin or the European Union has the political will to take concrete action, or to unite split interests, that would send a clear message to Russia.

Russia has maintained that it played no role in the poisoning of Mr. Navalny; last week the foreign ministry in Moscow accused Germany of dramatizing the episode. German and other European experts, though, say Mr. Navalny was attacked with a military-grade chemical from the Novichok group, a Soviet-designed chemical weapon.

Use of the substance would be a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention to which Moscow is a signatory, raising the prospect that Germany could lead the European Union to enact painful sanctions against Moscow.

The watchdog for that convention, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, is expected to release in the coming days the results of its own analysis of biomedical samples collected from Mr. Navalny by its team of experts, the agency said last week.

But Mr. Meister said he does not see the E.U.'s 27 members finding a consensus to enact sanctions. That is especially so, he said, after the failure of the bloc last week to impose economic sanctions on the leader of Belarus, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, after the fraudulent election in that country, crackdown on opposition leaders, and beatings and arrests of peaceful protesters.

"The political will to take a harder stance against Russia is absent," Mr. Meister said of the European Union. He added that Berlin's own policy toward Moscow remained "stuck in its internal contradictions and compromises."

Nevertheless, over the past six years, since the Russians sent soldiers without insignia -- the so-called "little green men" -- into Crimea, Berlin's position toward Moscow has shifted gradually, said Gustav C. Gressel, a senior policy fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin.

The pro-Russia stance that for decades has been the trademark of the center-left Social Democrats -- currently junior partners in Ms. Merkel's governing coalition -- has been chipped away at by Moscow's increasingly bold steps toward Berlin. These include carrying out a cyberattack against the German Parliament in 2015, and the daylight murder of a former Chechen commander in a Berlin park last year.

"All of those who call for appeasement, insisting that we have to respect Russia, are becoming less popular," Mr. Gressel said, and increasingly, it is the hard-liners against Russia who are being heard.

That does not translate into immediate action on Germany's part, however. Early calls to cancel the nearly completed, \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany have faded, and Ms. Merkel's government has insisted it will seek a European response to the poisoning.

But from the outset Ms. Merkel has taken an unusually personal interest in Mr. Navalny's fate. She granted him swift entry to Germany even though most Russians are barred, given the threat of the coronavirus, and personally announced in notably harsh terms the discovery that Novichok had turned up in the tests on Mr. Navalny -- which the chancellor in an unusually sharp tone called a "crime."

Speaking to reporters in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Monday, President Emmanuel Macron of France echoed the chancellor's demand for Russia to explain what had happened to Mr. Navalny before a meeting of the European Council, part of the European Union's executive arm, on Thursday and Friday. The poisoning has been added to that meeting's agenda.

"This is very clearly a murder attempt carried out on Russian soil, against a Russian opposition leader with a chemical agent manipulated in Russia," Mr. Macron told the reporters, according to Reuters. "It is therefore up to Russia to provide clarifications."

A European version of the United States's Magnitsky Act -- which sanctions those found to be in violation of human rights -- would give the bloc an additional tool to use against Moscow in Mr. Navalny's case. But even if Europe does pull together its own version, Mr. Meister expects that those affected would be limited largely to individuals who do not regularly conduct business outside of Russia.

The bigger question, though, will be how Russia decides to treat Mr. Navalny once he returns home as he has said he plans to do, said Janis Kluge, an analyst for Eastern Europe with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin.

President Vladimir V. Putin has never publicly mentioned Mr. Navalny's name in 20 years of speeches and interviews. But Mr. Navalny has now met with the German chancellor, whether officially or otherwise, and his poisoning has become the focus of an investigation by an international institution to which Russia is a signatory member.

"It's about how Moscow now deals with the case, much more than about Mr. Navalny himself," Mr. Kluge said.

"Russia could have at least launched an investigation into what happened to him, but the fact that they haven't done so yet shows how little Moscow really cares that Europe and Germany are shocked."

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny has said he expects to return to Russia. (PHOTOGRAPH VIA AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

Subject: Poisoning; Biological &chemical weapons; International relations; Sanctions

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While Navalny Was in Coma, Russia Froze His Assets

Troianovski, Anton . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]25 Sep 2020: A.11.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Aleksei A. Navalny was still in a medically induced coma in Berlin when a court in Russia froze his bank accounts and barred him from selling or mortgaging his apartment in Moscow.

MOSCOW – The Russian authorities froze the assets of Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader poisoned last month, at the behest of a Kremlin-allied businessman known as "Putin's chef," Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman said on Thursday.

Mr. Navalny, President Vladimir V. Putin's most prominent domestic opponent in Russia, was still in a medically induced coma in a hospital in Berlin when his assets were frozen.

A court barred Mr. Navalny from selling or mortgaging his apartment in southeastern Moscow, and his bank accounts have been frozen, Kira Yarmysh, the spokeswoman, said in a video posted to her Twitter account. The order was dated Aug. 27, a week after Mr. Navalny was poisoned with the military-grade nerve agent Novichok. But his lawyers learned of the court's decision only recently, Ms. Yarmysh said.

The legal maneuver was brought on by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the catering magnate who is close to Mr. Putin and is known as "Putin's chef." In August, Mr. Prigozhin moved to collect damages that Mr. Navalny owed in a libel lawsuit from 2019 – and coyly pledged to pursue the debt as long as Mr. Navalny survived the poisoning.

"Of course, if Comrade Navalny gives his soul to God, then I personally do not intend to go after him in this world," Mr. Prigozhin said in a statement last month.

Mr. Navalny was released from the Berlin hospital on Wednesday, 32 days after being evacuated by air from Siberia, where he was poisoned.

The Russian authorities have frozen the assets of Mr. Navalny and his team before, moves that complicated his anti-Putin activism but never silenced it. The latest freeze, done in the midst of international condemnation over the unexplained poisoning of Mr. Navalny, signaled that the Kremlin has no plans to let up on its pressure against the opposition leader, even as he attempts to recover his health.

The Russian government has insisted that the West is using Mr. Navalny as part of a calculated campaign to weaken Mr. Putin. Russian officials have also claimed that Mr. Navalny may not have been poisoned at all.

(Laboratory tests in Germany, France and Sweden have all identified Novichok.)

Mr. Prigozhin has been involved in some of Russia's clandestine operations before, including interference in the 2016 presidential election in the United States.

Mr. Navalny's team reported last year that a school food supplier owned by Mr. Prigozhin was to blame for a spate of illnesses among Moscow schoolchildren. Mr. Prigozhin denied owning the company and won a libel lawsuit against Mr. Navalny and his team that awarded him more than \$1 million in damages.

"Rather than taking the side of the child victims, the court took the side of Prigozhin, and now the accounts and the apartment of a person who was in a coma have been frozen," Ms. Yarmysh, the spokeswoman, said in her video message on Thursday. "This is all you need to know about the Russian justice system."

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny has been recovering from a poisoning. (PHOTOGRAPH VIA REUTERS)

DETAILS

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Putin Critic Leaves Hospital After Poisoning

Eddy, Melissa . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]24 Sep 2020:
A.10.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Doctors treating Aleksei Navalny said he had been discharged after 32 days of treatment and could make a full recovery.

BERLIN -- Aleksei A. Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, has been released from a hospital in Germany and could make a full recovery from poisoning with a highly toxic nerve agent, doctors said on Wednesday, as European leaders wrestled over a response to Moscow.

"Based on the patient's progress and current condition, the treating physicians believe that complete recovery is possible," the Charité hospital said in a statement released on Wednesday. "However, it remains too early to gauge the potential long-term effects of his severe poisoning."

Neither the doctors nor Mr. Navalny, 44, who has returned to communicating with his supporters through his Instagram account in recent days, gave any indication of where he would go after his release. But a senior German security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the opposition leader's movements, said he would remain under protection in Berlin for rehabilitation.

Mr. Navalny has said that he intends to return to Russia once he has made a full recovery. He arrived at the hospital, one of Germany's leading research clinics, on Aug. 22 after being evacuated by air ambulance from the Siberian city of Omsk, where he had been receiving treatment after collapsing on Aug. 20 while aboard a domestic flight to Moscow.

Russia has maintained that it played no role in the poisoning of Mr. Navalny, although he would not be the first Kremlin enemy to be attacked with a class of Novichok, a Soviet-designed chemical weapon. A similar agent was used by Russian operatives in Britain in 2018 to attack Sergei V. Skripal, a former intelligence officer who had served prison time in Russia for spying for the British before being traded in a spy swap.

Given the substance used, the German authorities and others say there is no doubt that the Russian government was behind the poisoning. Such an act would be a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention to which Moscow is a signatory.

The organization is expected in the coming days to release the results of its own analysis of biomedical samples collected from Mr. Navalny by its team of experts. Leaders in Berlin and Paris are awaiting the findings before moving to impose financial sanctions on Russia through the European Union.

According to the French newspaper Le Monde, during a Sept. 14 phone call between President Emmanuel Macron

of France and President Vladimir V. Putin, the Russian leader stonewalled with denials and offered dubious explanations for Mr. Navalny's poisoning, suggesting that the Russian opposition leader might have poisoned himself.

Although Mr. Macron's office declined to comment on the report, which was published on Tuesday and based on unspecified sources, Mr. Navalny responded with a sarcastic comment on his social media account.

"It's a good theory," he said. "I think it is worth the closest study."

"I boiled Novichok in the kitchen, quietly took a sip of it in the plane and fell into a coma," he continued. "Before that, I agreed with my wife, friends and colleagues, that if the Health Ministry insisted on taking me to Germany that they would never permit that to happen. Dying in an Omsk hospital and ending up in an Omsk morgue where the cause of death would be listed as 'lived long enough' was the ultimate goal of my cunning plan."

"But Putin," he said, "outplayed me."

Once Mr. Navalny arrived in Berlin, doctors at the Charité hospital placed him in a medically induced coma in the intensive care ward, where he spent 24 days, while also under constant police protection.

Suspecting that their patient was suffering from an agent more complex than what they could detect, they sent samples to their colleagues at the Military Institute for Pharmacology and Toxicology in Munich, which found traces of a nerve agent from the Novichok family in Mr. Navalny's blood and urine.

It was also found on a water bottle that the opposition leader's team brought to Germany from his hotel room, leading them to believe that he was poisoned there, not at the airport as had originally been suspected.

Laboratories in France and Sweden have confirmed the German findings that Mr. Navalny was poisoned with a nerve agent from the Novichok family.

Russia has been insisting that it is willing to open an investigation of the Navalny poisoning but that it has been stymied by the refusal of France and Germany to share the results of their analyses, an assertion that Mr. Putin repeated in his conversation with Mr. Macron, Le Monde said. Both countries have insisted that Moscow had all the information it needed from the two days Mr. Navalny spent in Russia before he was evacuated to Germany. Russia's ambassador to Germany, Sergei Nechayev, told a German newspaper, the Berliner Zeitung, that Mr. Navalny had not responded to attempts from the embassy to provide him with consular services.

Michael Schwirtz contributed reporting from London and Aurelien Breeden from Paris.

Photograph

A picture on social media Wednesday showed Aleksei A. Navalny in Berlin. He could make a full recovery, doctors said. (PHOTOGRAPH VIA REUTERS)

DETAILS

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Document 49 of 72

What Can Mr. Putin Get Away With?

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[!\[\]\(935d86dfc3cfcfdf8444440b84462761_img.jpg\) ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Why has the poisoning of Alexei Navalny been met with Western silence?

It is now an established fact, confirmed by laboratories in Germany, France and Sweden, that Alexei Navalny was poisoned with Novichok, a nerve agent developed by the Soviet Union. The powerful poison, which has been used in at least one previous assassination attempt against foes of the Russian regime, was this time employed against a domestic opposition leader who operated openly to expose corruption and challenge the Kremlin. It requires a serious response.

In the face of Kremlin stonewalling, many questions remain unanswered and are likely to remain so. Chief among them is whether President Vladimir Putin ordered or approved the attempted assassination. Then there is the fact that once again, the victim survived the attack, and the nerve agent was identified. Mr. Navalny had been flying home from Siberia to Moscow when he was stricken. Did his poisoners want him to perish on the way, as the timetable of the attack suggests, and want to cover up the reason? Or was it their intention to convey a brutal warning of what happens to those who challenge the Kremlin?

Mr. Navalny may have survived largely because of the pilot's alacrity in landing and getting him to a hospital. The government later allowed him to be taken to Germany for further treatment. Once they heard of his collapse, Mr. Navalny's colleagues quickly collected what they could from his last hotel in Siberia and got the evidence to Germany, where traces of Novichok were found on a water bottle.

Whatever the full story, the Russian government's contemptible posturing as an aggrieved victim of unfair suspicions only intensify the need to demand a reckoning from the Kremlin. Mr. Putin knows what happened, or he can find out, and if he continues to hide behind glaringly phony denials and ridiculous accusations, he only strengthens the suspicion that this was a deliberate, state-sanctioned hit. He had the greatest motive, means and opportunity.

Even if it was an operation ordered at some lower level, the attack on Mr. Navalny breaks new ground. Ranking assassinations according to degrees of infamy may seem frivolous, and attacking two former Russian double agents residing in England, Sergei Skripal and Alexander Litvinenko, by nerve gas or radiation, is hard to exceed in brazenness.

But Mr. Navalny was not a former spy. He was by far the best known and most visible of Mr. Putin's political opponents. His exposés of official corruption -- most famously of the extravagant properties owned by the former president Dmitri Medvedev -- were widely circulated, detailed and credible. Those who tried to kill him had to know, and not care, that the attack could be seen only as an attempt to silence a strong and effective political voice.

Even more appalling was their deployment of a banned chemical weapon on Russian soil against a Russian politician. The perpetrators knew that Novichok had been identified in the attack against Mr. Skripal and that its use was a violation of international law. Russia is a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and after Germany established that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons issued a statement that under the convention, "any poisoning of an individual through the use of a nerve agent is considered a use of chemical weapons." At the very least, that obligates Russia to establish how a known nerve agent came to be used in the center of Russia.

Mr. Putin must believe that there is not much the West can do that it hasn't already done by way of sanctions. President Trump, for reasons that remain one of the top mysteries of his administration, has largely closed his eyes to Mr. Putin's serial transgressions, whether it's meddling in American elections, annexing Crimea or stonewalling on the poisoning of dissidents.

The surest sign of European anger would be cancellation of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a gas conduit from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea. But the project is nearly completed, and Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, is reluctant to take a step that would be costly for Europe and that would look like bowing to threats from the Trump administration, which has demanded cancellation of the pipeline.

Yet, as Mr. Putin looks intent on spending the rest of his life at Russia's helm and displays ever less concern for human rights or the rule of law, it is incumbent on the West to hold him accountable for murdering or trying to

murder anyone he finds troublesome. A state prepared to use banned chemical weapons against its own citizens is a danger and threat to the rest of the world as well, and that must be made clear and unambiguous also to Mr. Putin and his co-conspirators.

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Photograph

(PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXEI NIKOLSKY/TASS, VIA GETTY IMAGES)

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Document 50 of 72

Putin Critic, Still on Mend, Flashes Wit On Instagram

Schwartz, Michael . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]20 Sep 2020: A.14.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The opposition leader jokes that he has recovered enough from being poisoned to scroll Instagram and know where to put the likes.

Nearly a month after being poisoned with a nerve agent, Aleksei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, said he has recovered his ability to speak and walk down stairs. He has also regained what is perhaps his most potent skill -- making acerbic posts on social media.

In his second message on Instagram since emerging from a coma two weeks ago, Mr. Navalny on Saturday thanked his doctors at the prestigious Charité hospital in Berlin, and flashed some of the wit that has endeared him to millions of Russians, if not to their leader in the Kremlin.

"They transformed me from a person who was 'technically alive,'" he wrote, "into someone who has every chance of again becoming that Highest Form of Existence in Modern Society: a person who is able to quickly scroll through Instagram and knows, without thinking too hard, where to put likes."

Much as he has throughout his political career, Mr. Navalny seems intent on documenting every step of his recovery on social media, giving his nearly 2 million followers on Instagram and millions on Twitter and YouTube, a close-up look at the effects of one of the world's most mysterious and highly classified chemical weapons.

German authorities, backed by laboratories in France and Sweden, say Mr. Navalny was poisoned with Novichok, a class of chemical weapon developed by the Soviet Union. It was used in the attempted assassination in England

two years ago of Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian military intelligence officer who spied for the British government.

Unlike Mr. Navalny, Mr. Skripal and his daughter, Julia, who was also poisoned, have basically vanished. Aside from a brief televised statement in which Ms. Skripal described a "slow and extremely painful" recovery, not a word has been heard from either of them since they were found unconscious and foaming at the mouth on a bench in Salisbury, England, in March 2018.

Their disappearance from public view has fueled conspiracy theories – many originating with Russian officials or Kremlin-controlled media – that the Skripals have been killed or perhaps were never poisoned to begin with.

While Mr. Navalny's resurrection in life and online has not stopped the Kremlin's propagandists from churning out reams of alternative theories about his poisoning, it has forced Russian officials to reckon with him in a way they had long sought to avoid. Before the poisoning, most top officials, including President Vladimir V. Putin, refused to even utter his name in public.

Last week, both Mr. Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, and the head of Russia's foreign intelligence service, Sergei Naryshkin, held news conferences in which they were forced to address the poisoning. Both dismissed accusations from Mr. Navalny's supporters and the German government that the Russian state was involved, and suggested without evidence that the Germans had poisoned him.

With the European Union beginning deliberations over possible financial sanctions against Russia, Moscow's diplomatic mission to the bloc published a list of awkwardly written questions last week meant to raise doubts about the poisoning. The first question: Why would Russia bother poisoning Mr. Navalny when, according to polls, his popularity rating is 2 percent?

How the poisoning might affect Mr. Navalny's standing among Russians is unclear, though it has certainly raised his profile, with seemingly interminable news media coverage for nearly a month both inside and outside the country.

Mr. Navalny, himself, has yet to address the political implications of his poisoning, aside from vowing to return to Russia upon his recovery to continue his work. His two messages to supporters so far have mostly concerned his recovery.

In Saturday's message, which was accompanied by a photo of a gaunt Mr. Navalny walking down a flight of stairs, the opposition leader said that while he had been able to regain some faculties, his recovery would be a long one. "The telephone in my hand is useless, like a rock, and pouring myself a glass of water becomes a total scene," he said. "Right now I'm a guy whose legs shake when he goes up the stairs, but one who thinks, 'Oh, that's a stairwell. You're supposed to go up it. Perhaps, I need to look for an elevator.'"

"Before," he said, "I'd simply stand there stupidly and look at it."

Photograph

The Russian opposition leader Aleksei Navalny at Charité hospital in Berlin, in an undated photo taken from a video posted by Mr. Navalny on his Instagram account. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Social Media, via Reuters FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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Navalny Was Poisoned at Hotel in Siberia, Not at Airport, His Aides Say

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 [ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Aides of the Russian opposition leader collected items from his hotel room in Siberia as soon as he fell ill, according to a video posted on his Instagram account.

Immediately after Aleksei A. Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, showed symptoms of poisoning last month, members of his team rushed to the Siberian hotel where he had been staying and grabbed anything that could possibly be used as evidence -- including a water bottle that tests showed was tainted with a highly toxic nerve agent.

Even as Russia maintains that it played no role in the poisoning of Mr. Navalny, the new details -- released on Thursday in a post on Mr. Navalny's Instagram account -- underscore his team's deep concerns for his well-being and their fears that he could fall victim to the kind of attacks directed at other Kremlin critics.

In a video posted on Instagram, members of Mr. Navalny's team swiftly donned rubber gloves and scoured his room at the Xander Hotel in Tomsk, packing evidence into blue plastic bags.

The plastic water bottle, Mr. Navalny's team and German investigators say, eventually helped German military scientists determine that the opposition leader had been poisoned with a class of chemical weapon called a Novichok, a Soviet-designed poison that Russian operatives have used in at least one previous assassination attempt.

The rush to grab evidence suggests that Mr. Navalny and his team had been prepared for the eventuality that there would be an attempt on his life. Indeed, at meetings with supporters around Russia, he was frequently asked how he remained alive, given his vicious criticism of the Kremlin and Russia's most powerful figures.

His continued existence even fueled conspiracy theories that he was in fact a government puppet, paid to play the role of an opposition figure, while never actually seeking power himself.

On Aug. 20, those doubts were put to rest when Mr. Navalny began choking and screaming on a flight to Moscow from the Siberian city of Tomsk.

Immediately after Mr. Navalny's plane made an emergency landing, his aides spoke with members of the team who had stayed in Tomsk to tell them what had happened, according to Mr. Navalny's Instagram post.

"At that moment, they did the one thing that was possible," the statement said. "They called a lawyer, went to the hotel room, which Navalny had just left, and began to identify, record and pack up everything that they found, including bottles of water from the hotel."

When Mr. Navalny was flown from a Siberian hospital to Berlin on Aug. 22, the evidence went with him. It is unclear how Mr. Navalny's team was able to sneak the bottle and other items out of the country without the Russian officials knowing.

Russia has insisted since Mr. Navalny first fell ill that he was not poisoned, and has instead offered a number of alternative theories, like he had been using cocaine or that he had low blood sugar and simply needed to eat some candy. Such statements convinced Mr. Navalny's team that the Russian authorities had no interest in conducting a real investigation.

"It was absolutely clear to us that Navalny was not lightly ill or got overheated and that a Raffaello candy would not help," the Instagram post read. "So we decided to grab everything that might hypothetically be of use and give that to the doctors in Germany."

An analysis by German military scientists at the Institute for Pharmacology and Toxicology in Munich found traces of a nerve agent in the Novichok family in Mr. Navalny's blood and urine, as well as on one of the bottles. Based on

the German findings, Mr. Navalny's team, according to the Instagram post, now believes that he was poisoned in that hotel room, not at the airport as they had originally suspected.

Laboratories in France and Sweden this week confirmed the German findings that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with a nerve agent from the Novichok family. A similar poison was used by Russian military intelligence operatives who traveled to Britain in 2018 to attack Sergei V. Skripal, a former intelligence officer who had served prison time in Russia for spying for the British before being traded in a spy swap.

Given the substance used, the German authorities and others say there is no doubt that the Russian government was behind the poisoning, a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention to which it is a signatory.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the world's chemical weapons watchdog, is expected to release in the coming days the results of its own analysis of biomedical samples collected from Mr. Navalny by its team of experts, the agency said in a statement on Thursday.

If those results confirm the German, French and Swedish findings, the German government would move quickly to impose financial sanctions on Russia through the European Union, according to a senior German security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

"We don't doubt our own result," the official said. "It's just to give it even more political legitimacy."

On Thursday, the European Parliament passed a nonbinding resolution calling for an international investigation into Russia's possible use of a chemical weapon as well as "ambitious restrictive" measures, including financial sanctions against "corrupt individuals."

"The attempted assassination of Navalny was part of a systemic effort to silence dissident voices in Russia," a statement by the European Parliament said.

Aleksei A. Navalny, a prominent Kremlin critic, in Moscow in 2019. He and his team seemed to be bracing for an attempt on his life. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Peter Kassin/Sipa, via Associated Press FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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LINKS

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Navalny Strikes a Defiant Tone While on the Mend

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[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The poisoned Russian opposition leader plans to return to Russia, his spokeswoman says.

BERLIN -- Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who is recovering in Berlin after being poisoned, posted a photograph on Tuesday showing him in the hospital, looking gaunt but very much alive, and telling followers that he was breathing on his own.

"Hello, it's Navalny," he said in an Instagram post with a picture of himself sitting up in a hospital bed surrounded by his wife and other relatives. "I can still do almost nothing, but yesterday I could breathe the entire day by myself," he added.

"I recommend it," he said with characteristic irony.

The message came hours after a senior German security official told The New York Times that Mr. Navalny was awake, alert and had told German judiciary officials that he was refusing to cooperate with a Russian inquiry into his case. He also vowed, according to the official, to return to Russia as soon as possible to continue his work. Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, confirmed on Tuesday that Mr. Navalny planned to return to Russia. "It's strange to me that anyone could think otherwise," Ms. Yarmysh said on Twitter. "No other options are being considered."

Mr. Navalny's return to health, as well as to social media, has the potential to re-energize Russia's opposition after nearly a month of uncertainty since he first fell ill on Aug. 20.

The most persistent critic of President Vladimir V. Putin, Mr. Navalny collapsed on a flight to Moscow after spending several days meeting with opposition candidates in Novosibirsk, a Siberian industrial hub that is Russia's third-largest city. His plane made an emergency landing in Omsk, another Siberian city, where he was first hospitalized. He was flown to Berlin two days later.

Mr. Navalny had been campaigning in Siberia before the nationwide municipal elections that took place Sunday. He and his allies made enough gains to cost Mr. Putin's party, United Russia, its majority on the City Council in Novosibirsk.

Senior Russian officials, largely silent in the aftermath of the poisoning, appeared in public on Tuesday to discuss the case. Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesman, held a news conference, as did Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's foreign intelligence service.

Both men denounced accusations of Russian involvement and insinuated, without evidence, that Germany was somehow implicated in the poisoning.

With the opposition leader seemingly out of danger, attention is likely to shift to the Western response to Russia. German officials now say they have almost no doubt that the Russian state was behind the poisoning of Mr. Navalny.

The German government said on Monday that laboratories in France and Sweden had confirmed that the substance used to poison Mr. Navalny was a form of the nerve agent Novichok.

The results match Berlin's own findings and provide additional confidence of state involvement, as Western intelligence agencies have assessed that only the Russian government was likely to have access to such a weapon.

German officials and others have said that any use of the nerve agent would violate the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Russia is a signatory.

Leonid Volkov, Mr. Navalny's chief of staff, who is in Berlin, said that Mr. Navalny's team was talking to German officials about the government's response to Russia and that they welcomed the clarity with which German and other European officials had condemned the poisoning.

"The E.U. has taken a strong, a harsh position," Mr. Volkov said. "They are using unusual wording in this case, which is a good sign that they might be prepared to go a step further."

But even as patience with Mr. Putin is running thin, Berlin is struggling to determine how exactly to respond. Some have suggested canceling the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, an \$11 billion project to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany that is nearing completion.

So far, however, the German government, its European allies and the United States have not taken any action other than raising the prospect of imposing additional sanctions on Russia.

Russian officials have largely pleaded ignorant, despite posing a number of alternative theories about Mr. Navalny's condition like a drug overdose and low blood sugar. Some have even insinuated that Germany was to blame.

"The fact is, at the moment Aleksei Navalny left Russian territory, he had no toxic, poisonous substances in his body," Mr. Naryshkin, the head of Russia's foreign intelligence service, said in a rare news conference on Tuesday. "In connection with this, we have a number of questions for the Germans."

Mr. Naryshkin added that Russia had destroyed its entire supply of Novichok-class chemical weapons in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. That statement contradicted the assessment of Western intelligence agencies, but it did provide a rare official acknowledgment that Russia had, at least at one point, possessed such weapons.

In remarks to journalists on Tuesday, Mr. Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, said that Russia remained open to cooperation in any investigation of the poisoning, insisting that Germany share any information it had collected. "We are simply stating in this situation our deep lack of understanding of what occurred and confirm our readiness and our intention to find out what happened," Mr. Peskov said, according to the Tass news agency. He added that Mr. Navalny, like any other Russian citizen, was free to return to Russia when he pleased, but ruled out any meetings with government officials.

Moscow even filed an official request for mutual assistance in Germany, seeking biological samples and other medical information related to the poisoning. As a formality, a Berlin judiciary official met briefly with Mr. Navalny on Monday to ask whether he would agree to the Russian request for medical information. Mr. Navalny rejected the request, declining to cooperate with any Russian inquiry, said Mr. Volkov, his chief of staff.

The German authorities have dismissed Russia's demand for more information.

The senior German security official, who spoke on condition on anonymity to speak candidly about interactions with the Russian government, said the German government had "rejected" Russia's argument that Germany should provide more information about the case.

Russia, the official said, had collected more evidence than anyone, including from the Siberian airport where Mr. Navalny might have been poisoned and at the Russian hospital where he was first treated.

Katrin Bennhold reported from Berlin, and Michael Schwirtz from London.

Photograph

Alexei A. Navalny on Tuesday at Charité hospital in Berlin, surrounded by family members. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXEI NAVALNY, VIA REUTERS)

DETAILS

Subject:	Press conferences; Election results; Local elections; Poisoning; Biological &chemical weapons; Cooperation; Poisons; Intelligence services
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Document 53 of 72

Navalny Said to Be Intent On Going Back to Russia

Bennhold, Katrin; Schwirtz, Michael . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]15 Sep 2020: A.12.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Mr. Navalny talked with a German prosecutor about being poisoned. Word of his improvement came as France and Sweden confirmed that he had been sickened by Novichok, a Russian nerve agent.

BERLIN -- Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who is recovering from being poisoned, has spoken to a German prosecutor about the attempt on his life and says he plans to return to Russia as soon as he has recovered, a senior German security official said on Monday.

Mr. Navalny had been in a medically induced coma at the Charité hospital in Berlin and it was not clear what condition he would be in once he regained consciousness. But the security official, who was briefed on his condition, said Mr. Navalny seemed mentally sharp.

"He's fully aware of his condition, he's fully aware of what happened and he's fully aware of where he is," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity to talk candidly about the case.

The news came hours after the German government announced that laboratories in France and Sweden had confirmed that the substance used to poison Mr. Navalny was a form of the nerve agent Novichok, results that match Berlin's own findings and provide additional confidence that the Russian state was involved.

"Three laboratories have now independently provided evidence of a substance from the Novichok group as the cause of Mr. Navalny's poisoning," a German government spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said in a statement. "We renew the call for Russia to explain what has happened."

Mr. Navalny remains heavily guarded by German police in the hospital. In his conversation with the German prosecutor, he refused to cooperate with a Russian request to jointly investigate the case with Germany, the security official said, adding that once he recovers, Mr. Navalny plans to return to Russia.

"He's not planning to go into exile in Germany," the official said. "He wants to go home to Russia and he wants to continue his mission."

Russian officials were not immediately informed of Mr. Navalny's refusal to cooperate, and did not initially respond to news of the French and Swedish tests. They have insisted that there was no proof Mr. Navalny had been poisoned. They have suggested several alternative theories, including a drug overdose and low blood sugar. In his statement, Mr. Seibert described the use of Novichok -- a class of potent nerve agents developed by the Soviet Union and used at least once before in an assassination attempt by Russian intelligence operatives -- as a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, of which Russia is a signatory.

But even as patience with President Vladimir V. Putin is running thin, Berlin is struggling to determine how to respond. Some have suggested canceling the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a nearly completed, \$11 billion project to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany. So far, however, the German government, its European allies and the United States have not taken any action aside from raising the prospect of additional sanctions on Russia.

The poisoning of Mr. Navalny is the latest in a long string of killings or attempted killings of Kremlin opponents in recent years. On Aug. 20, after campaigning in Siberia for antigovernment candidates for local offices, he collapsed, was hospitalized and flown to Germany for treatment two days later.

Local elections were held across Russia over the weekend, and Mr. Navalny and his allies made modest gains. In the opposition's biggest victory, Mr. Putin's United Russia party lost its majority on the City Council in Novosibirsk, a Siberian industrial hub and Russia's third-largest city.

The attack on Mr. Navalny increases the strain on the close, complicated and increasingly contradictory German-Russian relationship.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has been unusually clear in her sharp condemnation of Moscow's brazen actions and lack of cooperation. Less than a year ago, a former Chechen rebel leader was assassinated in broad daylight in a Berlin park, a killing that German federal prosecutors say was orchestrated by the Russian state.

Ms. Merkel, who normally speaks with Mr. Putin by phone at least once a week, has not spoken to him since Mr. Navalny's poisoning, a senior German security official said. On Monday, Russia's foreign minister, Sergei V. Lavrov, canceled a meeting scheduled for this week with his German counterpart, Heiko Maas. In a statement, the Russian foreign ministry did not mention the Navalny poisoning and said the cancellation had to do with a scheduling conflict.

President Emmanuel Macron of France raised the poisoning in a phone call with Mr. Putin on Monday, affirming the French laboratory results and asking that "all light be shed, without delay, on the circumstances and

responsibilities of this attempted assassination," according to a readout provided by the French government. The readout did not include Mr. Putin's response.

Ms. Merkel has been one of the tougher leaders in Europe when it comes to Russia, demanding a strong line on maintaining economic sanctions imposed after Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, even in the face of pushback at home and in other capitals.

But she has also worked hard to keep diplomatic lines to Moscow open. The two countries have deep economic links, not least in the energy market, and a sizable faction in German politics believes that Russia should be an important partner.

Ms. Merkel appears to be treading carefully once again -- at least for now. German officials did not raise Mr. Navalny's poisoning last week, when Dmitri Kozak, a close confidant of Mr. Putin, was allowed to land in Berlin for talks related to the war in Ukraine, despite a travel ban.

Germany has refused to rule out a re-evaluation of Nord Stream 2, but Ms. Merkel has long defended the project and experts say it is unlikely to be scrapped.

The German response so far contrasts sharply with Britain's reaction in 2018, after the poisoning of Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian spy, in the English city of Salisbury. Once the British government announced that Russian operatives had used Novichok in that case, it gave the Kremlin 24 hours to respond, after which it imposed sanctions and rallied allies to expel dozens of Russian diplomats.

But German officials insist that the poisoning of Mr. Navalny is not a bilateral issue between Germany and Russia. Unlike Mr. Skripal, who held British citizenship and was attacked on British soil, Mr. Navalny is a Russian who was in Russia when he was poisoned.

German officials are considering a variety of possible sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes against individuals, and are hoping for a response backed by all European Union member states.

"We want this to be a European sanctions regime to show that this is about our values when a leading opposition politician is poisoned," said one senior German security official involved in the discussions.

The official said that while it was important to send a message that Russia's behavior was out of line, it should not come at the expense of continued negotiations on issues like the wars in Ukraine and Syria, where Russia is a key player.

"This is a terrible thing, we have to sanction it, but it will not lead to a totally new Russia policy," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to talk candidly about internal deliberations. "The hard reality is: We need Russia on Ukraine, Libya, Syria. We don't want everything to collapse."

Mr. Navalny's recovery could also influence the eventual response, but doctors now expect him to make a full recovery, the senior official said.

Traces of the poison were found in samples taken from Mr. Navalny at the hospital in Berlin but also, crucially, on a water bottle that had traveled with him from Russia, German officials said. They have rejected Moscow's demand for "proof" that Mr. Navalny was poisoned inside Russia, noting that the Russian authorities had taken their own samples and confiscated dozens of objects before he was flown to Germany.

"They have their proof," one official said.

Within Russia, Mr. Navalny hoped to capitalize on discontent over Russia's economic slump and the coronavirus pandemic. Support for Mr. Putin has softened in recent years and dropped even further this year, said Denis Volkov, deputy director of Levada, an independent polling organization.

Russia's political system enforces support for Mr. Putin on a national level but allows more diversity in local elections -- an opening Mr. Navalny tried to seize to loosen the grip of the governing United Russia party. He encouraged the fractious opposition to unite behind a single candidate in each race.

In Novosibirsk, United Russia won 22 or 23 seats of 50 council seats, according to preliminary results, with one race still contested. That is down from 33 seats. Mr. Navalny's regional representative there, Sergei Boiko, and other opposition figures won council seats despite the poisoning of their leader, a stink bomb attack on Mr. Navalny's office in the city and allegations of ballot stuffing.

Mr. Navalny is aware of the results and said he is pleased, the senior German official said.

Mr. Navalny's allies also won a smattering of seats on other councils, including two in Tomsk, the last city he visited on his campaign swing.

But no mass movement in sympathy with Mr. Navalny has emerged, and there is no sign that the poisoning has shaken up Russian politics. United Russia's failings were already well known and some losses had been expected, said Dmitri Trenin, the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center.

"I am surprised by how little impact the poisoning" has had, he said.

Katrin Bennhold reported from Berlin, and Michael Schwirtz from London. Reporting was contributed by Andrew E. Kramer from Moscow and Aurelien Breeden from Paris.

Photograph

Angela Merkel, above, has not spoken with Vladimir Putin since Aleksei Navalny was poisoned. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KAPPELER/DPA, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS); Mr. Navalny in 2018 in Moscow. His condition has improved since his poisoning last month, but complications are still possible. (PHOTOGRAPH BY KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

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Document 54 of 72

Congress Should Pass A Navalny Act

Stephens, Bret . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]08 Sep 2020: A.23.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The latest poisoning of a Russian critic requires expanded sanctions and accountability for Kremlin leadership. In 2012, in the face of quiet resistance from the Obama administration, Congress passed the Magnitsky Act, named for a Russian lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, who was left to die in a Moscow prison in 2009 for blowing the whistle on a \$230 million scam perpetrated by government officials.

In 2020, in the face of what would be likely resistance from the Trump administration, Congress has a chance to do something useful by passing a Navalny Act, named for the Russian opposition leader Aleksei Navalny, who is only now emerging from a coma in a German hospital after being poisoned in Russia last month with the military grade nerve agent Novichok.

To be clear, a "Navalny Act" doesn't yet exist beyond this column. But it shouldn't be hard to sketch the essentials of what ought to be necessary legislation.

What did the Magnitsky Act do? In its original form (it has since been expanded in the United States and adopted by other countries) it imposed travel bans and asset freezes on a small number of people -- relatively low-level officials -- implicated in the swindle that Magnitsky uncovered, and in the cover-up that led to his grisly death. Yet the act had a neuralgic effect on the Russian government, because it hit where it hurt. As Julia Ioffe noted in *The Atlantic*, "What made Russian officialdom so mad about the Magnitsky Act is that it was the first time that there was some kind of roadblock to getting stolen money to safety" -- safety often meaning a condo in Miami, a townhouse in Belgravia or a Channel Island bank account. By threatening to unmask some of the faceless apparatchiks whose goal in life is to loot Russia so they may leave it, the Magnitsky Act threatened the incentive

structure of the regime itself. Why work for a pirate if you don't get to share in the booty?

A Navalny Act would take the Magnitsky Act several steps further. When I proposed the idea to Bill Browder, the American-born investor who once employed Magnitsky and who's been the prime mover of Magnitsky legislation in the United States and elsewhere, he jumped at the possibilities.

"There needs to be a list compiled of government officials who were complicit in the poisoning or cover-up of poisoning," he told me. "And the list should be long. And the list should include people with command responsibility. And the sanctions should be simultaneously put in place by the United States, the U.K., Canada, the E.U. and Australia."

What Browder has in mind is an extension of the Magnitsky concept -- maintaining the principle of holding individuals to account by targeting their assets and their rights to travel, only this time for a political crime. The same principle could be extended beyond the Navalny poisoning to establish a standing bipartisan commission to investigate other Putin-era political crimes: the murders of Boris Nemtsov, Natalya Estemirova, Anna Politkovskaya and Sergei Yushenkov; the poisonings of Sergei Skripal, Vladimir Kara-Murza and Viktor Yushchenko. A similar inquiry in Britain, led by the retired High Court judge Robert Owen, presented compelling evidence that the 2006 polonium murder of the dissident Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko in London was "probably approved" at the highest level in the Kremlin.

Moral accountability is step one. Step two is factual accountability.

Among the reasons Navalny was so hated by the Kremlin was his tireless campaign to expose secret assets (allegedly including a pair of yachts and a vineyard in Italy) belonging to top leaders like the former prime minister Dmitri Medvedev. The Senate already has a bill -- Lindsey Graham's Defending American Security From Kremlin Aggression Act, or DASKA -- that would require the intelligence community to publicize what it knows about Vladimir Putin's personal wealth.

Retaliating for Russia's disinformation campaign in the West with a Western information campaign for Russia seems like an ideally symmetrical response, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has not brought DASKA up for a vote. Draw your own conclusions.

The third step is economic accountability.

Navalny may be fighting for his life in Germany. But, thanks to Chancellor Angela Merkel's dogged support for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia, Germany has become Putin's greatest enabler in Europe.

Merkel's position that the European Union should keep separate economic and political accounts with Russia was never justifiable. Now it's outrageous: In the face of yet another Russian chemical-weapons attack against a human being, Merkel is proposing to provide a financial lifeline to the likely culprit while increasing Europe's strategic vulnerability to a criminal and aggressive regime. While it will undoubtedly enrage many in Germany, a properly written Navalny Act would formalize sanctions against companies from any country that does business with Nord Stream, prohibiting them from doing business in the United States -- and barring their corporate officers, including Gerhard Schröder, the chairman of the Russian energy company Rosneft and a former German chancellor, from traveling to the United States.

For now, Donald Trump says there is no proof who poisoned Navalny, while he boasts about trying to get along with Russia. If ever one needed another reminder of why he's unfit to be president, this is it. A Navalny Act will have to await a Biden administration and a Democratic Senate -- for which it should be the first order of foreign-policy business.

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Photograph

Aleksei Navalny in 2018. The Russian opposition leader is now lying comatose in a German hospital after a poisoning attack.
 (PHOTOGRAPH BY Mladen Antonov/Agence France-Presse -- Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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As Navalny Improves, Case Pits Germany Against Russia

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[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Doctors treating the Russian opposition leader said his condition had improved, but they could not rule out lasting effects of "severe poisoning." Germany said it was from a military-grade nerve agent.

BERLIN – The Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny is no longer in a medically induced coma and is responsive, doctors treating him at the Charité hospital in Berlin said on Monday. But they did not rule out lasting damage from what they called his "severe poisoning" with what the German government has said was a military-grade nerve agent.

Mr. Navalny was flown to Germany on Aug. 22 for treatment after a suspected poisoning. Specialists from the German Army later determined the poison came from the Novichok family of substances developed by the Soviet Union and used at least once before on an opponent of the Kremlin.

Ties between Berlin and Moscow, already strained over Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea and suspected involvement in the slaying of a Chechen rebel commander in a Berlin park last year, have been further eroded by the poisoning of Mr. Navalny.

The German government has demanded an explanation from Russia, but the Kremlin does not seem inclined to offer one, saying it has not yet been shown proof that Mr. Navalny was poisoned.

Mr. Navalny has been brought out of the medically induced coma and is being weaned from a respirator, the hospital said in a statement. "He is responsive to verbal stimuli," the statement said. "It remains too early to gauge the potential long-term effects of his severe poisoning."

Russia has a long history of using poison in assassination attempts, including Novichok agents.

Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian intelligence officer living in England, and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, were poisoned by a Novichok agent in March 2018, and the British authorities accused operatives from Russia's military intelligence service of carrying out the attack. Both Skripals survived, but they are in hiding and little is known about their condition.

The British government said on Monday that the Russian ambassador had been summoned and informed that London views Mr. Navalny's poisoning as "absolutely unacceptable," and stressed the demand from the German government for a full and transparent investigation.

Mr. Navalny fell violently ill on Aug. 20 as he made his way back to Moscow after meetings with opposition politicians in Siberia, ahead of nationwide local elections to be held on Sunday. Two days later, he was evacuated to Berlin, where he has been receiving treatment in one of the country's leading research hospitals. Experts from the German Army were asked to run tests that detected a substance from the Novichok group in Mr. Navalny's system.

News of Mr. Navalny's improved health came amid a debate in Berlin over how to respond to the poisoning. There have been calls for the German government to cancel the Russian-led Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea, a project that is nearly complete.

The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, has not ruled out any measures at this point, her spokesman said on Monday, as calls increased for construction of the final 90 miles of the \$11 billion pipeline project to be halted in response to the poisoning. Ms. Merkel led the push for the European Union to impose economic sanctions on Russia after the Crimea invasion and has maintained support of the effort, despite some calls to ease them.

Ms. Merkel had defended completion of the pipeline as in Germany's interest, even days after Mr. Navalny was flown by air ambulance to Berlin. But that was before the agent of his poisoning had been determined.

"It is up to Russia how Nord Stream 2 will continue," said Jens Spahn, a senior member of Ms. Merkel's conservative party who serves as minister for health. "There are no economic issues that can be more important than Germany's and Europe's foreign and security interests."

In official statements, Russian officials have said they wish the best for Mr. Navalny while lamenting that German doctors have not shared more details about how they ascertained he had been poisoned.

Mr. Navalny's supporters say the tactic is intended to bog down any investigation in an endless -- and fruitless -- diplomatic process, while possibly gleaning private medical data about Mr. Navalny's still uncertain condition.

Over the weekend, a prominent doctor known for pro-government political activities, Dr. Leonid Roshal, a pediatrician, suggested that Russian and German national medical boards work together to determine the cause of Mr. Navalny's illness.

Mr. Navalny's wife, Yulia Navalnaya, who flew with him to Berlin and has been consulting with German doctors about the treatment, their findings and what information is released to the public, flatly refused. And she chided Dr. Roshal for assuming that he could obtain patient data without first consulting her.

"First off, dear doctor, maybe you don't read the news but the cause of my husband's coma is known -- it is poisoning," Ms. Navalnaya wrote on Instagram. "You are behaving not as a doctor, but as a voice of the government and don't want to help a sick person, who you don't care about, but to ferret out information and curry favor."

Andrew E. Kramer contributed reporting from Moscow, and Mark Landler from London.

Photograph

The Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny at a march in Moscow in February. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Pavel Golovkin/Associated Press FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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Navalny Poisoning Raises Pressure on Merkel to Cancel Russian Pipeline

Erlanger, Steven; Eddy, Melissa . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y]04 Sep 2020: A.10.

FULL TEXT

Evidence that the Russian opposition leader was attacked with a military-grade nerve agent has placed new pressures on the German chancellor.

BRUSSELS – Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has long defended her decision to go ahead with an \$11 billion Russian gas pipeline, sticking to her position that politics and business should remain separate.

But that approach came under intense pressure Thursday, with a Russian dissident in a German hospital, poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent that is held closely by the Russian military. Even some members of her own party insisted that the chancellor should respond by canceling the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project.

The 764-mile pair of pipelines under the Baltic Sea is being built by a consortium led by the Russian energy giant Gazprom, which owns it, and would double the capacity for natural gas to flow directly from Russia to Germany. It has been criticized by many in Europe and the United States for increasing Russian leverage on Germany and helping to line the pockets of the Russian state.

But the pipeline is 94 percent completed, and Ms. Merkel defended the need to finish it as recently as last Friday.

At that point, Aleksei A. Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, was already in Berlin for treatment of a poisoning in Russia, although the use of the nerve agent, Novichok, had not yet been publicly confirmed.

But with the identification of Novichok as the poison, the debate on the pipeline has now been reopened.

For a long time, Ms. Merkel has advocated trade and diplomatic engagement with both Russia and China despite their internal repressions and external aggressiveness. Her argument has been that Russia is too close to Europe, and China too economically powerful, to isolate either of them, and that trade provides leverage on them that sanctions do not.

It is getting harder for her to have it both ways. German foreign policy has been notably more assertive to Russia after the country seized Crimea and shot down a Malaysian airliner, and to China after its increasing boldness and repression at home and abroad under its leader, Xi Jinping.

And so Nord Stream 2, originally promoted by her coalition partners, the Social Democrats, is becoming harder to defend, given that its owner, Gazprom, is controlled by the Kremlin of President Vladimir V. Putin. More Germans are asking how she -- and many other European leaders -- can portray Russia as a rogue nation in one breath and a legitimate commercial partner in the next?

On Thursday, Norbert Röttgen, a senior member of the chancellor's conservative party and the head of the foreign affairs committee in Parliament, who has long been critical of Nord Stream 2, called for Germany to respond to the poisoning with tough measures that could include the pipeline and Russia's sales of natural gas.

"The only language that Mr. Putin understands is tough language," Mr. Röttgen said. "We need to respond with the only language that Putin understands, the language of natural gas and selling natural gas."

To leave Nord Stream 2 out of the question now, he said, "would be the ultimate and maximum confirmation for Vladimir Putin to continue with exactly these kind of policies, because it has been proven once again that there will be no response from Europe."

The Trump administration and many in Congress have tried to stop the pipeline through the use of secondary sanctions that target companies working to lay the pipeline and would deny them access to the American market and banking system. Ms. Merkel and the European Union have decried their use, saying they are illegitimate and should be used against adversaries, not allies.

While Ms. Merkel may have been unwilling to bend to American pressure, however, the poisoning of Mr. Navalny may "now give her another reason to do so," noted Daniela Schwarzer, director of the German Council on Foreign Relations. "She could blame it on the Russians, not on the Americans."

Ms. Merkel is not alone in defending the project. Others in her party supported her stance, citing its usefulness for

maintaining leverage on Moscow, which needs the income.

"We need to have a joint European response, and we need to have a lever that ensures a robust response, and that has to involve the economy," said Jürgen Hardt, foreign policy spokesman for the conservatives in Parliament. Mr. Hardt said he expected Ms. Merkel to work with the European Union and NATO to find important collective responses to the poisoning that involve "effective sanctions, but without driving the Russian economy to the brink." But he did not believe she would cancel Nord Stream 2.

"If there is one thing we can say about the chancellor, it is that she is not one to bow to pressure," Mr. Hardt said. Thomas Gomart, director of the French Institute of International Relations and a Russia expert, also doubted that Ms. Merkel would block Nord Stream 2 at this late date. Other well-known Russian dissidents have been openly murdered on Russian soil – Boris Y. Nemtsov, for example, was shot down near the Kremlin in 2015 – and there was far less clamor for a response, he noted.

And other issues matter more, Mr. Gomart said, like Belarus, Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and the squabbling in the eastern Mediterranean. "This is a situation where Paris and to some extent Berlin do not want to spoil too many of their strategic resources in dealing with Russia when there are so many hot spots," he said.

"There is a big media focus on Navalny, and of course it's important and horrible," he added, "but we can't waste our resources on things we can't do anything about."

President Emmanuel Macron of France's own recent efforts to re-engage with Russia, sensing that Washington has created a vacuum of influence, have fallen flat, Mr. Gomart said. Now the poisoning of Mr. Navalny has made it harder for Mr. Macron. A scheduled meeting in Paris of French and Russian foreign and defense ministers in mid-September may not go ahead.

A meeting on Ukraine set for mid-September in Berlin, involving representatives of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, is also up in the air, a German official said.

Unlike the 2018 Novichok attack on a Russian double agent and his daughter in Salisbury, England, the poisoning of Mr. Navalny involves Russia using a nerve agent on its own soil for domestic political purposes, said Sam Greene, director of the Russia Institute at King's College London.

"Clearly, that offends the sensibilities of European politicians and citizens, as well it should," Mr. Greene said. "It raises a different dilemma for Europe, the question of whether or not they are going to pursue sanctions against Russia for the way it conducts itself internally."

Ian Bond, director of foreign policy for the Centre for European Reform and a former British diplomat in Moscow, said he expected Ms. Merkel would go first to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to investigate the poisoning, as Britain did after the Salisbury attack. After that she could raise the issue in the Security Council, the European Union and NATO.

The possible outcomes are targeted sanctions, the expulsion of more Russian agents from Europe and, if possible, international arrest warrants for those responsible, if they can be identified, he said.

But given the possibility that events in Belarus could get much worse, Mr. Bond said, the West must keep some sticks in reserve, like blocking Russian access to Western bond markets and increasing restrictions on the issue of Russian debt in the West.

Last Friday, Ms. Merkel said, "Our opinion is that Nord Stream 2 should be completed." The project has important economic value, she said, adding, "I do not think it is appropriate to link this economically driven project with the issue of Navalny for now."

But, as Ms. Schwarzer of the German Council on Foreign Relations noted, with the identification of Novichok as the toxin, "the debate on Nord Stream 2 has resurfaced and is wide open now."

Steven Erlanger reported from Brussels and Melissa Eddy from Berlin. Michael Schwirtz contributed reporting from New York.

Steven Erlanger reported from Brussels, and Melissa Eddy from Berlin. Michael Schwirtz contributed reporting from New York.

Photograph

The crane in a port just outside Sassnitz, Germany, belongs to a Russian pipe layer working on the last 100 miles of a gas pipeline. (PHOTOGRAPH BY LENA MUCHA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; Councils; International relations; Sanctions; Poisons; Pipelines; Foreign policy; Natural gas
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Location:	Russia New York Germany China Belarus France Ukraine Europe
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Company / organization:	Name: PJSC Gazprom; NAICS: 211120, 221210; Name: Council on Foreign Relations; NAICS: 541720, 813910; Name: North Atlantic Treaty Organization--NATO; NAICS: 928120; Name: European Union; NAICS: 926110, 928120
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The Spin From Moscow: Germany Did It, He Did, Or There Was No Poison

Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]04 Sep 2020: A.10.

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FULL TEXT

As they have in the past when Russia was accused of misconduct, officials and state media commentators responded to news of a nerve agent attack with an array of improbable explanations.

MOSCOW – To the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, what befell the Russian opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, was alarmingly simple: He was poisoned with a weapons-grade nerve agent in an attempted murder. To Russian officials and commentators on state news media, anxious to deny any Kremlin role and offer a wide range of alternative theories, it was not nearly so straightforward – the Germans had poisoned Mr. Navalny, or he had poisoned himself, or he was not poisoned at all.

Though dismissed by critics of the Russian government as dust thrown up to cover the truth, such flurries of evidence-free theories have become a standard response to accusations of Moscow's malfeasance, whether it is election meddling, military interventions, assassinations or the repression of the domestic opposition.

Mr. Navalny "and his supporters are putting on a big theater play," a Russian scientist, Leonid Rink, said in an interview on Russian state television.

Mr. Rink, identified as one of the developers of the Novichok group of nerve agents, ventured that Mr. Navalny had poisoned himself – though the poison is believed to be closely held by the Russian security services and almost impossible for a civilian to obtain.

In other explanations offered on state media, an enemy of Russia could have poisoned Mr. Navalny, or fabricated a poisoning that never occurred, with the nefarious goal of embarrassing the Kremlin and harming relations with Germany.

And so it went on Thursday, a day after German officials announced that after thorough analysis, their military's chemical weapons specialists had reached the unequivocal conclusion that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with

Novichok. That finding laid responsibility squarely at the Kremlin's doorstep.

The by-now-familiar Russian tactic is to fill the media with so many possibilities that people do not know what to believe. A range of theoretically possible but improbable alternative explanations turns up on prime-time Russian television, churning out a thick fog of uncertainty.

It was possible, Mr. Rink said, given the expertise of German chemists, that they copied the Russian nerve agent and poisoned Mr. Navalny after he had arrived in Germany. In that scenario, Mr. Navalny was either poisoned first with another substance in Russia or, again, poisoned himself as part of the ruse, Mr. Rink said.

"Somebody is sitting at a table now celebrating a successful operation," he concluded.

Another familiar participant in the media circus, Margarita Simonyan, the editor in chief of Russia Today, expressed a wide-eyed uncertainty about the case, suggesting that there was no way to form an impartial view.

"I don't know who poisoned Navalny and if he was poisoned at all," she wrote in a Twitter post on Thursday. "In the absence of hard facts, a person always chooses who to believe, based exclusively on personal sympathy and preference."

In 2014, President Vladimir V. Putin denied that men in unmarked uniforms turning up on the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea were Russian soldiers, saying they were local militia or members of a motorcycle gang. Some time later, he coyly conceded that they were Russian soldiers, the vanguard of Russia's military seizure of the territory.

That same year, Russia denied backing a separatist insurgency in an area of eastern Ukraine called Donbass, and denied supplying the rebels with the anti-aircraft missile system that shot down a Malaysia Airlines plane, killing 298 people – despite ample evidence to the contrary and the conclusions of Western governments.

The Kremlin and state media floated an array of alternative explanations and conspiracy theories about the flight – for example, that the Ukrainian military had shot it down. Russian state television broadcast a theory that the Central Intelligence Agency had downed a plane filled with corpses to justify the imposition of economic sanctions.

After the former double agent Sergei V. Skripal was poisoned with Novichok in Britain in 2018, the British government identified two Russian military intelligence officers as the attackers. The pair went on Russia Today to deny being spies and say they had visited the English city where Mr. Skripal lived just to see the spire of Salisbury Cathedral.

Ms. Simonyan, who conducted the interview, did not mention glaring weaknesses in their story and suggested Western governments might be homophobic for raising suspicions about young men traveling together. Other Russian media reports suggested that the British had poisoned Mr. Skripal.

In the case of Mr. Navalny's illness, the formal Russian government response has been to ask Germany for additional evidence.

"We are hoping it's possible to establish the cause of what happened," Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, told journalists on Thursday. "We are interested in this, we want this, and for this we need information from Germany."

The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement essentially accusing Germany of making reckless claims.

"Yet again, we become witnesses of a situation where in place of careful work, based on facts and evidence and cooperation between law enforcement organs and medical institutions, our partners prefer loud, public announcements," the statement said. The Germans had not produced "any facts at all," the statement said.

Within a few hours of the German revelation, more elaborate responses came from commentators on Russian media.

Mr. Rink said the German statement was untrue because Mr. Navalny could not have survived a Novichok poisoning, despite documented cases of such survival. "The comrade would be resting in a different place now," he said.

Olga Skabueva, a state television talk show host, noting that Mr. Navalny first took ill on an airline flight, questioned in a post on social media why, if such a dangerous poison were used, no other passengers and none of the doctors who treated him were sickened. "Novichok, they told us after Salisbury, is very dangerous."

Mr. Navalny's family and supporters have surmised that the poison was dropped into some tea he bought in the airport in Novosibirsk, in Siberia – the only thing he consumed that morning. He was flown to Germany for treatment two days later.

On Thursday, the president of Belarus, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, who has been currying favor with the Russian government to win support against street protesters, contributed his own theory.

He told the visiting Russian prime minister that his security service had intercepted a telephone call of Ms. Merkel admitting the poisoning was falsified.

"We caught an interesting conversation," he said in comments carried by the Tass news agency. "It speaks about this falsification. There was no poisoning of Navalny."

Russian doctors have suggested that Mr. Navalny lapsed into a coma because of low blood sugar.

"If the Kremlin wants its denials to be taken seriously, it ought not to have lied about Crimea, about Donbass," the Malaysian airliner and previous poisonings, Sam Greene, the director of the Russia Institute at King's College London, wrote on Twitter. "Whatever else may be going on in the world, Moscow's credibility problem is of its own making."

Photograph

Top, Aleksei A. Navalny at a Moscow rally last summer. Above, officers in protective gear in Salisbury, England, in 2018 to investigate the poisoning of Sergei V. Skripal and his daughter, Yulia. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAXIM ZMEYEV/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES; JACK TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

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As Others Condemn Dissident's Poisoning, Trump Just Wants to 'Get Along'

Crowley, Michael; Haberman, Maggie . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]04 Sep 2020: A.22.

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FULL TEXT

At a rally on Thursday, President Trump did not mention the dissident Aleksei A. Navalny, or warnings that Moscow is trying to interfere with the election. When news reports mention Russia, he said, "I just turn it off."

President Trump on Thursday reiterated his desire to "get along" with Moscow despite an international uproar over the poisoning of the Russian dissident Aleksei A. Navalny with a deadly nerve agent, saying that when the subject of Russia appears on the news, he turns it off.

Speaking at a small campaign rally in Latrobe, Pa., Mr. Trump did not mention Mr. Navalny on a day when his press secretary issued a stern statement about the apparent assassination attempt against the dissident, who is the most prominent domestic critic of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Nor did he address new warnings from his own intelligence officials that Russia is seeking to interfere in the 2020 election on his behalf.

Instead, he boasted that he had kept the United States "out of wars," and he pointed to his persistent efforts to thaw relations between Washington and Moscow. "It's good that I get along," Mr. Trump said. "If I get along with

Russia, is that a good thing or bad thing? I think it's a good thing."

His remarks came hours after the White House press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, called Mr. Navalny's poisoning "deeply reprehensible" and said the United States would "hold those in Russia accountable wherever the evidence leads." But she also insisted to reporters that "no one has been tougher on the Russian government than this president."

While the Trump administration has taken some punitive actions against Russia's government, including the expulsion of diplomats and an array of economic sanctions, it has done so mainly under pressure from Congress or European allies -- and often only with Mr. Trump's grudging approval, according to several former White House officials.

The startling attack on Mr. Putin's most prominent domestic critic during a trip to Siberia last month has renewed attention on Mr. Trump's undisguised admiration for a Russian leader widely seen in Washington and Europe as an amoral autocrat determined to undermine Western democracies. It comes amid several other acts of Russian aggression, including efforts to interfere in the 2020 election and a confrontation with American troops in Syria last month that injured seven U.S. soldiers.

Mr. Trump's comments came as foreign leaders, including Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, demanded answers from Moscow about the episode. Germany's government said this week that Mr. Navalny was afflicted by the advanced nerve agent Novichok, produced by the Soviet Union and thought to be possessed now by Russia's Kremlin-controlled security services.

No conclusive evidence exists linking Mr. Putin or the Kremlin to Mr. Navalny's poisoning, and the Kremlin has denied any involvement. Some analysts have said he may have been targeted by political rivals at the local level. But the finding by Germany -- which is now caring for Mr. Navalny and providing him with asylum -- that he was the victim of Novichok lends strong weight to the theory that it was an action by high levels of Russia's security services.

Seeing a political opening, Mr. Trump's Democratic rival, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., said in a statement on Wednesday that it was clear that Mr. Putin's government was responsible for poisoning Mr. Navalny, an outspoken critic of Mr. Putin and his political allies, and that Mr. Trump's "silence is complicity."

But in Latrobe on Thursday, the president treated the topic of Russia as little more than a political cudgel used by his opponents for partisan gain. He renewed his attacks on Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California, who led the House Intelligence Committee's inquiry into a possible conspiracy between the Trump 2016 campaign and Russian officials.

"These maniacs always talk about Russia. They never talk about China. It is always Russia. I heard it starting again," Mr. Trump said. "They said somebody spoke to Russia two years ago, Russia, Russia, Russia. The total maniacs -- Shifty Schiff is a total maniac. I can't even listen."

He said when he hears people talking about Russia, "I just turn it off. It is crazy."

Mr. Trump made no mention of last month's bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee report detailing ties between his campaign in 2016 and Kremlin officials, including confirmation that a business partner in Ukraine of his campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, was a Russian intelligence agent. Nor did he address a new warning from the Department of Homeland Security on Thursday that Russians are trying to foment disinformation by amplifying unfounded claims of voter fraud.

Mr. Trump has directly addressed Mr. Navalny's case only once, saying in response to a reporter on Aug. 20 that "we're looking at it," and that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would be "reporting to me soon."

Five days later, Mr. Pompeo issued a statement saying that if reports of a poisoning "prove accurate," the United States would back "a comprehensive investigation" by the European Union and stood ready to assist. He added that "Mr. Navalny's family and the Russian people deserve to see a full and transparent investigation carried out, and for those involved to be held accountable."

Michael Carpenter, a former top Russia official at the Pentagon and foreign policy adviser to Mr. Biden at the White House, said it was revealing that Mr. Trump had left the response to his subordinates. "In a well-established game,

he has subordinates deep down in the bureaucracy like the N.S.C. spokesman issue a statement," Mr. Carpenter said.

But as in previous instances of Russian wrongdoing, Mr. Trump himself has not echoed their words.

Mr. Trump has also not commented on a series of escalatory Russian military actions in recent days, including a late-August episode in northeastern Syria that left seven American troops injured after a Russian armored vehicle rammed theirs. And he has dismissed intelligence reports that Russia offered bounties to Taliban-affiliated fighters in Afghanistan for the killing of American troops there as "a hoax."

Some Trump officials, who hold more hawkish views toward Russia than the president, are also frustrated at Mr. Putin's support for the embattled president of Belarus, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Stephen E. Biegun, the deputy secretary of state, who recently met in Moscow with Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said that the United States was urging "Moscow to not intervene, and certainly not to militarily intervene to prop up the regime."

Mr. Biegun said he had discussed Mr. Navalny's case with Mr. Lavrov, adding that American relations with Russia have been "significantly challenged" in recent years by several points of conflict.

Allies of Mr. Biden's have grown increasingly aggressive in their attacks on Mr. Trump on the subject of his relations with the Russian president, with whom he has spoken at least eight times this year.

"Trump is unable to stand up to Putin. This is a real problem for the U.S. and NATO. His weakness emboldens the Kremlin," R. Nicholas Burns, a senior State Department official in the George W. Bush administration, wrote on Twitter in response to Mr. Trump's comments on Thursday.

"Trump repeatedly gets punked by Putin," Susan E. Rice, a former national security adviser to President Barack Obama, wrote in a tweet on Monday. "And says and does nothing."

Photograph

In Latrobe, Pa., President Trump didn't address the potential assassination attempt of a Putin critic.

(PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA MONEYMAKER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

DETAILS

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Russia Spins Alternative Theories in Poisoning of Navalny

Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]03 Sep 2020.

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FULL TEXT



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MOSCOW — To the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, what befell the Russian opposition leader, Alexei A. Navalny, was alarmingly simple: He was poisoned with a weapons-grade nerve agent in an attempted murder.

To Russian officials and commentators on state news media, anxious to deny any Kremlin role and offer a wide range of alternative theories, it was not nearly so straightforward —the Germans had poisoned Navalny, or he had poisoned himself, or he was not poisoned at all.

Though dismissed by critics of the Russian government as dust thrown up to cover the truth, such flurries of evidence-free theories have become a standard response to accusations of Moscow's malfeasance, whether it is election meddling, military interventions, assassinations or the repression of the domestic opposition.

Navalny "and his supporters are putting on a big theater play," a Russian scientist, Leonid Rink, said in an interview on Russian state television.

Rink, identified as one of the developers of the Novichok group of nerve agents, ventured that Navalny had poisoned himself —though the poison is closely held by the Russian military and almost impossible for a civilian to obtain.

In other explanations offered on state media, an enemy of Russia could have poisoned Navalny, or fabricated a poisoning that never occurred, with the nefarious goal of embarrassing the Kremlin and harming relations with Germany.

And so it went on Thursday, a day after German officials announced that after thorough analysis, their military's chemical weapons specialists had reached the unequivocal conclusion that Navalny had been poisoned with Novichok. That finding laid responsibility squarely at the Kremlin's doorstep.

The by-now-familiar Russian tactic is to fill the media with so many possibilities that people do not know what to believe. A range of theoretically possible but improbable alternative explanations turns up on prime-time Russian television, churning out a thick fog of uncertainty.

It was possible, Rink said, given the expertise of German chemists, that they copied the Russian nerve agent and poisoned Navalny after he had arrived in Germany. In that scenario, Navalny was either poisoned first with another substance in Russia or, again, poisoned himself as part of the ruse, Rink said.

"Somebody is sitting at a table now celebrating a successful operation," he concluded.

Another familiar participant in the media circus, Margarita Simonyan, the editor-in-chief of Russia Today, expressed a wide-eyed uncertainty about the case, suggesting that there was no way to form an impartial view. "I don't know who poisoned Navalny and if he was poisoned at all," she wrote in a Twitter post on Thursday. "In the absence of hard facts, a person always chooses who to believe, based exclusively on personal sympathy and preference."

In 2014, President Vladimir Putin denied that men in unmarked uniforms turning up on the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea were Russian soldiers, saying they were local militia or members of a motorcycle gang. Some time later, he coyly conceded that they were Russian soldiers, the vanguard of Russia's military seizure of the territory.

That same year, Russia denied backing a separatist insurgency in an area of eastern Ukraine called Donbass, and denied supplying the rebels with the anti-aircraft missile system that shot down a Malaysia Airlines plane, killing 298 people —despite ample evidence to the contrary and the conclusions of Western governments.

The Kremlin and state media floated an array of alternative explanations and conspiracy theories about the flight —for example, that the Ukrainian military had shot it down. Russian state television broadcast a theory that the Central Intelligence Agency had downed a plane filled with corpses to justify the imposition of economic sanctions.

After the former double agent Sergei Skripal was poisoned with Novichok in Britain in 2018, the British government identified two Russian military intelligence officers as the attackers. The pair went on Russia Today to deny being spies and say they had visited the English city where Skripal lived just to see the spire of Salisbury Cathedral.

Simonyan, who conducted the interview, did not mention glaring weaknesses in their story and suggested Western governments might be homophobic for raising suspicions about young men traveling together. Other Russian media reports suggested that the British had poisoned Skripal.

In the case of Navalny's illness, the formal Russian government response has been to ask Germany for additional evidence.

"We are hoping it's possible to establish the cause of what happened," Dmitri Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, told journalists on Thursday. "We are interested in this, we want this, and for this we need information from Germany." The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement essentially accusing Germany of making reckless claims.

"Yet again, we become witnesses of a situation where in place of careful work, based on facts and evidence and cooperation between law enforcement organs and medical institutions, our partners prefer loud, public announcements," the statement said. The Germans had not produced "any facts at all," the statement said.

Within a few hours of the German revelation, more elaborate responses came from commentators on Russian media.

Rink said the German statement was untrue because Navalny could not have survived a Novichok poisoning, despite documented cases of such survival. "The comrade would be resting in a different place now," he said.

Olga Skabueva, a state television talk show host, noting that Navalny first took ill on an airline flight, questioned in a post on social media why, if such a dangerous poison were used, no other passengers and none of the doctors who treated him were sickened. "Novichok, they told us after Salisbury, is very dangerous."

Navalny's family and supporters have surmised that the poison was dropped into some tea he bought in the airport in Novosibirsk, in Siberia –the only thing he consumed that morning. He was flown to Germany for treatment two days later.

On Thursday, the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, who has been currying favor with the Russian government to win support against street protesters, contributed his own theory.

He told the visiting Russian prime minister that his security service had intercepted a telephone call of Merkel admitting the poisoning was falsified.

"We caught an interesting conversation," he said in comments carried by the Tass news agency. "It speaks about this falsification. There was no poisoning of Navalny."

Russian doctors have suggested that Navalny lapsed into a coma because of low blood sugar.

"If the Kremlin wants its denials to be taken seriously, it ought not to have lied about Crimea, about Donbass," the Malaysian airliner and previous poisonings, Sam Greene, the director of the Russia Institute at King's College London, wrote on Twitter. "Whatever else may be going on in the world, Moscow's credibility problem is of its own making."

DETAILS

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Navalny Poisoning Raises Pressure on Merkel to Cancel Russian Pipeline

Erlanger, Steven; Eddy, Melissa . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]03 Sep 2020.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

BRUSSELS — Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has long defended her decision to go ahead with an \$11 billion Russian gas pipeline, sticking to her position that politics and business should remain separate.

But that approach came under intense pressure Thursday, with a Russian dissident in a German hospital, poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent that is held closely by the Russian military. Even some members of her own party insisted that the chancellor should respond by canceling the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project.

The 764-mile pair of pipelines under the Baltic Sea is being built by a consortium led by the Russian energy giant Gazprom, which owns it, and would double the capacity for natural gas to flow directly from Russia to Germany. It has been criticized by many in Europe and the United States for increasing Russian leverage on Germany and helping to line the pockets of the Russian state.

But the pipeline is 94% completed, and Merkel defended the need to finish it as recently as last Friday. At that point, Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, was already in Berlin for treatment of a poisoning in Russia, although the use of the nerve agent, Novichok, had not yet been publicly confirmed.

But with the identification of Novichok as the poison, the debate on the pipeline has now been reopened.

For a long time, Merkel has advocated trade and diplomatic engagement with both Russia and China despite their internal repressions and external aggressiveness. Her argument has been that Russia is too close to Europe, and China too economically powerful, to isolate either of them, and that trade provides leverage on them that sanctions do not.

It is getting harder for her to have it both ways. German foreign policy has been notably more assertive to Russia after the country seized Crimea and shot down a Malaysian airliner, and to China after its increasing boldness and repression at home and abroad under its leader, Xi Jinping.

And so Nord Stream 2, originally promoted by her coalition partners, the Social Democrats, is becoming harder to defend, given that its owner, Gazprom, is controlled by the Kremlin of President Vladimir Putin. More Germans are asking how she –and many other European leaders –can portray Russia as a rogue nation in one breath and a legitimate commercial partner in the next?

On Thursday, Norbert Röttgen, a senior member of the chancellor's conservative party and the head of the foreign affairs committee in Parliament, who has long been critical of Nord Stream 2, called for Germany to respond to the poisoning with tough measures that could include the pipeline and Russia's sales of natural gas.

"The only language that Putin understands is tough language," Röttgen said. "We need to respond with the only language that Putin understands, the language of natural gas and selling natural gas."

To leave Nord Stream 2 out of the question now, he said, "would be the ultimate and maximum confirmation for Vladimir Putin to continue with exactly these kind of policies, because it has been proven once again that there will be no response from Europe."

The Trump administration and many in Congress have tried to stop the pipeline through the use of secondary sanctions that target companies working to lay the pipeline and would deny them access to the American market and banking system. Merkel and the European Union have decried their use, saying they are illegitimate and should be used against adversaries, not allies.

While Merkel may have been unwilling to bend to U.S. pressure, however, the poisoning of Navalny may "now give her another reason to do so," noted Daniela Schwarzer, director of the German Council on Foreign Relations. "She could blame it on the Russians, not on the Americans."

Merkel is not alone in defending the project. Others in her party supported her stance, citing its usefulness for maintaining leverage on Moscow, which needs the income.

"We need to have a joint European response, and we need to have a lever that ensures a robust response, and that has to involve the economy," said Jürgen Hardt, foreign policy spokesman for the conservatives in Parliament. Hardt said he expected Merkel to work with the European Union and NATO to find important collective responses to the poisoning that involve "effective sanctions, but without driving the Russian economy to the brink." But he did not believe she would cancel Nord Stream 2.

"If there is one thing we can say about the chancellor, it is that she is not one to bow to pressure," Hardt said.

Thomas Gomart, director of the French Institute of International Relations and a Russia expert, also doubted that Merkel would block Nord Stream 2 at this late date. Other well-known Russian dissidents have been openly

murdered on Russian soil —Boris Nemtsov, for example, was gunned down near the Kremlin in 2015 —and there was far less clamor for a response, he noted.

And other issues matter more, Gomart said, like Belarus, Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and the squabbling in the eastern Mediterranean. “This is a situation where Paris and to some extent Berlin do not want to spoil too many of their strategic resources in dealing with Russia when there are so many hot spots,” he said.

“There is a big media focus on Navalny, and of course it’s important and horrible,” he added, “but we can’t waste our resources on things we can’t do anything about.”

President Emmanuel Macron of France’s own recent efforts to re-engage with Russia, sensing that Washington has created a vacuum of influence, have fallen flat, Gomart said. Now the poisoning of Navalny has made it harder for Macron. A scheduled meeting in Paris of French and Russian foreign and defense ministers in mid-September may not go ahead.

A meeting on Ukraine set for mid-September in Berlin, involving representatives of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, is also up in the air, a German official said.

Unlike the 2018 Novichok attack on a Russian double agent and his daughter in Salisbury, England, the poisoning of Navalny involves Russia using a nerve agent on its own soil for domestic political purposes, said Sam Greene, director of the Russia Institute at King’s College London.

“Clearly, that offends the sensibilities of European politicians and citizens, as well it should,” Greene said. “It raises a different dilemma for Europe, the question of whether or not they are going to pursue sanctions against Russia for the way it conducts itself internally.”

Ian Bond, director of foreign policy for the Centre for European Reform and a former British diplomat in Moscow, said he expected Merkel would go first to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to investigate the poisoning, as Britain did after the Salisbury attack. After that she could raise the issue in the Security Council, the European Union and NATO.

The possible outcomes are targeted sanctions, the expulsion of more Russian agents from Europe and, if possible, international arrest warrants for those responsible, if they can be identified, he said.

But given the possibility that events in Belarus could get much worse, Bond said, the West must keep some sticks in reserve, like blocking Russian access to Western bond markets and increasing restrictions on the issue of Russian debt in the West.

Last Friday, Merkel said, “Our opinion is that Nord Stream 2 should be completed.” The project has important economic value, she said, adding, “I do not think it is appropriate to link this economically driven project with the issue of Navalny for now.”

But, as Schwarzer of German Council on Foreign Relations noted, with the identification of Novichok as the toxin, “the debate on Nord Stream 2 has resurfaced and is wide open now.”

DETAILS

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A Guide to Novichok, the Soviet Neurotoxin Used in Navalny's Poisoning

Pérez-Peña, Richard . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]03 Sep 2020: A.14.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

For decades, scientists, spies and chemical weapons specialists have known about and feared the lethal substance.

Few people had heard of the nerve agent Novichok until 2018, when Western officials accused Russia of having used it in the attempted assassination of a former spy in Britain. It returned abruptly to the headlines on Wednesday, when Germany said the poison had sickened the Russian dissident Alexei A. Navalny.

But for decades, scientists, spies and chemical weapons specialists have known about and feared Novichok. It is a potent neurotoxin, developed in the Soviet Union and Russia in the 1980s and 90s, that can be delivered as a liquid, powder or aerosol, and is said to be more lethal than nerve agents that are better known in the West, like VX and sarin.

The poison causes muscle spasms that can stop the heart, fluid buildup in the lungs that can also be deadly, and damage to other organs and nerve cells. Russia has produced several versions of Novichok, and it is anyone's guess how often they have actually been used, experts say, because the resulting deaths can easily escape scrutiny, appearing like nothing more sinister than a fatal heart attack.

That may have been the plan in the case of Sergei V. Skripal, a former Russian spy living in Salisbury, England. When Mr. Skripal was found barely conscious in a park on March 4, 2018, there was no obvious reason to suspect poisoning -- except that his daughter, who was visiting, was with him, suffering the same symptoms.

British intelligence agencies identified the substance as Novichok and accused Russia. The attack became a major international scandal, further chilling relations between Moscow and the West. The British identified Russian agents who they said had flown into Britain, applied the poison to the front door handle of Mr. Skripal's house and left the country, leaving a trail of video and chemical evidence.

President Vladimir V. Putin's government has consistently denied any involvement in the incident, spinning a series of alternative theories, and just months before the Salisbury attack, Mr. Putin declared that Russia had destroyed all of its chemical weapons.

Mr. Skripal worked for Russian military intelligence until he was caught passing secrets to the British, and imprisoned. After he was released in a 2010 prisoner swap and settled in England, he advised several countries'

governments on Russian intelligence.

Time and time again, people seen as enemies of the Kremlin have been killed, both in Russia and abroad. Russian spies have a long history of using poisons in assassinations, and Western intelligence officials say Russia has spy units specially trained in the handling and deployment of the most dangerous substances.

Mr. Skripal and his daughter, Yulia S. Skripal, survived the poisoning, as did a police officer who had been exposed when he visited their home to investigate and a man who had found the discarded perfume bottle used to transport the poison. But the man's girlfriend, Dawn Sturgess, who had sprayed herself with the bottle, died. After the Soviet Union disintegrated in the early 1990s, scientists who had worked on its chemical weapons program – some of whom moved to the United States -- spoke publicly about a nerve agent they had named Novichok, Russian for "new guy." One of them accidentally exposed himself to it 1987, suffering permanent and ultimately fatal muscle and organ damage. He told his story to a Russian newspaper in 1992, shortly before he died.

Novichok belongs to a broad class of compounds called cholinesterase inhibitors, which are used in a wide range of medicines as well as poisons. They attack the normal ebb and flow of neurotransmitters, chemicals in the body that nerve cells use to regulate essential functions.

Nerve agent poisoning can be treated with the chemicals atropine and oxime, but even if the treatment is successful, victims can suffer lasting damage.

The first field use of the poison may have been in 1995, when a Russian businessman and his secretary were killed. Officials said at the time that they had been poisoned with cadmium, a heavy metal, but Russian media have since reported that it was Novichok.

In 1999, the United States struck an agreement to help Uzbekistan dismantle a former Soviet chemical weapon lab that had produced and tested Novichok.

After that, it went all but unmentioned in news reports for almost 19 years – until two Russians were found near death in a park in Salisbury.

Photograph

The Charité hospital in Berlin, where Aleksei A. Navalny, Russia's opposition leader, remains in a medically induced coma. The German government said he had been poisoned with a deadly nerve agent from the Novichok family.

(PHOTOGRAPH BY Christoph Soeder/DPA, via Associated Press FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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Putin Adversary Was Poisoned With Nerve Agent

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[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The German government said that toxicology tests showed the Russian opposition leader was poisoned with a nerve agent from the same class used in a 2018 attack in Britain on an ex-Soviet spy.

Soon after a private plane carrying the poisoned Russian opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, touched down in Berlin last month, doctors treating him at the prestigious Charité hospital there became so alarmed, they called in the Army.

Mr. Navalny was certainly not suffering from low blood sugar, as the Russian doctors who first treated his mysterious illness had claimed, or even a standard detective-novel poison like arsenic or cyanide.

It was, the German doctors suspected, something far more dangerous, requiring the attention of the Army's chemical weapons specialists, German officials said.

On Wednesday, the German government confirmed the doctors' fears: Mr. Navalny, 44, had been poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent from the Novichok family, a potent class of chemical weapon developed by the Soviet Union that was used at least once before in recent years in an attack on a Kremlin enemy. Mr. Navalny remains in critical but stable condition at the Charité hospital, in a medically induced coma.

The Novichok revelation, which the German government said was based on "unequivocal evidence," provided the strongest indication yet that the Kremlin, which has denied involvement, was behind the poisoning, as Western intelligence agencies have assessed that only the Russian government would likely have access to such a dangerous weapon.

That thrust what had begun as a domestic Russian political scandal into the international arena, with serious implications for Moscow's relations with the West.

Already, the German government has briefed its allies in the European Union and NATO, and plans to provide information about its findings to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the world's chemical weapons watchdog. All day Wednesday, Western governments issued condemnations of Russia, with the United States raising the possibility of imposing financial sanctions on those involved.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, who over the years has taken pains to preserve Germany's diplomatic relations with the Kremlin, took the unusual step on Wednesday of publicly calling Russia out.

"Mr. Navalny has been the victim of a crime," Ms. Merkel in a statement. "It raises very serious questions that only the Russian government can and must answer."

Russia is unlikely to provide such answers.

On Wednesday, the Kremlin said it had not been informed of Germany's findings before they were announced, the Russian state news outlet Tass reported.

"No, such information was not conveyed to us," said the presidential spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov. He added that Russian doctors had found no evidence of any poisonous substances in Mr. Navalny's system before he was moved to Germany.

German officials said the Russian ambassador had been briefed at around the same time the findings were made public.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun said on Wednesday that American officials found the German conclusion about the use of Novichok "very credible" and "deeply concerning." He said Washington was discussing a response with Germany and other allies.

It is unclear what Western governments can do to curtail such behavior. Despite years of escalating sanctions, expulsions of diplomats and international isolation, the Kremlin, according to Western intelligence agencies, continues to act concertedly to undermine American and European institutions and violate international norms.

The German revelation comes less than a month after U.S. intelligence officials declared that Russia was seeking to interfere in the 2020 presidential election in the United States, using a range of techniques designed to denigrate Joseph R. Biden Jr. and boost President Trump.

And it comes a day after Facebook and Twitter announced that they had disrupted a disinformation operation launched by the same Kremlin-backed group, the Internet Research Agency, that interfered in the 2016 election. Attacks against the Kremlin's enemies both in Russia and abroad have also become increasingly brazen. In 2015, Boris Nemtsov, who was Mr. Navalny's predecessor at the helm of Russia's opposition, was shot dead on a bridge near Red Square, just outside the Kremlin walls.

An attacker doused Mr. Navalny with a green liquid in 2017 that damaged his sight. Last December, a former Chechen rebel commander was shot to death in a park in Berlin.

And in March 2018, operatives from Russia's military intelligence service, known as the G.R.U., traveled to Britain, where they poisoned Sergei V. Skripal, a former G.R.U. officer who had served prison time in Russia for spying for the British before being traded in a spy swap.

At the time, few in the world had heard of Novichok, a nerve agent that Soviet chemists devised for battlefield use. It was that substance, British authorities said, smuggled into the country in a perfume bottle, that sickened Mr. Skripal and his daughter, Yulia.

The Skripals survived the attack, as did two other people who came into contact with the poison, but it killed one person, a woman who handled the perfume bottle after the would-be assassins had discarded it.

Mr. Navalny's team of doctors said in a statement that they expected a lengthy recovery and that they could not rule out lasting effects.

The United States stopped producing nerve agents in 1970, after the development of "third generation" nerve agents like sarin and VX. Soviet scientists kept at it for two more decades, developing a "fourth generation," the Novichok group of weapons. The United States still has some of its aging stockpile of nerve agents, while Russia claimed in 2017 to have eliminated all of its chemical weapons.

The Skripal poisoning provoked international fury, resulting in Britain and its allies expelling more than 120 Russian diplomats and intelligence officers as well as imposing punishing sanctions.

The poisoning also turned Novichok into something of a Russian calling card.

With the substance again being used, this time to poison the Russian government's most visible opponent, critics accused the Kremlin of thumbing its nose at its opponents both at home and abroad.

"In 2020, poisoning Navalny with Novichok is the same as leaving an autograph at the scene of the crime," Leonid Volkov, Mr. Navalny's chief of staff, wrote on Twitter.

The Navalny case also sends an unmistakable message from Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, at time when Russians are holding enormous protests in the country's Far East, and pro-democracy forces have flooded the streets in neighboring Belarus, said John Sipher, a former chief of station for the Central Intelligence Agency, who was once posted to Russia.

"In a country that's ruled by fear you need to send signals to the population about what's acceptable and what's not acceptable," Mr. Sipher said. "They want to make it clear to the people inside that if you screw with the czar, you're going to get killed."

Mr. Navalny, the most persistent critic of Mr. Putin, fell ill on Aug. 20, on a flight back to Moscow, after spending several days meeting with opposition candidates in Novosibirsk, Siberia's largest city. He had been promoting a strategy aimed at drawing support away from the dominant United Russia party before nationwide municipal elections on Sept. 13.

His plane made an emergency landing in Omsk, another Siberian city, where he was first hospitalized. He was flown to Berlin two days later.

On Wednesday new details emerged about the race to identify the source of his illness.

Shortly after Mr. Navalny arrived in Germany, on Aug. 22, his doctors requested the assistance of the German military's Institute for Pharmacology and Toxicology in Munich, where there are scientists with expertise in nerve agent attacks, said a senior German security official who was not authorized to provide details about the case and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It was only this week that military scientists made their final determination about the poison and informed the German leadership, the official said. The results were so highly classified, the official said, that even Mr. Navalny's doctors were not immediately informed, though they had been operating under the assumption of a nerve agent attack and providing the appropriate treatment.

The Novichok class of nerve agents contains many possible variations and the official would not provide the precise chemical formula of the substance found in Mr. Navalny, saying such information had received the highest

German security classification.

German military scientists, the official said, "were 100 percent certain that it was Novichok."

"It's not nearly certain. It's not probably certain. It's absolutely certain," the official said.

The case is expected to further strain ties between Berlin and Moscow that have been tense since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Ms. Merkel said on Wednesday that Germany, which currently holds the European Union's rotating presidency, would consult with its European and NATO partners about a coordinated response.

"The world will wait for answers," she said.

Germany and Russia share deep cultural and economic ties, and Ms. Merkel, who is fluent in Russian, has insisted on maintaining a dialogue with Mr. Putin through regular calls and meetings.

But she has also resisted Moscow as it has pivoted against the West. She led Europe's move to impose economic sanctions in response to Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, expelled two Russian embassy employees after the German federal prosecutor's office said it suspected Russia in the Berlin park killing less than one mile from her chancellery, and is seeking sanctions against the head of Russia's military intelligence agency over a 2015 cyberattack on the German Parliament.

Michael Schwirtz reported from New York and Melissa Eddy from Berlin. Michael Crowley contributed reporting from Washington, Andrew E. Kramer from Moscow, Megan Specia from London and Christopher F. Schuetze from Berlin.

Photograph

The Charité hospital in Berlin, where the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny is being treated. He is in a medically induced coma after falling ill in August. (PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPH SOEDER/DPA, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS); Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany said the findings raise serious questions that "only the Russian government" can answer. (POOL PHOTO BY MARKUS SCHREIBER) (A14)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; Biological &chemical weapons; Intelligence services; Political dissent
Location:	Russia Germany
People:	Navalny, Alexei Putin, Vladimir
URL:	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/02/world/europe/navalny-poison-novichok.html
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Country of publication:	United States, New York, N.Y.

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Last updated:	2020-09-03
Database:	New York Times

LINKS

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Document 63 of 72

Russia Rejects Call for Query Into Poisoning

Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]26 Aug 2020: A.12.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The Kremlin's spokesman said there was no need to investigate because it had not yet been proven that the opposition leader was poisoned.

MOSCOW -- The Russian government said Tuesday that it was willing to launch a vigorous investigation into the recent sickening of a leading opposition figure, but only if it could be proved that he was poisoned.

On Monday German Chancellor Angela Merkel endorsed the conclusion of doctors at a Berlin hospital that the dissident, Alexei A. Navalny, had indeed been poisoned on a flight from Siberia, and called for an immediate investigation.

For the time being, though, that does not seem likely to happen.

"We don't understand on what grounds our German colleagues are in such a hurry to use the word poison," Russia's presidential spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, told reporters on a conference call. "A substance has not been identified."

Mr. Navalny, 44, who for almost a decade has challenged President Vladimir V. Putin politically and criticized his entourage for corruption, became one in a series of Kremlin opponents to collapse suddenly into a coma after drinking tea.

Doctors at the Siberian hospital that initially treated Mr. Navalny said laboratory results showed no signs of poisoning, while the hospital's head doctor pointed to a metabolic disorder caused by low blood sugar as the most likely cause.

At the request of his family, Mr. Navalny, still in a coma, was evacuated to Germany by air ambulance on Saturday, and on Monday doctors at Charité Hospital in Berlin said he had been poisoned.

While they were not able to name the exact poison, the doctors said tests showed it came from a group of chemicals known as cholinesterase inhibitors, which interfere with the nervous system. They are used medically to treat Alzheimer's and other types of dementia and in some forms are also found in chemical weapons and pesticides.

Ms. Merkel, in a statement issued Monday, said that "clinical findings indicate Aleksei Navalny was poisoned," and that Russia should investigate.

It was a clear signal of support from the German leader for Russian opposition figures, defectors, journalists and human rights activists who have said for years that the Russian security services conduct secret operations to kill or incapacitate them with poison.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo similarly urged a thorough inquiry.

"The United States is deeply concerned by reported preliminary conclusions from German medical experts that Russian opposition activist Aleksey Navalny was poisoned," he said, calling for "a comprehensive investigation." France on Tuesday also echoed the German position. A Foreign Ministry statement called the poisoning of Mr. Navalny a "criminal act perpetrated against a major actor of Russian political life."

Mr. Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, said the German finding fell short of proof. Russian doctors, too, had detected low levels of cholinesterase in Mr. Navalny, he said, but ventured that this could have been caused by a variety of factors and not just by poison.

He noted the German doctors' failure to identify a specific toxin. "The substance is absent," he said. "Unfortunately, it cannot be found, and analyses do not show it."

Mr. Navalny's wife, spokeswoman and personal doctor had said Russian authorities endangered the opposition leader's life by delaying his medical evacuation from Siberia for a day to allow time for the poison to metabolize, becoming more difficult to identify.

Mr. Peskov also denied a pattern of poisoning of Russian opposition figures.

"Here, I would not sketch out some tendency of murders, occurring in different countries of the world, of those who criticize the president of Russia," he said. "This is not the case."

Aurelien Breeden contributed reporting from Paris.

Photograph

Alexei A. Navalny

DETAILS

Subject:	Hospitals; Poisoning; Coma; Investigations
Location:	Siberia Russia United States--US
People:	Navalny, Alexei
URL:	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/25/world/europe/russia-navalny-poisoning.html

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Pages:	A.12
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Place of publication:	New York, N.Y.
Country of publication:	United States, New York, N.Y.
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Document URL:	https://go.openathens.net/redirector/gatech.edu?url=https://search.proquest.com/newspapers/russia-rejects-call-query-into-poisoning/docview/2437028557/se-2?accountid=11107
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Document 64 of 72

Russia Rejects Calls for Investigation of Navalny Poisoning

Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]25 Aug 2020.



Enlarge this image.

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On Monday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel endorsed the conclusion of doctors at a Berlin hospital that the dissident, Alexei Navalny, had indeed been poisoned on a flight from Siberia, and called for an immediate investigation.

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DETAILS

Subject:	Hospitals; Poisoning; Coma
Location:	Siberia Russia New York
People:	Navalny, Alexei
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
Identifier / keyword:	World Murders And Attempted Murders Disasters And Emergencies Medicine And Health Siberia Russia Germany France Berlin (Germany) Charite Universitatsmedizin (Berlin, Germany) Putin, Vladimir V Peskov, Dmitri S Navalny, Aleksei A Merkel, Angela Kramer, Andrew E Coma Defectors (Political) Alzheimer's Disease Evacuations And Evacuees Human Rights And Human Rights Violations Hospitals Assassinations And Attempted Assassinations
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Germany Calls for Inquiry as Doctors Say Putin Critic Was Poisoned

Eddy, Melissa; Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]25 Aug 2020: A.10.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Once again, a prominent critic of Moscow has mysteriously fallen ill. And once again, poison appears to be the culprit.

BERLIN -- Aleksei A. Navalny, the outspoken Russian dissident who fell into a coma last week, was a victim of poisoning, German doctors said Monday, adding him to the ranks of Russians stricken by mystery illness after drawing the wrath of Moscow.

Mr. Navalny, who became ill on a domestic flight in Russia, was under round-the-clock guard at the Berlin hospital where his family transferred him Saturday after what now appears to be yet another attack signaling Russia's status as an outlaw nation.

While not able to pinpoint the exact poison, German doctors said tests showed it came from a group of chemicals known as cholinesterase inhibitors, which interfere with the nervous system. While they are used medically to treat Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, in some forms they are also found in chemical weapons and pesticides. A Russian health ministry issued a statement challenging the German findings, saying Mr. Navalny's symptoms were not consistent with cholinesterase inhibitors. But a doctor at the Siberian hospital where the dissident was initially taken said after the German announcement that the patient had been given an antidote often used against nerve agents.

A state news agency, RIA, carried a statement from a pro-Kremlin group that took the opportunity to invoke World War II. The group, Strong Russia, criticized the German government for providing treatment for Mr. Navalny but not for elderly Russians who suffered as children during the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.

"Of course, as with any sick person, we wish Navalny a quick recovery," the statement said. "Has Berlin ever sent an air ambulance for a former detainee in the concentration camps?"

German doctors said that they expected Mr. Navalny to survive, but that it was too early to gauge the long-term effects of the attack.

Mr. Navalny, who has challenged President Vladimir V. Putin politically for nearly a decade, and has waged a long battle to publicize rampant official corruption, has been attacked at least twice before. One assault left him mostly blind in one eye.

This time, he fell ill while returning from a trip to Siberia, where he was organizing opposition candidates and strategy for regional and local elections. His plane made an emergency landing in the Siberian city of Omsk, where

he was taken to a local hospital.

Mr. Navalny's family and supporters organized an air ambulance to take him to Germany, but Russian doctors delayed for nearly 48 hours, saying his medical condition was too unstable for him to be moved. That drew bitter criticism from the Navalny camp, which accused the doctors of stalling to give the toxins enough time to drain from his system.

Mr. Navalny was flown to Germany at the invitation of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Though Germany enjoys strong economic and cultural ties to Russia, it has not shied from criticizing Mr. Putin's policies, and even before Mr. Navalny arrived in Berlin, the German government appeared to be taking extra precautions to ensure his safety. After the doctors declared the case a poisoning, Ms. Merkel and her foreign minister, Heiko Maas, called on Russia to launch an immediate investigation but did not offer any harsher criticism.

"Given Mr. Navalny's prominent role in Russia's political opposition, the authorities there are now urgently called upon to investigate this crime to the last detail -- and to do so in full transparency," they said in a statement.

"Those responsible must be identified and held accountable."

Minutes before landing, his plane was rerouted from Schönefeld Airport to Tegel Airport, and the ambulance that brought him from the tarmac to the Charité hospital was escorted by the police. A police van and several officers have been stationed outside the hospital's main entrance since Saturday.

"It was clear that after he arrived here, security measures had to be put in place," Ms. Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, told reporters on Monday, before the hospital released its statement. "We are dealing with a patient who appears, with a certain level of probability, to have been the target of a poisoning attack."

"Unfortunately," Mr. Seibert noted, "there are one or more examples of such poisonings in recent Russian history." The Russian security services are suspected of having used a range of poisons in attempts to eliminate opponents, although Russian officials have consistently denied it.

Many of those victims have been stricken after drinking tea.

Anna Politkovskaya, an investigative journalist, fell ill after taking a cup of tea on a domestic flight. She survived, but was shot and killed in her apartment elevator two years later.

A former Russian agent turned Kremlin critic Alexander V. Litvinenko, succumbed after ingesting a radioactive isotope, Polonium 210, while having tea with two Russian agents. British investigators later determined that the killing had most likely been ordered by Mr. Putin.

Mr. Navalny, too, drank a cup of tea before falling ill, at an airport cafe before departure.

Numerous, less prominent figures have been felled under mysterious circumstances. In March 2018, a former Russian spy named Sergei V. Skripal was found poisoned on a park bench in Salisbury, England, alongside his unconscious daughter. Both survived.

Sometimes, though, the weapon is not very mysterious.

In 2015, one of the most high-profile Putin critics, Boris Y. Nemtsov, was gunned down just a stone's throw from the Kremlin. And last August, an assassin riding a bicycle shot and killed a former Chechen rebel commander in a Berlin park; German officials suspect Russia was behind the killing, but Moscow has denied responsibility.

While miscellaneous hit men have been charged in some of the killings, those giving the orders have never been identified.

For the last decade, Mr. Navalny has been Mr. Putin's most unflinching critic, leading opposition rallies and publishing reports on high-level corruption among Mr. Putin and his cronies -- most memorably a lengthy video showing the multiple mega-properties, yachts and other luxuries amassed up by the former prime minister Dimitri A. Medvedev.

Having persevered despite numerous arrests, he likes to call Mr. Putin's political party the party of "scoundrels and thieves" and has accused the president of trying to turn Russia into a "feudal state."

Mr. Navalny's needling criticism of Mr. Putin has never posed a serious electoral threat to the Russian leader, and Mr. Putin remains popular with many Russians. But Mr. Navalny has dominated Russian opposition politics since he led large antigovernment street protests in 2011.

And Mr. Navalny cannily used social media to build a tenacious movement even after much of the independent news media had been squelched and other critics were driven into exile or killed.

Like the German doctors, the Russian doctors who initially treated Mr. Navalny said they had looked at poisoning as the cause for his sudden collapse. Then they ruled it out, they said.

"Of course, we will sort this out," Anatoly Kalinichenko, the deputy head doctor of the Siberian hospital where Mr. Navalny was treated, said of the German findings. "Did we make a mistake, or did the laboratories, or is all of this disinformation?" he said.

Another doctor who consulted on Mr. Navalny's treatment in Siberia, Boris Teplykh, said the medical team had in fact considered a poison in the class of chemicals identified by the Germans, which includes nerve agents.

They ruled it out, he said -- but before doing so had injected Mr. Navalny with an antidote for nerve toxins, atropine. German doctors said Monday they had also begun atropine treatment.

"Concerning atropine, which our colleagues prescribed for treatment, well, in the first minutes after arrival injections with this substance were made," Dr. Teplykh told the news agency Interfax.

While Mr. Navalny was still in Russia, the hospital's head doctor, Aleksandr Murakhovsky, released a statement offering a different diagnosis. He said Mr. Navalny was most likely suffering from a metabolic disorder brought on by low blood sugar.

Men who appeared to be with the security services but were not in uniform had milled about the hospital hallways, and came and went from Dr. Murakhovsky's office, videos and pictures showed.

Their presence alarmed Mr. Navalny's wife, his personal physician and a spokeswoman, who said they worried the security services were dictating his care.

Asked about these plainclothes men in his office, Dr. Murakhovsky said that he did not know who they were, but that they had not influenced his treatment decisions.

"I had a lot of people in my office, but I cannot say what they were doing there," he said. "They came and asked, 'Is everything all right?' And I said, 'Everything is all right.' And they left.

"They were just interested."

Melissa Eddy reported from Berlin and Andrew E. Kramer from Moscow.

Photograph

The Charité hospital in Berlin, where the Russian activist Aleksei A. Navalny is being treated. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ODD ANDERSEN/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE – GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

Subject:	Hospitals; Security services; Poisoning; Criminal investigations; Murders &murder attempts; Critics; Physicians; Criticism
Location:	Siberia Russia Germany
People:	Navalny, Alexei
URL:	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/world/europe/aleksei-navalny-poison.html
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Document type:	News
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Document 66 of 72

Sickened Putin Critic Is Treated in Germany

Eddy, Melissa; Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y.[New York, N.Y]23 Aug 2020: A.11.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

His sudden, unexplained illness comes amid political uprisings in Russia's Far East, and just weeks before municipal elections take place across the country.



BERLIN -- Russia's most prominent opposition figure, Aleksei A. Navalny, arrived in Berlin for treatment on Saturday after falling into a coma in Siberia in what his family and supporters suspect was a deliberate poisoning weeks before nationwide local elections.

Mr. Navalny was admitted to Charité, one of Germany's leading medical research facilities, where he is undergoing extensive diagnostic tests, the hospital said after a plane transporting him from Russia touched down. He arrived more than 48 hours after he first lost consciousness, a delay his supporters bitterly criticized Russian officials for having caused.

"Patient stable, mission accomplished," said Jaka Bizilj, who runs the Cinema for Peace, the foundation that organized the air transport at the urging of Mr. Navalny's friends and family.

Mr. Navalny became violently ill on Thursday shortly after a Moscow-bound flight he had boarded took off, forcing an emergency landing in the Siberian city of Omsk.

The sudden illness struck Mr. Navalny, the most persistent critic of President Vladimir V. Putin, just as popular uprisings have sprung up in Russia's Far East and in neighboring Belarus -- and only weeks before Russians vote in municipal elections on Sept. 13.

How it will affect the political scene, analysts in Russia said, will hinge in part on Mr. Navalny's longer-term condition and whether he will be able to return home.

"Sometimes, instances that are publicly perceived as political terror do demoralize the opposition," Ekaterina Schulmann, a Moscow-based political analyst, said in an interview, "and at other times they motivate people to protest, or at the least, to vote in protest."

If Mr. Navalny remains in Germany for a lengthy recovery, or indefinitely as a political exile, the Kremlin stands to benefit politically, she said.

"It is very useful to have an opposition figure in exile," Ms. Schulmann said. "He can be cast in the state media as a person who fled Russia. They can present it as unpatriotic behavior."

In the days before he fell ill, Mr. Navalny had been meeting with opposition candidates in Novosibirsk, Siberia's largest city, promoting a strategy he called "smart voting" that encourages multiple, small opposition movements to back a single candidate on a local ballot.

The strategy seeks to chip away at the dominance of the pro-government party, United Russia, in city councils and regional parliaments.

Mr. Putin's popularity has been in decline for the past two years as nationalist fervor over the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine has faded and the economy has slumped under sanctions and then coronavirus lockdowns.

Upon landing in Berlin, Mr. Navalny's plane was met by an ambulance that brought him, under police escort, to the hospital, where doctors began extensive testing to determine what may have caused the illness and how to treat it. Several police officers were stationed outside the hospital throughout the day.

The examinations, said Manuela Zingl, a spokeswoman for Charité, "will take some time."

Mr. Navalny is being treated at the same hospital where Pyotr Verzilov, a member of the Russian protest group Pussy Riot, was admitted in 2018. Doctors said at the time that he likely had been poisoned.

Speaking to reporters via video link on Friday, Mr. Verzilov said his own symptoms had mirrored those of Mr. Navalny, including a loss of consciousness and his slipping into a coma several hours after the suspected poisoning.

"The similarities are striking, not only in the medical condition, but in the behavior of the Russian government and doctors," Mr. Verzilov said, pointing out that his own transfer from Russia was delayed more than two days.

Such delays by Russian officials, critics say, are intended to make it harder to determine what substance has been ingested.

Mr. Navalny collapsed in agonizing pain on Thursday shortly after takeoff on what was to have been a 2,000-mile flight to Moscow. His family suspects that poison may have been added to a cup of tea he drank in the airport before boarding that flight.

His evacuation came only after long hours of wrangling with Russian doctors and officials, who had insisted that a

transfer to Germany would endanger Mr. Navalny's health. But a team of German doctors, who had arrived in Omsk on the air ambulance, were granted access to Mr. Navalny Friday afternoon and stated unequivocally that it was safe for him to travel.

Mr. Navalny's wife, Yulia, who had sent Mr. Putin a letter on Friday requesting permission to evacuate her husband, was allowed to accompany him to Germany.

The Russian authorities said tests for toxins in Mr. Navalny's blood were all negative, indicating they found no evidence he was poisoned. At a news conference on Friday, Dr. Aleksandr Murakhovsky said Mr. Navalny had suffered an "imbalance in carbohydrates, that is, metabolic disorder," possibly caused by low blood sugar.

Mr. Navalny's wife and personal doctor quickly dismissed this account, saying the idea that an otherwise healthy 44-year-old would collapse and fall into a days-long coma from low blood sugar was ridiculous.

If Mr. Navalny is found to have ingested dangerous toxins, he would become the latest prominent Kremlin critic to have been the victim of a poisoning.

A fatal dose of the radioactive substance polonium 210 was used against Alexander Litvinenko, and a nerve agent called Novichok against Sergei Skripal, both former Russian intelligence officers attacked in England. The former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko fell ill from a dioxin, and Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Russian journalist who lobbied in the West for sanctions against Kremlin operatives, said unknown toxins were used against him.

The people who ordered the attacks have never been identified, despite efforts to take cases to higher courts, including the European Court of Human Rights.

Officials in Berlin did not comment on Mr. Navalny's arrival. But in offering this past week to allow the opposition leader into Germany for medical treatment, Chancellor Angela Merkel called for a thorough investigation.

"What is particularly important is that the circumstances behind this are cleared up very quickly," Ms. Merkel said. "We insist on this, because what we have heard so far is very unfavorable."

Mr. Navalny has been treated abroad previously, after an attack in 2017 in which a caustic liquid was thrown in his face, partially blinding him in one eye. He resumed his political activities almost without interruption. Dozens of arrests and short spells in jail have also failed to deter him.

Still, violence by pro-Kremlin activists and arrests for administrative offenses have kept him out of sight for important protests and elections. Mr. Navalny will now be absent from campaigning before the September local elections.

Melissa Eddy reported from Berlin, and Andrew E. Kramer from Moscow.

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition figure, may have been poisoned. (PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES HILL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES); The plane carrying Mr. Navalny landed in Berlin on Saturday and was met by an ambulance that transported him to a hospital. (PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KAPPELER/DPA, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS)

DETAILS

Subject:	Local elections; Poisoning; Coma; Political activism; Physicians; Hospitals; Hypoglycemia; Rebellions; Negative campaigning; Consciousness
Location:	Russia Germany Siberia
People:	Navalny, Alexei
URL:	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/22/world/europe/aleksei-navalny-germany.html
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LINKS

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Document 67 of 72

Why Poison Aleksei Navalny Now?

Kashin, Oleg . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]22 Aug 2020:
A.21.

[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

The unchanging leader of the regime is Mr. Putin; the unchanging leader of the opposition is Mr. Navalny. But everything changes.

On Thursday, as the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny was returning to Moscow from the Siberian city of Tomsk, where he had been meeting with opposition candidates ahead of local elections, he began to feel ill. A heart-rending video was later posted online -- one of the passengers on the plane had managed to capture Mr. Navalny's groans and cries of pain. They sounded like the screams of a dying man.

Almost immediately, it appeared that Mr. Navalny had been slipped a strong poison. The airplane was forced to make an emergency landing in the Siberian city of Omsk. Mr. Navalny was transported to the hospital and fell into a coma.

The Russian authorities initially seemed prepared to facilitate Mr. Navalny's transfer to a specialist clinic in Germany. But they now appear to have changed their minds: According to Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman, doctors at the hospital where he is being treated are refusing to allow him to board the waiting plane. He remains unconscious.

In recent years, Mr. Navalny's undeniable leadership of the Russian opposition has also become a kind of sign of President Vladimir V. Putin's stability. The unchanging leader of the regime is Vladimir Putin; the unchanging leader of the opposition is Aleksei Navalny. It was hard to imagine him being arrested or killed. But everything changes.

If the Russian government has now decided to get rid of Mr. Navalny, that suggests it is constructing some new political configuration in which there is no longer a need for any kind of an opposition.

Mr. Navalny is no stranger to toxins. Three years ago, Kremlin loyalists threw a triarylmethane dye on his face, temporarily staining him green and permanently damaging his vision in one eye. At the time, Mr. Putin's chief of staff, Anton Vaino, personally signed a document allowing Mr. Navalny to travel to Spain for treatment. (Mr. Navalny, who had been convicted of embezzlement, among other crimes, was legally prohibited from leaving Russia.) This was a humane act on the part of the Kremlin, although it would have been more humane to restrict the activities of the pro-Kremlin activists who regularly attack opposition figures.

But there is a difference between spraying someone with poison dye and a classic political murder. The most notorious of the latter, in recent years, was the 2015 killing of the opposition politician Boris Y. Nemtsov. Mr. Nemtsov was gunned down in the center of Moscow. A group of Russian policemen from Chechnya were charged with his murder, but the court -- improbably -- named the driver of a Chechen military officer as the one who ordered the killing.

After Mr. Nemtsov's killing, Mr. Navalny found himself in the role of the sole and most important leader of the Russian opposition. Even the Kremlin acknowledged his special status. In the most grotesque sign of this acknowledgment, Mr. Putin and his people never refer to Mr. Navalny by his name, preferring the faceless "that person." They don't like "that person": He has been tried and convicted in a number of politically motivated criminal cases. But he has never received a real prison sentence or faced other unpleasant punishments that would exclude him from participating in politics.

Today, breathless updates on Mr. Navalny's health dominate the headlines in Russia and my social media feeds. If he dies, Mr. Putin will lose his leading opponent and the system will lose its balance. But peace and stability are no longer the values that the Kremlin holds above all else. In January, Mr. Putin introduced constitutional amendments that essentially change the structure of the state and allow him to be president for life. The Russian authorities often warn of the dangers of oppositionist extremism, but Russia's chief extremist is Mr. Putin himself, with his willingness and ability to radically change the rules of the game.

We may not know what happened to Mr. Navalny, but we do know that immediately following his hospitalization, pro-Kremlin bloggers and media outlets began claiming that his sickness may have been caused by drinking bad

home-brewed liquor. This is a lie: His doctors have refuted the presence of alcohol in his system and, as someone who has been friends with Mr. Navalny for many years, I can personally attest that he has never been much of a drinker.

The eagerness with which the pro-Kremlin press is denying it being an attack suggests the authorities are interested in concealing the true perpetrators. This can be read as a public confession that Mr. Navalny was indeed poisoned by people working for the government.

As in the case of Sergei Skripal, a Russian intelligence officer who defected to Britain and was poisoned with a nerve agent in 2018, the authorities will now surely cover their tracks so noisily and clumsily that they will leave no doubt of their involvement. There is really no version of the story that doesn't involve the Kremlin. After all, the Putin era of Russian politics has been governed by the laws of a secret service operation.

Mr. Navalny has truly held an important place in the political system for many years with his unique monopoly over the segment of the opposition that refuses to compromise with the Kremlin. But the new reality of Mr. Putin's lifelong rule demands new conditions. A critic of the regime must now acknowledge that he is not risking a seat in Parliament or even his freedom -- but his very life.

The problem is that the system in which you're either for Mr. Putin or you die seems much more unstable than what came before it. Political terror precludes the possibility of political stability. The person least comfortable in a Navalny-free Russia is bound to be Mr. Putin himself.

Oleg Kashin (@kshn) is the author of "Fardwor, Russia! A Fantastical Tale of Life Under Putin." This essay was translated from the Russian by Bela Shayevich.

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Photograph

(PHOTOGRAPH BY DMITRY SEREBRYAKOV/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

DETAILS

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Document 68 of 72

Russia to Allow Sickened Opposition Leader to Be Treated in Germany

Eddy, Melissa; Kramer, Andrew E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]22 Aug 2020: A.9.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Aleksei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader suspected to have been poisoned, was flown out of a Siberian city early Saturday after a German medical team said it was safe for him to travel.

BERLIN -- A plane carrying a prominent Russian opposition figure to a German hospital for treatment of suspected poisoning took off early Saturday from a Siberian city, his spokeswoman said, after a day of delays in which Russian doctors offered a variety of reasons to block his transfer.

The opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, who had been in a coma since Thursday, was being flown on a Challenger 604 air ambulance arranged by the foundation of a Berlin-based movie producer. The evacuation came

after a team of German doctors who had arrived on the air ambulance stated unequivocally on Friday that it was safe for him to travel.

Mr. Navalny's personal doctor, Anastasia Vasilyeva, said in an interview Friday that she believed the Russian authorities had tried to delay his departure long enough for the poison in his system to diminish and become difficult or impossible to identify.

The standoff had dragged on throughout the day Friday, with the evacuation plane idling at the airport.

Mr. Navalny fell suddenly and violently ill on Thursday on a flight to Moscow from the Siberian city of Tomsk, where he had met with local opposition candidates. The plane was forced to make an emergency landing in the nearby city of Omsk.

After Mr. Navalny's arrival at the hospital in Omsk, his family and associates were bitterly critical of the authorities, who refused to release detailed information on his condition, denied he had been poisoned and contended that he was too unstable medically for travel.

The daylong refusal to allow Mr. Navalny's transfer was effectively "an attempt on his life" being carried out by "doctors and the deceitful authorities that have authorized it," Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, said. Early Saturday, after the evacuation flight took off, Ms. Yarmysh tweeted: "The struggle for Alexei's life and health is just beginning, and there is still a lot to go through, but now at least the first step has been taken."

Upon arrival in Germany, Mr. Navalny was expected to be treated at a leading research hospital in Berlin, Charité. "We were working like crazy through every possible channel to make this happen," said Jaka Bizilj, the producer whose foundation sent the evacuation plane. "But I think the breakthrough was the report from the German medical team."

Mr. Bizilj, who had previously arranged the transfer of a member of the Russian protest group Pussy Riot, who was likely poisoned, stressed that the German doctors were not toxicologists and did not give any assessment of what had caused Mr. Navalny's illness.

Mr. Navalny, who is the most persistent critic of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, had collapsed in agonizing pain shortly after takeoff on what was to have been a 2,000-mile flight to Moscow. He drank a cup of tea in an airport cafe before departure.

His wife, Yulia, sent Mr. Putin a letter Friday requesting permission to evacuate her husband for treatment. The Kremlin had earlier said it was open to allowing Mr. Navalny to be flown abroad. But after the German hospital airplane arrived Friday morning, delays ensued.

The head doctor at Hospital No. 1 in Omsk, where Mr. Navalny was being treated, told journalists that he could not release his patient even if relatives requested he do so, because Mr. Navalny's medical condition was too unstable. Dr. Aleksandr Murakhovsky, who had a portrait of Mr. Putin in his office and is reportedly a member of the ruling party, United Russia, also offered the first diagnosis of what had befallen Mr. Navalny on the flight.

Mr. Navalny, he said, had suffered an "imbalance in carbohydrates, that is, metabolic disorder," possibly caused by low blood sugar. He said doctors had found nothing to support the idea that Mr. Navalny had been poisoned.

His contention that Mr. Navalny, an otherwise healthy 44-year-old, had suffered from low blood sugar was quickly dismissed as ridiculous by the opposition leader's physician, Dr. Vasilyeva.

"This is not a diagnosis," she said. "If it were just a metabolic disorder he would not be in a coma or on ventilation." Low blood sugar can be corrected quickly with an injection, she said.

The Kremlin spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, then offered another reason for delaying Mr. Navalny's departure, noting that he had first become ill while on an ascending airplane. If the plane's ascent had caused the coma, then another flight so soon might "threaten the life of the patient," he said.

Dr. Vasilyeva rejected Mr. Peskov's theory as "complete nonsense."

In the interview, Dr. Vasilyeva described a curious encounter earlier reported by Mr. Navalny's wife, Yulia, and members of his political movement but denied by the Russian authorities, pointing to another possible stalling tactic.

Dr. Vasilyeva said that she, Yulia Navalnaya and the chief doctor at the Siberian hospital, Dr. Murakhovsky, were

discussing treatment when an official with Russia's transport police entered the room and said Mr. Navalny had been poisoned with a substance so lethal it could endanger "those near him."

Dr. Vasilyeva said the policewoman, who did not introduce herself, had said the substance was "very dangerous" and showed Dr. Murakhovsky the name of the toxin, written on a phone screen. The policewoman said she could not reveal it to others because it was "an investigative secret."

Though the Russian security services are suspected of having used a range of exotic poisons to eliminate opponents, including radioactive polonium 210 and a military nerve agent, Mr. Navalny's supporters suggested that the transport police, who monitor air safety, had raised the prospect to delay the evacuation.

"They are just artificially delaying so no toxic substance will be found in his blood," Dr. Vasilyeva said.

The Russian authorities have consistently denied any evidence of poisoning. Dr. Murakhovsky, at a news conference Friday, denied this account of the meeting as conveyed by Mr. Navalny's wife and personal doctor. He said tests for toxins in Mr. Navalny's blood were all negative.

Melissa Eddy reported from Berlin and Andrew E. Kramer from Moscow. Mike Ives contributed reporting from Hong Kong.

Photograph

Dr. Aleksandr Murakhovsky at the Siberian hospital where Aleksei A. Navalny was taken after falling violently ill on an airplane. (PHOTOGRAPH BY DIMITAR DILKOFF/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

DETAILS

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Poison: 'Easy, and Easy To Cover Your Tracks'

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[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Poison has been a preferred tool of the Russian security service for more than a century, and critics of the Kremlin say it remains in the arsenal today.

MOSCOW – Without the slightest premonition of any issues with his health, Pyotr Verzilov, a Russian opposition activist, suddenly fell violently ill two years ago and slipped into a coma, a common problem for opponents of the Kremlin.

Mr. Verzilov, who is known for staging antigovernment performance art, displayed the same, mysterious symptoms that struck Aleksei Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition politician, on Thursday as he was on a flight to Moscow.

"I was in exactly the same condition," Mr. Verzilov said in an interview Thursday with Rain TV, an independent Russian television station, of his monthlong illness in 2018.

Mr. Verzilov was kept alive on a ventilator and later flown to Germany for treatment. Though doctors found no trace of poison, he said that he is convinced it was the cause, and that the Kremlin was responsible.

Poison, though redolent of medieval intrigue, has been a favored tool of Russian intelligence agencies for more than a century. And critics of the Kremlin and independent analysts say the weapon remains in use today. While

other countries, including the United States and Israel, have targeted killing programs, they are strictly limited to counterterrorism efforts. Russia, by contrast, has been accused of targeting a wide variety of opponents both at home and abroad.

The Soviet Union operated a secret laboratory to research tasteless and untraceable poisons that were tested on condemned gulag prisoners, security service defectors have said.

After a series of assassinations and attempted assassinations of dissidents, journalists, defectors and opposition leaders in Russia and abroad over the past two decades, researchers have concluded the post-Soviet government has turned to its poison arsenal as a preferred weapon.

Substances that have been identified or suspected in poisonings blamed on the Russian government include radioactive polonium-210; heavy metals; gelsemium, a rare Himalayan plant toxin; and Novichuk, a military nerve agent lethal to the touch.

Lacing a meal or a cup of tea -- the last substance Mr. Navalny is said to have consumed at an airport cafe before falling ill -- with poison is simple and requires no special training, Gennadi V. Gudkov, a former opposition member of Parliament and onetime colonel in the K.G.B., said in a telephone interview on Thursday.

"It is easy, and easy to cover your tracks," he said. "Any person can use poison." Poisons can be intended either to kill or to incapacitate a person with a long and unpleasant illness, he said.

Ukraine's former pro-Western president, Viktor A. Yushchenko, for example, was left with his face disfigured after a poisoning with the industrial pollutant dioxin -- most likely concealed in a meal of boiled crayfish. Mr. Yushchenko attributed the poisoning to Russian agents.

The Kremlin has for years regarded Mr. Navalny as an enemy because of his investigations into graft by officials. He has been harassed and jailed numerous times, but only for short periods.

Mr. Navalny was rushed to a Siberian hospital after his flight made an emergency landing on Thursday because of his sudden illness. Doctors have not announced a cause.

The state-owned news agency Tass quoted an unidentified law enforcement source as saying that the authorities were not yet considering the possibility of a deliberate poisoning. Mr. Navalny's personal doctor, Yaroslav Ashikhmin, said he has not seen Mr. Navalny since the illness began, so he could not say whether poison was the cause. But, he added, "it looks like it."

If Mr. Navalny were poisoned before or during his flight, it would not be the first time an opposition figure was targeted while sitting in the controlled environment of a commercial airplane in Russia.

In 2015, the opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza fell into a weeklong coma in Moscow. He later said he believed he had ingested a poison during the in-flight service on an Aeroflot plane.

His symptoms included swelling in his brain and kidney failure. His wife, Yevgenia, recalled that his arms and legs took on a blue hue, an alarming, almost cartoonish reaction to poison.

Mr. Kara-Murza said he was poisoned and survived a second time in 2017 while traveling in Russia to show a documentary about another Russian politician, Boris Y. Nemtsov, who in 2015 was shot and killed on a bridge in Moscow.

In 2004, the opposition journalist Anna Politkovskaya was also poisoned on a domestic flight operated by another airline, Karat. She drank a poisoned cup of tea, she said. She survived but two years later was shot and killed in her apartment elevator.

Toxins lethal to the touch have also come to light. The Arab-born terrorist Ibn al-Khattab died in 2002 in his mountain hide-out in Chechnya after opening a letter laced with a nerve agent.

Some toxins may have also slipped from government arsenals and into the organized crimes wars in Russia in the early post-Soviet period. In 1995, for example, a Russian banker, Ivan K. Kivelidi, died after coming in contact with a poison deadly to the touch. The cause of his death might have remained a mystery had his secretary not also died of the same symptoms, apparently because the poison had been spread on an office telephone handset.

Photograph

Viktor A. Yushchenko, a former Ukraine president poisoned with dioxin, in 2005. (PHOTOGRAPH BY GAIL

DETAILS

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Document 70 of 72

As Top Putin Foe Is Hospitalized, Suspicions of Poison in His Tea

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FULL TEXT

The prominent opposition leader was reported to be in serious but stable condition in intensive care in Siberia after his flight to Moscow was forced to make an emergency landing.

MOSCOW – Booked on an early morning flight back to Moscow, Aleksei A. Navalny began his day with a rushed breakfast – just a cup of tea in a plastic cup – at the airport in the Siberian city of Tomsk. Soon after his flight took off Thursday, he rushed to the toilet feeling violently ill.

Just a few hundred miles into its nearly 2,000-mile flight, the plane made an emergency landing, and Mr. Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition leader, groaning in agony before losing consciousness, was taken on a gurney to an ambulance waiting on the tarmac.

Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, who was traveling with him, announced on Twitter that he had been poisoned, probably by something put in his tea at the airport's Vienna Café. Mr. Navalny, who has often described President Vladimir V. Putin as the leader of a "party of crooks and thieves," had traveled to Siberia to help organize opposition candidates ahead of local elections next month.

Doctors at the No. 1 Clinical Hospital in Omsk, the Siberian city where the plane made its emergency landing, initially said that Mr. Navalny was on a ventilator in serious condition. It later reported that his condition, though still grave, had stabilized.

As alarm that Mr. Navalny might die receded, speculation of foul play escalated, particularly after his personal physician and fellow opposition activist, Anastasia Vasilyeva, arrived at the hospital in Omsk only to be denied access to his medical records and the intensive care ward where he was being treated.

"Nobody is allowed in to see Aleksei Navalny, or to see his medical records," Dr. Vasilyeva, who flew to Tomsk with the opposition leader's wife, Yulia, wrote in a Twitter post. Dr. Vasilyeva, an optometrist, treated Mr. Navalny for severe eye burns after an unidentified assailant in 2017 threw a green chemical liquid in his face.

Ms. Yarmysh, his spokeswoman, said Thursday evening that Mr. Navalny's wife had finally been allowed into his ward but that documents needed to fly him out of Omsk to a hospital elsewhere had still not been provided.

The Berlin-based movie producer, Jaka Bizilj, said his foundation was flying an air ambulance to Omsk and hoped to bring Mr. Navalny back to a Berlin hospital, Charité. Mr. Bizilj did the same in 2018 after a member of the Russian group Pussy Riot had been poisoned.

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and President Emmanuel Macron of France, meeting in France, offered their assistance, including medical help and possible asylum. "What urgently needs to be clarified is how this situation came about," Ms. Merkel said.

The Kremlin said earlier that it would, if asked, help facilitate Mr. Navalny's transfer, but this did not calm

suspicions that the authorities wanted to delay his departure to prevent his being seen by foreign doctors more likely to identify poison if any remained in his system.

While the Kremlin insisted Thursday that it was too early to say what had happened to its best known and most persistent critic, it was already clear by the end of the day that Mr. Navalny had joined a long list of Mr. Putin's opponents to be suddenly afflicted by bizarre and sometimes fatal medical emergencies, often after drinking tea. [Video: Watch on YouTube.]

Anna Politkovskaya, an investigative journalist and fierce critic of the Kremlin, fell gravely ill in 2004 after drinking tea on an another domestic flight. She recovered from what she believed was poisoning, only to be shot dead two years later in the stairwell of her Moscow apartment. While five men were given lengthy prison sentences for the murder, investigators never identified who ordered the killing.

A month after her murder, a renegade former intelligence officer, Aleksandr V. Litvinenko, died an agonizing death in a London hospital after sipping tea laced with a rare and lethal radioactive isotope, polonium 210. A British investigation concluded in 2016 that he had been the victim of a hit by Russia's secret service that had probably been personally approved by Mr. Putin.

In 2015, another opposition activist, Vladimir Kara-Murza, fell into a weeklong coma in Moscow and later said he believed he had ingested poison on an Aeroflot flight. Mr. Kara-Murza said he was poisoned a second time, in 2017, while traveling in Russia to show a documentary about another Russian politician, Boris Y. Nemtsov, who had been shot and killed two years earlier on a Moscow bridge just yards from the Kremlin.

The Kremlin and its supporters have long detested Mr. Navalny because of the investigations he has led into graft by officials – including, most vividly, the former prime minister, Dmitri A. Medvedev. Mr. Navalny has been harassed and jailed numerous times for short periods, but the authorities had refrained from harsher steps that could elevate his national profile.

Last year, after his arrest for leading an unauthorized protest in Moscow, Mr. Navalny fell so ill while in jail that he had to be hospitalized for a mysterious "severe allergic reaction." A generally healthy 44-year-old, he has no history of allergies and many, including Dr. Vasilyeva, suspected poison then, too.

The Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told journalists that a decision on whether to open a criminal investigation into the cause of Mr. Navalny's latest bout of sudden ill health would depend on the doctors' diagnosis. Talk of poisoning, he said, was "just speculation."

But so many Russians at odds with the Kremlin have fallen gravely ill over the years – and so few criminal attacks on opposition figures, whether with bullets or poison, have been solved -- that virtually nobody expects Russia's law enforcement system to delve deeply into what happened to Mr. Navalny even if there is an investigation.

Within a few hours of Mr. Navalny being rushed to the hospital in Omsk, there were already signs that his illness would be quickly enveloped in a fog of disinformation and wild conspiracy theories – the Kremlin's response to nearly all potentially embarrassing scandals.

Pro-Kremlin news outlets quickly began pumping out alternative and apparently fictitious explanations for Mr. Navalny's ordeal: a drug overdose; heavy drinking the night before; the side effects of anti-depressants; a botched medical treatment in the West.

Tass, the state-owned news agency, quoted an unidentified law enforcement source as saying that the authorities were not yet considering the possibility of a deliberate poisoning. It said that Mr. Navalny could have "taken something himself" before boarding the plane.

Ms. Yarmysh, Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman, responded on Twitter by asking, "If law enforcement agencies are not looking into intentional poisoning, why are there so many cops in the hospital?"

A news agency linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, an associate of Mr. Putin from St. Petersburg who controls a network of media outlets known for disinformation, reported that Mr. Navalny probably fell ill because he was a drug addict. There is no evidence that Mr. Navalny uses drugs.

Mr. Navalny was traveling in Siberia on one of his regular trips to far-flung regions in an effort to expand Russia's weak, Moscow-centric opposition movement.

Before boarding his flight in Tomsk on Thursday, he met with opposition candidates in a coming election for the local council. He arrived there from Novosibirsk, Siberia's largest city, where he had met with his supporters and discussed plans to field independent candidates.

Mr. Navalny, like many other Kremlin critics, has rejoiced at the recent unrest in neighboring Belarus and in Khabarovsk in Russia's Far East, seeing a sudden burst of protests in those previously somnolent places as a sign that Moscow, too, will emerge from its long, enforced political slumber under Mr. Putin, now in power for more than two decades.

Mr. Navalny announced plans to run against Mr. Putin in the 2018 presidential election, but the authorities blocked his candidacy by entangling him in a criminal case involving corruption charges widely seen as trumped-up.

Mr. Putin would almost certainly have won any election against Mr. Navalny, but a head-to-head contest would have forced him to acknowledge the existence of a rival with different ideas. Each assault on Mr. Navalny's person and reputation, however, has only stirred sympathy and reaffirmed his position as the country's best-known opposition leader.

Aurelien Breeden contributed reporting from Paris, Melissa Eddy from Berlin and Yonette Joseph from Hong Kong.

Photograph

Aleksei A. Navalny, on Thursday in a video on social media. (A1); Top, the Russian opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny, center, in a march in Moscow on Feb. 29 in memory of Boris Y. Nemtsov, a politician fatally shot near the Kremlin. Above, the hospital in Omsk, Russia, where Mr. Navalny was admitted on Thursday after a suspected poisoning. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIRILL KUDRYAVTSEV/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES; ALEXEY MALGAVKO/REUTERS) (A9)

DETAILS

Subject:	Poisoning; Criminal investigations; Intensive care; Corruption in government; Political activism; Activists; Demonstrations &protests; Assassinations &assassination attempts; Murders &murder attempts; Political dissent
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Don't Drink the Tea: Poison Is a Favored Weapon in Russia

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[🔗 ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT



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Kremlin.

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Substances that have been identified or suspected in poisonings blamed on the Russian government include radioactive polonium-210; heavy metals; gelsemium, a rare Himalayan plant toxin; and Novichuk, a military nerve agent lethal to the touch.

Lacing a meal or cup of tea —the last substance Navalny is said to have consumed at an airport cafe before falling ill—with poison is simple and requires no special training, Gennadi V. Gudkov, a former opposition member of Parliament and onetime colonel in the KGB, said in a telephone interview on Thursday.

"It is easy, and easy to cover your tracks," he said. "Any person can use poison." Poisons can be intended either to kill or to incapacitate a person with a long and unpleasant illness, he said.

Ukraine's former pro-Western president, Viktor A. Yushchenko, for example, was left with his face disfigured after a poisoning with the industrial pollutant dioxin —most likely concealed in a meal of boiled crayfish. Yushchenko attributed the poisoning to Russian agents.

The Kremlin has for years regarded Navalny as an enemy because of his investigations into graft by officials. He has been harassed and jailed numerous times, but only for short periods.

Navalny was rushed to a Siberian hospital after his flight made an emergency landing on Thursday because of his sudden illness. Doctors have not announced a cause.

The state-owned news agency Tass quoted an unidentified law enforcement source as saying that the authorities were not yet considering the possibility of a deliberate poisoning. Navalny's personal doctor, Yaroslav Ashikhmin, said he has not seen Navalny since the illness began, so he could not say whether poison was the cause. But, he added, "it looks like it."

If Navalny were poisoned before or during his flight, it would not be the first time an opposition figure was targeted while sitting in the controlled environment of a commercial airplane in Russia.

In 2015, opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza fell into a weeklong coma in Moscow. He later said he believed he had ingested a poison during the in-flight service on an Aeroflot plane.

His symptoms included swelling in his brain and kidney failure. His wife, Yevgenia, recalled that his arms and legs took on a blue hue, an alarming, almost cartoonish reaction to poison.

Kara-Murza said he was poisoned and survived a second time in 2017 while traveling in Russia to show a documentary about another Russian politician, Boris Y. Nemtsov, who in 2015 was shot and killed on a bridge in Moscow.

In 2004, opposition journalist Anna Politkovskaya was also poisoned on a domestic flight operated by another

airline, Karat. She drank a poisoned cup of tea, she said. She survived but two years later was shot and killed in her apartment elevator.

Toxins lethal to the touch have also come to light. The Arab-born terrorist Ibn al-Khattab died in 2002 in his mountain hideout in Chechnya after opening a letter laced with a nerve agent.

Some toxins may have also slipped from government arsenals and into the organized crimes wars in Russia in the early post-Soviet period. In 1995, for example, a Russian banker, Ivan K. Kivelidi, died after coming in contact with a poison deadly to the touch. The cause of his death might have remained a mystery had his secretary not also died of the same symptoms, apparently because the poison had been spread on an office telephone handset.

DETAILS

Subject:	Security services; Poisoning; Coma; Political asylum; Politics
Location:	Russia
People:	Navalny, Alexei
Identifier / keyword:	World Murders And Attempted Murders Assassinations And Attempted Assassinations International Relations Criminal Justice Crime And Criminals Transportation Culture (Arts) Movies Medicine And Health United States Ukraine Ussr (Former Soviet Union) Siberia Russia Moscow (Russia) Israel Himalayas Germany Chechnya (Russia) Kgb Aeroflot Russian Airlines Yushchenko, Viktor Politkovskaya, Anna Nemtsov, Boris Y Navalny, Aleksei A Kramer, Andrew E Kara Murza, Vladimir V Gudkov, Gennadi V Documentary Films And Programs Quarantines Espionage And Intelligence Services Coma Defectors (Political) Targeted Killings Accidents And Safety Murders, Attempted Murders And Homicides Airlines And Airplanes Aviation Accidents, Safety And Disasters Hazardous And Toxic Substances United States International Relations Politics And Government
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FULL TEXT



Enlarge this image.

MOSCOW — Groaning in agony from a suspected poisoning before losing consciousness, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was rushed to a Siberian hospital Thursday after the plane he was flying on made an

emergency landing because of his sudden illness.

Doctors at the No. 1 Clinical Hospital in Omsk, the Siberian city where the plane landed, initially said that Navalny, a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin, was on a ventilator in “serious condition” but later reported that his condition, though still grave, had stabilized.

Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told journalists that the Kremlin wished Navalny a swift recovery, “as we would for any citizen of Russia,” and would, if asked, provide help to get the opposition leader transferred to a hospital abroad.

Navalny is the latest in a long line of Kremlin opponents to be suddenly afflicted by bizarre and sometimes fatal medical emergencies.

Navalny’s spokeswoman, Kira Yarmysh, who was traveling with the anti-corruption campaigner on a flight destined for Moscow from Tomsk, said on Twitter, “We assume that Alexei was poisoned with something mixed with his tea.”

Pavel Lebedev, a passenger who posted a picture of Navalny drinking tea at the Omsk airport before departure, said on Instagram that the opposition activist “went to the toilet at the beginning of the flight and didn’t return. He started feeling very bad. They could barely revive him and he’s still crying out in pain.”

Videos posted by Russian news outlets showed an apparently unconscious Navalny being wheeled on a gurney to an ambulance waiting on the tarmac at the Omsk airport.

The state-owned news agency Tass quoted an unidentified law enforcement source as saying that authorities were not yet considering the possibility of a deliberate poisoning. It said that Navalny could have “taken something himself” before boarding the plane.

Yarmysh, Navalny’s spokeswoman, responded on Twitter by asking, “If law enforcement agencies are not looking into intentional poisoning, why are there so many cops in the hospital?”

Anatoly Kalinichenko, a doctor at the Omsk hospital who was interviewed by state television, said poisoning was being considered as a possible cause of Navalny’s sudden illness.

Yaroslav Ashikhmin, a cardiologist who has served as Navalny’s personal doctor, told Meduza, a Russian news outlet, that he was trying to get the opposition leader flown from Omsk to a hospital in either Hanover, Germany, or Strasbourg, France, with more experienced toxicology specialists.

Toxicology, he said, is a very specialized field and there are very few institutions that can “handle a patient who has probably been poisoned by some kind of toxin.”

He said he had not seen Navalny since the latest illness so he could not say whether poison was the cause, but, he added, “it looks like it.”

Navalny was traveling in Siberia on one of his regular trips to far-flung regions in an effort to expand Russia’s weak and often Moscow-centric opposition movement beyond the capital.

Before boarding his flight in Tomsk on Thursday, Navalny met with opposition candidates in a coming election for the local council. He arrived in Tomsk from Novosibirsk, Siberia’s largest city, where he had met with his supporters and discussed plans to field independent candidates in a city council election next month.

A Siberian news outlet, Taiga, reported that Navalny had also filmed an investigative report for his Anti-Corruption Foundation on local officials affiliated with United Russia, a Kremlin-backed political party that dominates most regional parliaments in Russia as well as the national parliament.

Last year, Navalny was hospitalized with a “severe allergic reaction” in jail, which his doctor at the time suggested could have been the result of a poisoning, after he was detained for leading an unauthorized election protest.

He had been arrested and sentenced to 30 days in jail for calling a rally to protest a decision by election authorities to bar several opposition candidates from running for Moscow’s City Council.

Navalny was doused with a bright green liquid in the Siberian city of Barnaul in 2017 by an unknown assailant who had pretended to shake his hand.

Navalny later said that a doctor had told him he lost 80% of the sight in one eye after suffering a chemical burn from the green liquid.

While there was no independent confirmation that Navalny had been poisoned before falling ill Thursday, the Russian security services have been suspected of targeting a number of dissidents and others before. Among those are Sergei Skripal, a former Russian double agent who was poisoned in England in 2018; Boris Nemtsov, a former deputy prime minister who in 2015 was gunned down in the shadow of the Kremlin; and Alexander Litvinenko, a KGB officer turned Kremlin critic who was poisoned in London in 2006.

The Kremlin and its supporters have for years regarded Navalny as an enemy because of the investigations into graft by officials —including, most vividly, the former prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev —carried out by his Anti-Corruption Foundation. Unlike Putin, who for security reasons almost never uses the internet, Navalny has exploited social media to mobilize a large following.

Navalny, who often refers to Putin as the head of “a party of crooks and thieves,” largely appeals to younger Russians, particularly in larger cities like Moscow, but he has built up a network of offices across the country. Putin never mentions Navalny’s name in public, and state-controlled news outlets generally ignore him and his work.

But while feigning indifference, the Kremlin has repeatedly tried to silence Navalny, jailing him, accusing him of money laundering, and searching the homes and offices of his supporters.

The Russian Justice Ministry last October classified the Anti-Corruption Foundation as a “foreign agent,” a label frequently used by the Kremlin to stigmatize its critics as traitors.

Navalny, like many other Kremlin critics, has reveled in the recent unrest in neighboring Belarus and also in the Russian Far East, seeing a sudden burst of protests in those places as a sign that Moscow, too, will emerge from its long, enforced political slumber under Putin, now in power for more than two decades.

Putin recently engineered constitutional changes that remove term limits requiring him to step down in 2024 and allow him to rule potentially until 2036. Navalny denounced the changes, endorsed in a tightly controlled nationwide vote, as a constitutional coup.

Navalny announced plans to run against Putin in the 2018 presidential election, but authorities blocked his candidacy by entangling him in a criminal case involving corruption charges widely seen as trumped up for political reasons.

Putin would almost certainly have won any election against Navalny but wanted to avoid a straight contest that would have forced him to acknowledge the existence of a rival with different ideas.

Each assault on Navalny’s person and reputation, however, has only reaffirmed his position as the country’s best-known opposition leader and stirred sympathy for him even among those who do not trust or like him.

DETAILS

Subject:	Local elections; Poisoning; Councils; Law enforcement; Term limitations; Corruption; Hospitals; Toxicology; Consciousness; Poisons; Prime ministers; Critics
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People:	Navalny, Alexei
Company / organization:	Name: New York Times Co; NAICS: 511110, 511120, 515112, 515120
Identifier / keyword:	World Science And Technology Computers And The Internet Murders And Attempted Murders Terrorism Frauds And Swindling Hazardous And Toxic Substances Transportation Medicine And Health Criminal Justice Crime And Criminals Local Government Strasbourg (France) Siberia Russia Novosibirsk (Russia) London (England) Hanover (Germany) Germany France England Belarus Twitter United Russia Meduza (Medusa Project Sia) Kgb Instagram Inc Anti Corruption Foundation Skripal, Sergei V Putin, Vladimir V Nemtsov, Boris Y Navalny, Aleksei A Medvedev, Dmitri A Litvinenko, Alexander V Higgins, Andrew Allergies City Councils Quarantines Computer Security Assaults Social Media Bribery And Kickbacks Hospitals Airlines And Airplanes Assassinations And Attempted Assassinations Term Limits (Political Office) Poisoning And Poisons Corruption (Institutional) Politics And Government
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