

Navalny's Private E-Mails Leaked

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Private e-mails by whistleblower Alexei Navalny have been leaked online just days after media claimed that United Russia was preparing a smear campaign against him.

The anonymous blogger who released a 1,040-page Word document with the letters claimed they expose Navalny as a corrupt ultranationalist financed by U.S. authorities. But a review of the letters found they contained little in the way of incriminating evidence.

The incident is reminiscent of the 1990s, when drudging up dirty laundry was a staple of political life. Once used in Kremlin turf wars, the practice has been recently applied to opposition activists and, as such, the leaked letters may confirm Navalny's clout with the opposition rather than ruin it.

Navalny's letters were [published](#) late Tuesday on a newly created LiveJournal blog, onenavnav, and mirrored on a Kazakh-based web site.

The sole post on the blog says the letters implicate Navalny in dealings with the U.S. State

Department, illegal corporate raiding and the ultranationalist Movement Against Illegal Immigration.

Phone calls and e-mails to Navalny went unanswered Wednesday. He wrote on Twitter that he did not have time to read the letters, but excerpts shared by friends indicated that at least some of them were real. He added that some letters might have been doctored, but did not elaborate.

The letters offer a jumble of personal and business-related correspondence, where exchanges with liberal politicians Nikita Belykh and Maria Gaidar, ultranationalist leader Alexander Belov and U.S. Embassy officials are mixed with letters from supporters and private e-mails signed by Navalny's wife, Yulia.

The e-mail address on the letters is one Navalny uses in his correspondence with journalists.

One string of e-mails, dated 2010, details an attempt to obtain contacts at the U.S. Justice Department in order to push for an investigation into carmaker DaimlerChrysler, which admitted last year to bribing Russian officials.

A 2007 letter addressed to Frank Conatser, a representative for the U.S.-based National Endowment for Democracy, speaks about funding provided to the Navalny-backed Da youth political movement, co-led by Gaidar.

Any hint of Western funding would cause a fierce public backlash for any politician in Russia, Yabloko party leader Sergei Mitrokhin said Wednesday. "If you want to blackmail someone, call him an agent of the West," Mitrokhin said by telephone.

But Navalny has never tried to conceal his ties to the United States. His most famous exposé, accusations that Transneft misused \$4 billion in state funds, was released online last year while he was in the United States to speak in Congress about corruption in Russia.

The letters also appear to confirm that Navalny once sought a legal crackdown on the Kirovles timber producer in the Kirov region, where he worked as an adviser for Governor Belykh.

An e-mail addressed to a Deloitte partner, Alexei Zelenkov, indicates that Navalny tried to facilitate an audit of Kirovles by using his friendship with Belykh last year.

Navalny has acknowledged pressuring Kirovles, but said he was reacting to the inefficiency of the company, which eventually filed for bankruptcy and was bought by regional authorities. The Investigative Committee has been examining Navalny's role in the case, though it admitted he was "not acting for personal gain."

Belykh did not speak publicly about the letters' leak Wednesday.

The letters also appear to confirm Navalny's close and long-running ties with Belov, who headed the now-banned Movement Against Illegal Immigration. However, this would come as no surprise after the two appeared together at a "Stop Feeding the Caucasus" rally in Moscow last week.

The leaks may pose more danger to Navalny's less-known supporters, who may get some

little-wanted publicity. One example is a letter from a forex trader who offered Navalny a donation of \$100,000 for his anti-corruption campaign. The published reply says the donation must not be anonymous to ensure transparency.

Among the more embarrassing publications may be a private correspondence credited to Navalny's wife and a friend, who speak of Navalny's workaholic habits and a desire to live a carefree life in Miami. The letters were not addressed to Navalny, and it was unclear why they were included in the leak.

None of Navalny's numerous political enemies, including United Russia, which he has famously dubbed "the party of crooks and thieves," has commented on the leak.

Novaya Gazeta [reported](#) earlier this month that United Russia has allotted 10 million rubles (\$350,000) for a campaign to discredit Navalny by filming a lookalike in compromising situations. The party has dismissed the allegation.

In 2010, smear campaigns were initiated against a number of leading opposition activists. Ilya Yashin was filmed allegedly bribing a traffic cop, while Eduard Limonov, Viktor Shenderovich and Belov were shown in separate videos having sex with the same woman. The activists have called the videos a setup by the government or the pro-Kremlin Nashi youth movement, both of which denied involvement.

The attack on Navalny may not be an isolated incident, coming days after a host on Kommersant FM radio, Stanislav Kucher, accused former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov of owning expensive property abroad. Kucher cited Kasyanov's purported personal pilot, an Austrian national, as the source for the information.

Kasyanov called the report a "smear campaign" and said all the described assets belonged to his daughter's husband, businessman Timur Klinovsky. The story fizzled out after the radio station — which is not known to have links to the Kremlin — failed to follow through on a promise to make the pilot repeat his revelations on air.

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