

Authorities Audit Bank Navalny Has Accounts In

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Authorities have launched an investigation into a bank that holds accounts related to anti-government blogger Alexei Navalny, one of the organizers of protests against Prime Minister Vladimir Putin before next month's presidential election.

The Central Bank said the investigation at the midsized Vyatka bank was intended to establish whether it was financially viable, and made no mention of Navalny.

But the bank's owner, Gennady Guselnikov, said inspectors were asking for details of individual accounts, including ones related to Navalny.

He said in his Twitter microblog that the inspectors, who visited all the bank's branches Tuesday, were looking for details of accounts related to Navalny's law firm and a fund he has registered to receive public donations.

“The Central Bank started an investigation into Vyatka bank on Feb. 14. There were no raids or searches. The Central Bank as an auditor can ask for access to the bank’s papers, which we provided,” Vyatka said in a statement Wednesday.

Navalny could not be reached for comment.

The inspection followed a report in Vedomosti that Navalny registered a fund to receive private donations to support his anti-corruption work, although it did not say the fund was with Vyatka bank.

Navalny’s influence has grown during the three big street protests in Moscow over allegations that fraud helped Putin’s United Russia party win a parliamentary election on Dec. 4, but he has no formal leadership role.

He has previously had his e-mail account hacked and faced fraud allegations over his role in a loss-making deal by a state-owned timber company.

Navalny, 35, became popular by using his share holdings in state companies to reveal suspected wrongdoing. He says Putin, if elected president as expected, is unlikely to hold on to power for more than two years and will be forced out by popular protests.

Navalny also masterminded a campaign against United Russia in the run-up to the parliamentary elections, calling it a “party of swindlers and thieves.”

Vedomosti named two businessmen who have donated money to Navalny — a sign that funding the opposition is no longer taboo.

But Kremlin-backed media and pro-Kremlin bloggers have criticized Navalny’s links to nationalists and a fellowship at Yale University that they see as evidence of connections with the United States. Navalny has not appeared in interviews on state-controlled television.

Channel One television talk-show host Vladimir Pozner says a reference to Navalny was removed from a program he presents, and Russian MTV halted the production of a show in which Navalny was going to take part.

“We had an agreement with [Navalny]. I started preparing the show, gathered the material and then was told that the program was being taken off air,” said Ksenia Sobchak, the show’s host.

Russian MTV explained the decision by saying the political talk show had only a limited appeal for the channel’s young audience that, it said, expected entertainment rather than politics.

“It was not related to Navalny,” a spokeswoman for the channel said.

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