

Lithuania Court Orders News Agency to Reveal Leak of Secret Service Report

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 10, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

A Lithuanian court has ordered the local BNS news agency to reveal the source of a report that Russia is trying to dig up damaging information against the country's president.

The BNS report on Oct. 31 said Moscow was planning to spread information drawn from Soviet-era archives to discredit Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite. It gave no details of what kind of material was involved.

BNS said its information was based on a Lithuanian secret service report saying the move was in retaliation for the Baltic country's foreign and energy policies, and for its part in promoting a free trade and association deal to be signed between Ukraine and the European Union in Vilnius later this month.

The court order, made public Friday, said BNS must reveal the source of the leak after a criminal investigation was started last week. Lithuanian legislation allows courts to order

journalists to disclose their sources.

BNS, owned by Finland's Alma Media Group, said it would not comply with the court order.

"The right of a journalist to keep his source of information is one of the guarantees for press freedom. BNS will use this right and will not reveal its sources," the agency said in a statement.

Lithuania has taken moves to reduce its dependence on Russia for energy supplies, forcing Gazprom to sell its stake in its national gas pipeline and making plans for a new pipeline to Poland.

"Russian special services have been ordered to actively search through Russian archives and look for compromising information about high-ranking officials from former Soviet countries," BNS said.

There has been no reaction from Russia to the allegations.

Lithuania currently holds the six-month rotating EU presidency and will host a summit between six countries from the Eastern Partnership which includes Ukraine and the EU from Nov. 28 to 29.

Ex-Soviet Ukraine's shift closer to the EU and away from Russia's sphere of influence has irritated Moscow, which has threatened to interrupt gas supplies to its neighbor.

Both Lithuania's ruling Social Democrat party and its main opposition Homeland Union party condemned the investigation, saying that journalists were just doing their job.

An investigation was started last week by Lithuania's general prosecutor into the mishandling of state secrets, which carries a maximum penalty of three years in prison.

BNS director Jurgita Eivaitė told Reuters that investigators have interrogated all journalists on the news agency's domestic politics desk, searched the home of its editor-in-chief and seized some computers.

Dainius Radzevičius, chairman of the Lithuanian Journalists Union, said the order was unacceptable.

"Actions by law enforcement seem designed to put psychological pressure on one of the most professional media groups in Lithuania," he said.

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