

Kremlin Denies Pressure on Prokhorov to Sell RBC

April 25, 2016



Mikhail Prokhorov

The Kremlin has had no involvement in the possible sale of the RBC media holding, spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday, the Interfax news agency reported.

Reports that billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov could sell the holding along with his energy company Quadre appeared Sunday on the Gazeta.ru news website. Unidentified sources told the website that the order to sell RBC had come from “upstairs” after its reporting on the business interests of Putin’s family members had upset the Kremlin.

“The Kremlin never interferes in editorial policy,” Peskov was quoted by Interfax. “It does not interfere with the the ownership rights even more so.”

A representative of Onexim, the group charged with managing Prokhorov's assets, denied negotiations on the sale of Quadre and RBC, the RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Earlier this month, Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) raided the Onexim Group's

headquarters on Tverskoy Bulvar. According to sources at the Dozhd television channel, the searches were linked with pressure on Prokhorov to sell RBC.

A few days after the incident, RBC's chief editor Yelizaveta Osetinskaya announced a year-long sabbatical to study at Stanford University in the United States. Osetinskaya allegedly had been pressured by Kremlin officials to begin her sabbatical four months earlier than planned, news agency Reuters reported, citing a source close to the company.

News website Gazeta.ru has speculated that billionaire Yury Kovalchuk's is most likely to acquire RBC through his media holding National Media Group. Billionaire and media tycoon Alexander Mamut had also been tipped as a potential buyer, but told news outlet Varlamov.ru Monday that he would not be buying the holding.

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