

Navalny Allies Accused of Using Bot Farm to Spread Anti-Govt Narrative, Deny Claims

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Alexey Navalny and Igor Zhdanov, 2017 **WikiMedia**

Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) has been accused of creating a network of bot farms in Lithuania and Georgia for spreading "anti-government messages," including information about the Kremlin invasion of Ukraine and its consequences for Russian citizens.

The SVTV media outlet, created by libertarian politician Mikhail Svetov, [published](#) an investigation that claims that FBK created a network of 200 employees to write negative comments about the Russian government on the social media platform VKontakte.

The investigation claimed that Navalny's allies Igor Zhdanov, Oleg Stepanov and Vladimir Milov were involved in the bot farm project. The bot farm was reportedly run by the Free Russia Foundation NGO's director Natalia Arno and her colleagues Yegor Kuroptev and Anton Mikhalkchuk, who work for the South Caucasus branch.

SVTV cited an alleged former employee of the bot farm who claimed that it was possible to earn as much as 1,800 euros per month from writing online posts.

Zhdanov dismissed the allegation, calling it a “complete lie.”

“That network has nothing to do with the Anti-Corruption Foundation or me personally...I am ready to confirm this in court,” Zhdanov [said](#) on X (formerly Twitter).

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The Free Russia Foundation said that following the start of the war in Ukraine it created the Center for Strategic Communications to provide “both in-depth analytical research on information warfare and formats for countering the state propaganda machine that promotes violence and hatred.”

"Tens and hundreds of Russian activists, media professionals, [social media marketing] work in different countries seven days a week with the sole purpose of helping to convey the truth about the crimes of the Kremlin and the consequences of the bloody war unleashed against Ukraine to their fellow citizens in Russia," the Free Russia Foundation [said](#) on Telegram.

"We deny any cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Foundation in the framework of counter-propaganda projects. We declare that the material published on the SVTV website is unreliable on a large number of points," it added.

According to the SVTV investigation, in addition to anti-Kremlin messages and "calls to overthrow the regime and go to protests in Russia", the bot farm was allegedly used to criticize opposition and public figures, including media personality Ksenia Sobchak and politician Maxim Katz.

"FBK had and has no relation to our work. No projects of the fund have ever been directed against anyone from the opposition," [said](#) Kuroptev, director of the Free Russia Foundation in the South Caucasus.

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