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NAVALNY ASSETS SEIZED BY AUTHORITIES

Alexei Navalny's spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, has announced that the opposition activist's Moscow apartment was seized by Russian authorities on August 27th. Yarmysh noted that the seizure means that the property may not be "sold, donated, or mortgaged." Navalny's bank accounts have also reportedly been frozen.

The government action adds a new wrinkle to the situation surrounding Navalny, who fell ill last month as a result of what was subsequently determined to be poisoning by a nerve agent - an action many suspect to have been orchestrated by the Kremlin. Yet the asset seizures may have to do with a different matter entirely. Back in 2018, Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation publicly accused oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin of substandard quality products after a food poisoning outbreak swept through Moscow schools serviced by a catering company connected to Prigozhin. The oligarch subsequently took Navalny to court for libel, and last year was awarded some $1.1 million in damages - funds that it now appears authorities are attempting to collect. (*BBC*, September 24, 2020)

NAVALNY POISONED HIMSELF, PUTIN TELLS MACRON

Citing an anonymous source, French news outlet *Le Monde* has reported that during a recent call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Vladimir Putin claimed that Russian dissident Alexei Navalny poisoned himself with Novichok nerve agent. Putin also purportedly claimed that Navalny has a history of fabricating illness. The Kremlin has fervently denied any involvement in Navalny's poisoning, and it has disputed the wording of the *Le Monde* story. The French Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, has opened an investigation into the leak of details pertaining to Macron's phone call with Putin, but has not commented on the accuracy of the reporting itself. (*The Moscow Times*, September 23, 2020; *Meduza*, September 25, 2020)

YALTA MAYOR FIRES DEPUTY OVER BELARUS SUPPORT

Yalta deputy mayor Mikhail Zagortsev, a former district official in Belarus, was fired after just four days of service for expressing his support for the democratic protests now taking place in Belarus. Yalta mayor Ivan Imgrunt discovered his deputy mayor's position on the issue via a video that was published by a Belarusian news outlet. In it, Zagortsev also speculated that "Russian nationals" may be responsible for the harsh detainment of Belarusian protestors. Imgrunt noted that he was unaware of Zagortsev's position when he hired him, and claimed that Zagortsev's comments were "incompatible" with his position as deputy mayor. (*Meduza*, September 25, 2020)

RUSSIA, CHINA CONSPIRE AT UN OVER LIBYA

Moscow and Beijing, both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, are using their combined diplomatic clout to obstruct the release of a new UN report on arms embargo violations in civil war-torn Libya. The report details Russia's military and logistical support on behalf of warlord Khalifa Haftar through the use of the Wagner Group paramilitary. After diplomats from Moscow and Beijing blocked the report from coming out of a committee investigating the matter, Germany's Deputy UN Ambassador brought the issue to the Security Council, where it was again blocked by the two countries. Additionally, the report identifies other regional powers known to be supporting combatants in Libya, such as Turkey, Qatar, and the UAE. On the issue of embargo enforcement, the committee wrote that current efforts are "totally ineffective." (Associated Press, September 25, 2020)

RUSSIAN HACKER TO BE SENTENCED IN U.S.

A Russian national convicted of hacking several major American companies, including Linkedin and Dropbox, will soon be sentenced in a U.S. federal court. The hacker, named Yevgeny Nikulin and known as the "Putin of Russian hackers," was arrested in the Czech Republic in October 2016 and extradited to the United States 17 months later for prosecution. Nikulin's arrest was a major achievement in a years-long American campaign to capture Russian cybercriminals. That campaign has angered Moscow and inhibited collaboration on cyber-initiatives between Russia and the U.S. However, through the campaign, the U.S. has gained valuable insights into the role cyber activities play in Russian intelligence and influence operations. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 29, 2020)