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Navalny Donors Fret About FSB 'Leak'

By Alexander Bratersky

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The Federal Security Service has collected personal data on people who donated to whistleblower Alexei Navalny, and the information was later leaked to third parties, including possibly a pro-Kremlin youth movement, bloggers said.

Yandex confirmed Monday that the FSB had requested information on people who used its web money system to donate to Navalny's Rospil.info project, an online watchdog monitoring murky state tenders.

A company spokeswoman told The Moscow Times that Yandex was obliged to comply by law.

Neither the company nor the FSB explained why the data were collected.

But at least three bloggers reported that they had received cell phone inquiries about their ties to Rospil.info, and the caller had cited confidential information about their Yandex.Money payments.

The caller's cell phone number is listed on the Vkontakte.ru page of Yulia Dikhtyar, a Voronezh-based member of the pro-Kremlin youth movement Nashi, wrote a LiveJournal blogger identified as Nykolaich.

The blogger, who said he was one of those asked about his donation, posted a screenshot of Dikhtyar's page on the popular social networking site.

The number was out of service Monday.

The three bloggers said the caller, who identified herself as Yulia Ivashova, had posed as a journalist and asked why they had donated to Navalny. Each time, the caller said she represented a different regional media outlet.

The caller knew details about the personal Yandex.Money accounts and the transactions, the bloggers said. Prominent Internet expert Anton Nosik wrote in his blog Monday that the data "couldn't have been legally obtained by third parties."

Navalny confirmed that data on contributors had been leaked to third parties and said he believed that the FSB has handed over the information to Nashi.

"Instead of conducting investigations into corrupt officials exposed by our work they have collected information on our donors," Navalny said by telephone.

"I could have understood if they just collected the information for themselves, but sharing it with Nashi passes all boundaries," Navalny said.

He said he would ask the Prosecutor General's Office to open a check into the leak.

Nashi, which has a history of harassing critics of the authorities, has not commented on the allegations. An FSB spokeswoman was unavailable for comment Monday, a public holiday.

Navalny, who made headlines last year by leaking an Audit Chamber report that implicated state-owned Transneft in the embezzlement of $4 billion, opened Rospil.info in February.

The web site is funded exclusively through public donations and has raised 6 million rubles ($218,000) since its inception. It claims to have identified rigged state tenders worth 1.6 billion rubles and prevented the embezzlement of 337 million rubles.

Moskovsky Komsomolets claimed last week that Navalny's exposes serve his commercial interests and target only specific companies or agencies. The daily, which is seen as friendly with the government, suggested that Navalny's funding came from businesses, not grass-roots supporters, and promised a series of reports on the matter. The initial report did not refute any of Navalny's accusations.

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