

# Youth Group Leader in Leak Scandal

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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E-mails attributed to youth agency head Vasily Yakemenko show lavish spending and efforts to smear enemies. **Igor Tabakov**

The official in charge of Russia's pro-Kremlin youth groups found himself embroiled in scandal Thursday after hackers posted links to what they claimed were thousands of his private e-mail messages.

The e-mails detail lavish spending on youth initiatives and laughable efforts to smear a major opposition leader.

Analysts said the release of Federal Youth Agency chief Vasily Yakemenko's e-mails could signal an impending reshuffle at the agency, whose pro-Kremlin youth groups have suffered from bad publicity and questions about their effectiveness in light of a recent upswing in opposition activism.

Screen shots of the e-mails, which date from November to December 2011, and summaries by bloggers who started downloading them Tuesday via Twitter paint an embarrassing

portrait, especially of Yakemenko.

He discusses buying ritzy apartments and electronics and smearing anti-corruption whistleblower Alexei Navalny.

In one e-mail, a subordinate proposes videotaping a Navalny impersonator approaching passersby to ask for money, since the United States, he would say, has cut off funding.

In another, the impersonator would carry the flag of post-Gadhafi Libya and a sign saying, "I want Russia to be a democracy, like Libya."

At one point, however, Yakemenko acknowledges that "our image is not good enough to lock antlers with Navalny." (See [here](#) for summary of the e-mails.)

The Federal Youth Agency, which Yakemenko has led since 2007, refused to comment on the e-mail exchanges.

Repeated calls to a spokesperson for the pro-Kremlin youth movement Nashi went unanswered Thursday.

The e-mails also contain suggestions that Yakemenko, whose official salary was 1 million rubles (\$33,000) per year in 2009 — the latest available figure — was considering buying apartments worth over 30 million rubles and a stereo system worth 1 million rubles.

A YouTube video of socialite Ksenia Sobchak scolding Yakemenko for dining at a swanky Moscow restaurant went viral in October and raised questions about how his agency, which controls Nashi and other pro-Kremlin groups, was spending money allotted for youth policy.

Those questions are unlikely to go away following the leak, which showed Yakemenko's agency allotting large sums to seemingly obscure events and organizations.

Analysts said the leak is authentic and a serious blow to Yakemenko.

Alexei Makarkin, of the Center for Political Technologies, said the leak was part of an internal struggle over the future of the youth movements, which he said have been ineffective in the face of massive opposition protests.

Sergei Markov, of the Institute of Political Studies, agreed that the youth movements are becoming ineffective, but said he was 99 percent sure that the hackers came from outside the government.

"If Putin was unhappy with Yakemenko," Markov said, "he could have just fired him."

In a wide-ranging [interview](#) with Lenta.ru last month, Yakemenko said he wouldn't leave his post until "the political situation stabilized," or until he was instructed to leave.

But an agency source [told](#) Gazeta.ru that Yakemenko would leave his post after the presidential election, the news portal reported Monday.

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