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Investigators Tell Navalny to Return for 2nd Day of Questioning

By Jonathan Earle

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Navalny speaking to reporters before meeting with investigators Monday. **Maxim Shemetov**

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said after meeting with investigators Monday that he had been asked to return for a second day of questioning and expected to be charged then.

"Investigators told me that they won't charge me. I'll have to come back for that at 11 a.m.," Navalny said on Twitter after a brief meeting at the office of the Investigative Committee late Monday afternoon. "Honestly, it looks like they're trying to ruffle some feathers."

Investigators in May re-opened a case into allegations that Navalny had pressured the state-owned KirovLes timber firm into a disadvantageous contract while serving as an adviser to Kirov Governor Nikita Belykh in 2009. If convicted, Navalny faces up to five years in prison.

The case was dropped in January 2011 for lack of evidence. Navalny has denied wrongdoing.

Navalny is among the opposition's most popular leaders, and his leaflets and slogans — he

famously dubbed United Russia "the party of crooks and thieves" — have made him the No. 1 enemy of many Kremlin supporters.

Navalny was summoned by the Investigative Committee as he accused Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin of concealing real estate and business interests in the Czech Republic, a violation of rules for state officials, in a series of blog posts last week. The posts cited articles written by State Duma Deputy Alexander Khinshtein in 2008.

Bastrykin denied the charges in an interview published Friday in Izvestia. He told the newspaper that he never had a residence permit in the Czech Republic and did not profit from LAW Bohemia, the Czech-registered company that he once owned.

But Navalny continued his assault Monday, referring to Bastrykin — a longtime Putin ally — as "a Czech agent" on his blog and accusing him of lying in the Izvestia interview.

Khinshtein said Monday that he wouldn't work with Navalny to punish the country's top investigator.

"The enemy of my enemy is not my friend," the United Russia deputy told Interfax, adding that Navalny's campaign against Bastrykin was aimed at preempting the KirovLes case.

If charged, Navalny would become the latest prominent opposition figure to find himself in murky legal trouble in recent months.

Leftist leader Sergei Udaltsov was sentenced to 240 hours of community service earlier this month on charges of assaulting a pro-Kremlin youth activist at a rally in Ulyanovsk in April, while State Duma Deputy Gennady Gudkov has said he was forced to sell his family's profitable security business.

Meanwhile, pro-opposition television host Ksenia Sobchak has been booted from her last nationally televised program and lost an appeal for investigators to return about $1 million in cash seized from her apartment during a June search connected to an inquiry into anti-Kremlin protests.

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