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Navalny Says Yakunin Owns Business Empire

By The Moscow Times

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Anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny on Tuesday published details of a huge web of offshore companies that he claims conceal the vast business interests of the family of Vladimir Yakunin, head of Russian Railways.

"We state that the family of ... Yakunin, with the aid of corruption and abuse, has constructed a business empire, incorporating offshore companies around the world. The value of this empire is in the billions of dollars. ... It is a mafia family of the purest kind, and it exists due to its mafia boss, Vladimir Putin, who gives license to steal everything around."

The blog entry, posted Tuesday, shows 17 hotels built or being built close to railway stations all over European Russia, which Navalny claims are affiliated with Yakunin's son, Andrei.

Yakunin's younger son, Viktor, holds stakes in property developers working on the territories of two railway stations in St. Petersburg, the blog says. The family also controls a stake in the

Ust-Luga port on the Gulf of Finland and owns property in Gelendzhik, a resort town on the Black Sea, Navalny said.

Tuesday's release was forced by two factors, Navalny said. On Thursday, Navalny may be sentenced to a prison term for theft of timber worth 16 million rubles ($490,000), in what is widely seen as a political case, which would severely limit his activity.

Navalny also said that due to "obvious" eavesdropping by the Federal Security Service at his Anti-Corruption Fund, the web of companies had begun to "change in front of our eyes." For example, Yakunin's wife got rid of stakes in companies that she had held for years, he added.

The allegations are the result of the same investigation by the Anti- Corruption Fund that in early June revealed aerial photographs of a three-story marble-clad mansion, reportedly worth tens of millions of dollars, on a 70 hectare plot of land to the south of Moscow, which the blogger claimed was controlled by Yakunin.

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