The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Journalist Ksenia Sobchak Reported to Have Fled Russia

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March 16, 2015



Ksenia Sobchak

Russian journalist Ksenia Sobchak was reported to have left the country following rumors of the existence of a hit list targeting political dissidents, though the star herself called the news "exaggerated."

Kommersant business daily reported Monday that Sobchak had announced her planned departure at a party held at Russia's literary association to celebrate the publication of a new Russian-language issue of fashion magazine L'Officiel, where Sobchak has recently taken over as editor-in-chief.

"Tomorrow I will leave Russia for some time," Sobchak is reported to have said at the Friday party.

Following widespread reports of her departure on Monday, however, Sobchak neither denied

nor confirmed the news, tweeting: "Official: my friends may have exaggerated the news on my immigration, the dinner at L'Officiel was indeed spirited and offered good wine."

The socialite-turned-journalist, who also hosts a talk show on opposition-minded Dozhd television, had expressed fears for her safety after independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper reported last week that her name was featured on a supposed contract hit list, allegedly drawn up by the same people who were involved in the murder of Nemtsov on Feb. 27.

Other intended targets identified in the report included former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky and editor-in-chief of independent Ekho Moskvy radio Alexei Venediktov.

The report provided few details on the organizers of the supposedly planned hits, saying only that the attacks had been allegedly commissioned by a high-ranking security official in Chechnya who had also ordered the killing of Nemtsov. Novaya Gazeta identified the man only by his first name Ruslan, adding that his identity was known to Russian investigators.

Following the report, Sobchak said she had been forced to increase security measures and hire bodyguards, Gazeta.ru reported last week.

Spokesman for President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, last week denied the existence of the dissidents' hit list, saying the theory was "absurd," Ekho Moskvy reported.

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