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Yakunin Quit Russian Railways Over Son's Wish to Become British Citizen – Report

By Eva Hartog

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Yakunin, who stood at the helm of Russian Railways for a decade, repeatedly refused to reveal his income amid widespread allegations of corruption.

A source close to the former head of Russian Railways, Vladimir Yakunin, has called false and slanderous a report claiming his resignation from the state rail monopoly was connected to his son's reported application for British citizenship.

"We don't react to anonymous sources, because, as everybody knows, they lie. I am assuming that the [Dozhd TV] channel will find time to apologize for broadcasting false and slanderous information," a source close to Yakunin told the RBC business daily on Saturday.

Russia's independent television channel Dozhd TV last week cited unidentified sources close to Yakunin as claiming his decision to resign was made under pressure after his eldest son,

Andrei Yakunin, applied for British citizenship.

"Given the war with the West, [the application] was seen as an act of treason," one of the sources was cited as saying by Dozhd.

Dozhd also cited a source as saying that Yakunin had attracted the wrath of his longtime ally President Vladimir Putin following a report by the Federal Security Service and the Federal Financial Monitoring Service on corruption within Russian Railways.

"The company continued to siphon off funds even after the president had clearly said 'enough,'" they said.

Yakunin's surprise resignation in August fueled speculation regarding the real motives for the move. Only last year, Yakunin had extended his contract with Russian Railways by three more years.

Initially claiming he was stepping down to take up work as a senator in the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, Yakunin then said he was not interested in the post and would focus on public and academic activities instead.

Yakunin, who stood at the helm of Russian Railways for a decade, repeatedly refused to reveal his income amid widespread allegations of corruption, and was a popular target for opposition firebrand Alexei Navalny.

Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation published aerial photos in 2013 of a lavish estate reportedly worth tens of millions of dollars that it said belonged to Yakunin.

Navalny also accused Yakunin of hypocrisy for espousing patriotic ideals while his children lived abroad. In a blog post in 2013, Navalny said Yakunin's son Andrei lived in a luxurious London home worth $7.2 million, and that his younger son Viktor lived in Switzerland.

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