The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia's Prosecutor General Blames Browder for Corruption Accusations

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December 14, 2015



Yury Chaika

Russia's Prosecutor General Yury Chaika has accused a British-American investor and the U.S. secret services of being behind a film that alleges extensive corruption and criminal activities carried out by the Chaika family.

“I have no doubt that this full-of-lies film was ordered by Bill Browder [head of the Hermitage Capital investment fund], and secret services behind him,” Chaika was quoted as saying in a letter, published by the Kommersant newspaper on Monday.

“This is proven by the fact that the film's release was followed by an unprecedented insulting attack on me and my family in the newspapers, on television and on the Internet in several European countries,” Chaika said in a letter.

The prosecutor's comments come two weeks after the controversial “Chaika” film — released

by Russian opposition-leader Alexei Navalny' s Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) — was uploaded to YouTube.

The 43-minute film, released on Dec. 1, accuses Chaika's family members, including his two sons Artyom and Igor and members of an inner circle, of being involved in shady business deals.

According to the investigation, Chaika's son Artyom is owner of a luxurious villa in Greece and a house in Switzerland, and co-owns the five-star Pomegranate Spa Hotel located on the Greece's Chalkidiki Peninsula with Olga Lopatina, the former wife of Deputy Prosecutor General Gennady Lopatin.

The investigative film also links Chaika's deputy Gennady Lopatin to the Tsapok gang responsible for a series of murders in the southern Russian town of Kushchevskaya.

As of Monday afternoon, the film has been viewed 3,405,955 times. Despite huge public interest, the Kremlin has considered the allegations worthy of neither attention nor further investigation.

“This information does not provoke our interest because this is about Chaika's adult sons, who are engaged in their own business,” President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by the TASS news agency as saying.

According to Chaika, Navalny himself did not play a large part in the production of the film. The creators of the film were only generously paid performers, he said in a statement.

He said Navalny's film was in response to the actions of Russian investigators, who have been probing schemes that resulted in huge money outflows from Russia between 1996 and 2006.

The U.S. secret services were the mastermind behind the embezzlement schemes, with Browder the organizer, Chaika said.

Navalny denied the Browder connection and said Chaika's statement only proved the accusations presented in the movie.

Speculations about the involvement of William “Bill” Browder — an outspoken critic of Putin and former employer of Sergei Magnitsky, who died in captivity under suspicious circumstances — were previously voiced by former Russian Interior Ministry investigator Pavel Karpov.

Karpov, who was put on the list of Russian citizens subject to U.S. sanctions over the Sergei Magnitsky case, said that the film was released following a raid conducted by Russian and local investigators on a Cypriot firm connected with Browder's Hermitage Capital.

Commenting on Chaika's allegations, Browder denied any involvement in the film.

“I'm very impressed with the investigation which went into making this movie and applaud Alexei Navalny and his colleagues for their bravery in exposing the shocking allegations against Chaika and his family, but I had nothing to do with the investigation, financing or production of this film,” he said in a statement.

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