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Putin Responds to Panama Papers After 4 Days of Keeping Silent

By The Moscow Times

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The Panama Papers investigation is “an attempt to destabilize the situation” in Russia, President Vladimir Putin said Thursday, Russian news outlets reported. The investigation doesn't show corruption — it is an attempt to “make Russia more yielding,” carried out by U.S. officials, “as Wikileaks has shown,” Putin said.

The Panama Papers, published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) on Sunday, were based on leaked documents from Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca. The papers implicate members of Putin's inner circle in an alleged $2 billion money-laundering scheme, identifying musician and Putin's close friend Sergei Roldugin as the owner of a number of offshore companies that helped to channel funds back to Russia.

Putin's comment comes four days after the results of the investigation were revealed in several international publications, including the Russian opposition-leaning Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

“There is a friend of Russian president, he did something, probably, that implies corruption … What corruption? There is none,” the president was quoted as saying by the Slon news website. Roldugin, Putin said, is an entrepreneur, but he is not earning billions of dollars and “is spending all his earnings on buying musical instruments for Russia.”

“I am proud to have people like Sergei [Roldugin] as friends,” Putin added.

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