

Navalny to Sue Media Holding VGTRK Over Browder-Link Accusations

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Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny

Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny is set to file a lawsuit against state-owned television and radio company VGTRK in connection with the film that links him to a British-American investor William Browder. In addition to the lawsuit, Navalny intends to demand that a criminal case be opened against the authors of the film on libel charges, the opposition politician wrote on his blog Monday.

On April 10, a clip of the film “The Browder Effect,” was shown during “Vesti Nedeli,” weekly news show on the Russia 1 television channel, presented by the infamous anchor Dmitry Kiselyov. In the film — which is set to be released in full on Wednesday — Navalny is portrayed as a paid agent of Browder, the head of investment advisory firm Hermitage Capital.

The documentary features a series of Skype conversations allegedly between Navalny and Browder, in which Browder assigns Navalny different tasks aimed at “changing constitutional

order” in Russia. These conversations, according to the film, took place in 2006–2008. The authors of the documentary back them up with what they claim is CIA reports about an operation that recruited Navalny and Browder as “agents Freedom and Salomon.”

Navalny mocked the film content and pointed out numerous spelling and grammar errors in the supposed CIA reports, implying that it was a fake. According to him, his conversations with Browder were also made up by authors of the film. “Kiselyov's film is a great success. We will use it to once again talk about the fact that television propagandists do not say even a single word of truth,” Navalny wrote.

According to Alexey Kovalyov, former employee of the state-run RIA Novosti news agency that is now headed by the TV anchor Kiselyov, editors of the agency received instructions on Monday not to cover the story due to it “probably being fake.” Kovalyov cited the email sent to the editors that was shown to him by one of the employees.

Yevgeny Popov, the Russia TV channel reporter that produced the film, declined to comment on the allegations that it misrepresented facts. “Before the film [airs in full] I'm not going to talk [about it],” he told The Moscow Times over the phone.

The request for a comment sent to Browder went unanswered by the time of publication.

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