

Cossacks Chief Denies Attack on Navalny Group at Anapa Airport

May 17, 2016



Cossacks throw milk at opposition leader Alexei Navalny at the Anapa airport, Russia, May 17, 2016.

A group of Cossacks did not attack Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny but tried to break up the fight, the chief of Anapa's Cossack community told the RBC newspaper Tuesday.

“Those who attacked Navalny and his companions are not Cossacks. Police are now looking for them,” Ivan Petrov said.

Navalny, his colleagues from the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), and their families were attacked by a group of around 20 people as they entered the airport in the southern city of Anapa on Tuesday morning.

The attackers, some of which allegedly wore Cossack uniforms, threw milk at the activists and started to beat them, Navalny's spokesperson Kira Yarmysh said.

One FBK member was hospitalized as a result of the attack.

A number of Cossacks were providing security at the airport and backup was called for as a

crowd started to gather, Petrov said.

Cossack Dmitry Slaboda, who filmed the incident, said in an interview with the Govorit Moskva radio station that the members of the local Cossack community did participate in the incident. He also said that the attack was provoked by one of Navalny's allies.

“No one planned to attack. We wanted to pour milk on them and then tell them what we thought of them to their faces. Then one of them [Navalny's allies] hit out at us and all this happened,” Slaboda was quoted as saying.

Deputy Interior Minister Alexander Gorovoy has promised to sort out the incident, opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov wrote on Facebook Tuesday.

The Cossacks are an ethnic group within Russia with a strong military tradition. They often take on roles as police or security guards to maintain peace in Russia's streets.

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