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‘Pro-Kremlin Troll Boss’ Is a Criminal, Say Russian Anti-Corruption Activists

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Alexei Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation has released another investigative report, this time targeting Evgeny Prigozhin, the restaurateur and entrepreneur known as “Putin’s favorite chef” and the man who has allegedly funded a vast network of pro-Kremlin Internet trolls.

According to the Anti-Corruption Foundation’s latest work, Prigozhin organized cartels in order to gain illegal profits on state contracts, including agreements to supply food to Russia’s armed forces and schoolchildren.

Navalny’s group concludes that Prigozhin owes his billionaire’s wealth to his personal relationship with President Vladimir Putin. Notably, Prigozhin supplied the catering for the inauguration banquet of Dmitry Medvedev and one of Putin’s birthday parties.

The activist’s researchers found that Prigozhin used price-fixing cartel agreements to

position himself to win his most lucrative state contracts, specifying six cases when this allegedly happened.

Arguing that Prigozhin's actions constitute the creation of a criminal association, the Anti-Corruption Foundation has appealed to Russia's Federal Security Service.

Last year, reporters unearthed a so-called "troll farm" in the St. Petersburg area, where a staff of public relations workers posed online as ordinary Internet users, flooding news forums and social media with pro-Kremlin comments. The operation, which has since relocated and possibly winded down, was reportedly funded and controlled by Evgeny Prigozhin.

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