

Two Angry Men: Rosneft and Lukoil Spokesmen Locked in Facebook Feud

November 16, 2016



Vladimir Putin and Mikhail Leontiev at a youth event in July 2012. **Kremlin Press Secretary**

The detention of Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev on corruption charges has sent shockwaves through Russia's state elite. But it has also proven a point of tension for two very angry Russian oil company press secretaries.

On Nov. 16, Vitaly Matushkin, press secretary for Lukoil, published an open letter to Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin on [his Facebook page](#). In his post, Matushkin demanded that Sechin take measures to punish Rosneft's vice-president and press secretary, Mikhail Leontiev, for insulting Lukoil's management in [comments](#) to The Insider news site.

But beyond simply criticizing Leontiev's statements, Matushkin also [implied](#) that the Rosneft press secretary had been hitting the sauce a bit too hard.

Such "disjointed" phrases and "impulsive" speech, Matushkin wrote, are rare in public relations professionals, but "widespread among patients at drug treatment clinics who are prone to alcohol abuse."

In fairness, Leontiev's comments were indeed bizarre. In an emotional statement given to The Insider "not as Rosneft press secretary, but just as Mikhail Leontiev," the Rosneft spokesman expressed shock at the level of corruption in the Economic Development Ministry and implied that Lukoil was somehow involved.

"It's total loudishness," Leontiev said. "I know that [Lukoil CEO Vagit] Alekperov and other people are involved. They've grown totally insolent."

Given the seriousness of these allegations, one might expect Rosneft to deescalate the conflict. But it wasn't that simple.

In a subsequent interview with the Moscow Speaks radio station, Leontiev [denied](#) that he was accusing Alekperov of involvement in corruption; rather, he meant that the corruption case would make more sense if someone powerful – like Alekperov, for example – were requesting the money from Ulyukayev.

Leontiev didn't stop there.

"And then this little idiot shows up and ruins everything for his boss," he said, seeming to imply that Matushkin's defense of Alekperov made the CEO look like he was indeed corrupt.

The situation surrounding Ulyukayev was causing "sporadic hysteria among certain people, and I was just advising people to get a hold of themselves," Leontiev concluded.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/11/16/two-angry-men-rosneft-and-lukoil-spokesmen-locked-in-facebook-fued-a56178>