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Navalny Lifts Veil on Putin's Alleged 'Secret Dacha,' One Week After Dozhd

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Screenshot Alexei Navalny Youtube Channel

Opposition politician Alexei Navalny on Thursday published an investigation claiming to show President Vladimir Putin's "secret dacha", drawing nearly half a million views within hours of it appearing on YouTube.

Drone footage depicts a lavish property on the Russian border with Finland occupying 48.5 hectares with a helicopter pad and a 745-square-meter residence with a 1,500-square-meter extension, the investigation said.

The expose is the latest in a series by Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation detailing the alleged ill-gotten wealth of senior Russian officials. Navalny hopes to use the investigations as a springboard to challenge Putin at presidential elections next year, but may be barred from running by criminal convictions that he says are politically motivated.

The investigation comes nearly a week after the opposition-leaning Dozhd television

channel published its own report about the villa, identifying it as “Villa Sellgren,” a cultural heritage site said to be one of the locations where a much-loved Soviet depiction of “Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson” was filmed in 1979.

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Work to fit out the “secret dacha” for Putin began after 2010 and the president himself “has vacationed there at least once,” a source close to the Vyborg regional administration told Dozhd. An unidentified local resident referred to it as “Putin’s residence,” it added.

Dozhd cited registry documents that showed a complicated web of ownership including Oleg Rudnov, who died in 2015 and whom Dozhd referred to as a “long-time friend of Putin."

“That Dozhd television channel,” Navalny wrote in a blog post on Thursday. “You prepare and prepare an investigation into Putin’s secret dacha, and they — bam — publish a report about it first.”

The investigation comes five months after Navalny’s foundation claimed in another report that Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev controls a 5-billion-ruble ($85 million) mansion near Moscow, a winter home in the mountains near Krasnodar region, and another mansion in Kursk region.

That investigation also alleges that Medvedev owns two large plots of land in Krasnodar, an Italian vineyard, an opulent residential building in the heart of St. Petersburg with luxurious apartments, and two yachts.

Medvedev’s spokeswoman said at the time it was “pointless to comment propaganda attacks from an opposition figure and a convict.”

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