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How Russian Prime Minister Medvedev Dodged a Question About Navalny on State TV

November 30, 2017



Alexander Astafyev / TASS

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev continued the Kremlin's long-running tradition of refusing to say opposition leader Alexei Navalny's name on Thursday, after he was asked to respond to corruption allegations.

Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation accused Medvedev of embezzlement in a viral documentary that sparked several large protests after its release in March. At the time, the prime minister gave a terse response to the investigation, comparing it to "compote" and calling its creator "that character you're referring to."

For years, Russian officials have made a point of not mentioning Navalny by name in public or allowing him access to state media.

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During Medvedev's annual meeting with the press on Thursday, journalist and former editor-in-chief of The Moscow Times, Mikhail Fishman, asked Medvedev whether he would elaborate on Navalny's investigation.

"I have nothing to add," Medvedev said. "The more you reply to these worthless people and crooks, the better off they are."

"That's what they want."

This week, a Moscow court ordered Navalny to retract his claim that Medvedev's former classmate had received an illicit donation worth $85 million from the oligarch Alisher Usmanov.

Usmanov won a libel suit against Navalny in a separate case last month.

Medvedev cited the court decisions as proof that Navalny's claims were "lies" and said that criminal punishment should be tightened for those who fail to comply with court orders.

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