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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Navalny.com

Russian Mobsters

The U.S. Treasury Department added 10 mobsters and two entities linked to the Thieves-in-Law Eurasian criminal group to its sanctions list Friday, thus prohibiting their financial transactions and freezing any assets they hold in the U.S.

The Russian mobsters Alimzhan Tokhtakhunov, known as "Taivanchik," and Zakhariy Kalashov, known as Shakro the Young, were among the 10 individuals.

Navalny Nominated

An action group nominated opposition leader Alexei Navalny as a presidential candidate for the March 2018 elections. Supporters also held "nomination rallies" in 20 cities across Russia.

Navalny's application was accepted by the Central Election Commission, though that does not guarantee its approval. A fraud conviction that his supporters say is politically motivated bars him from running.

Lethal Weapons

Russia's Foreign Minister condemned the U.S. decision to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine, saying it was "an encouragement by Washington of militant forces in Kiev" and that it "prevented the establishment of dialogue between Kiev and the Donbass, without which the crisis is impossible to resolve."

Kadyrov Blocked

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov complained on Friday that his Instagram and Facebook accounts had been blocked.

Kadyrov said he would remain on the popular Russian social network Vkontakte and Twitter, and was testing a new social network called @Mylistory.

Opposition Meeting

Opposition politician Ilya Yashin applied for a permit to hold a "Day of Free Elections" on Sunday. But in response to a complaint from a United Russia deputy in his region, a court on Friday prohibited the event.

Yashin then announced he would hold a "meeting with voters" instead.

Police came to Yashin's home 30 minutes before the meeting, but, according to the activist, eventually allowed 300 people to gather to hear him speak.

Bank Probe

The FBI has asked officials in Cyprus for financial information about FBME, a defunct bank said to be used for money laundering by Russians with political connections.

A source said the FBI request was connected to the investigation of Paul Manafort, the former campaign manager of U.S. President Donald Trump, who was indicted in October.

Scientists' Protest

A group of prominent Russian scientists blasted comments made by FSB chief Alexander Bortnikov on the centenary of the founding of the Cheka secret police last Wednesday.

In response to Bortnikov's claim that the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s were grounded, the scholars said "an enormous number of remarkable scientists were destroyed at the peak of their activities," in an open letter published Friday.

Bad Guys

Former State Department official Daniel Fried, currently at the Atlantic Council think tank, said the list of Russian "bad guys" to be issued by the U.S. administration at the end of January should be kept short to be more effective, in an interview with the Kommersant business daily published Monday.

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