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Putin Says U.S. 'Screwed Up' by Backing Navalny

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Alexei Navalny / Evgeny Feldman for project "It's Navalny" (CC-BY-NC)

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the United States "screwed up" by backing opposition leader Alexei Navalny's to get on the 2018 presidential ballot.

U.S. State Department officials expressed concern late last month after election officials barred Navalny from running in the March 18 vote — a decision that was twice upheld by Russia's Supreme Court. The concerns drew a sharp rebuke from Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman at the time, who accused Washington of election interference.

Related article: Russia Accuses U.S. of Election Meddling Over Navalny

On Friday, Putin suggested that the U.S. and other countries' comments reflect their desire to see Navalny in 'Russia's political sphere and [show] who they'd like to see at the helm of the country."

“In that sense, they screwed up. It would be better if they stayed quiet,” Putin was cited as saying by state-run TASS news agency Thursday.

Speaking on a visit to the offices of the Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid, Putin continued the Kremlin's long-standing tradition of never saying the anti-corruption blogger's name by calling him “that individual you mentioned."

Meanwhile, Putin criticized the U.S. for ignoring other candidates that were barred from running for the Russian presidency.

Navalny has called on his supporters to attend a protest against the elections on Jan. 28.

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