

5 Things to Know About Russia's Alleged Banker-TV Anchor Couple

December 03, 2019



Nailya Asker-Zade and Andrei Kostin [Kremlin.ru](#) / MT

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's latest investigation claims that state-owned bank CEO Andrei Kostin gifted millions of dollars worth of elite property, a private jet and a yacht to his alleged partner, state television journalist Nailya Asker-Zade.

News outlets have previously [covered](#) the real estate [transfers](#) from VTB Bank CEO Kostin to Russia state broadcaster host Asker-Zade. Russian authorities [blocked](#) around 1,000 websites earlier this year that mentioned Kostin and Asker-Zade.

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The sheer cost of the gifts indicates that Kostin couldn't have afforded them alone and may have spent taxpayer money, Navalny alleged in a post published Monday. "Even the real estate alone hardly fits into Kostin's official budget, and there's much more than real estate," he said in the 29-minute video.

“There’s a distinction between a state banker in love and a state banker in love who steals tens of millions to shower his mistress with,” Navalny [said](#). “This is a story about corruption.”

The Moscow Times gathered five facts and claims surrounding the now-viral investigation:

Assets.

— Navalny said he found Asker-Zade’s \$60.5 million Bombardier business jet with monthly operating costs of \$470,000 by cross-referencing her interview locations with flight-tracking data around those dates. Showing registration details of the Bombardier [switching owners](#) from a VTB offshore to an unknown offshore company in 2017, he said Kostin “either bought or rented” it for Asker-Zade.

— Navalny claimed to have found a \$62 million, 62-meter-long “Sea & Us” yacht using marine traffic services, Asker-Zade’s Instagram posts and drone footage. He did not go into the yacht’s registration or ownership structure.

— Navalny cited past reporting in saying that Kostin had bought Asker-Zade a \$3.4 million Moscow apartment in 2011 and that she owns a neighboring \$1.9 million apartment. Additionally, he cited property documents naming her as the owner of a \$4 million mansion in an elite suburb outside Moscow. “She knows full well how she came into these yachts, jets, mansions and jewelry,” he said.

Plaque. Navalny traveled to New York to find a personalized plaque dedicated to “Andrey Kostin” from a “Nailya” on a Central Park bench. The park’s 2015 annual report listed a “Nailya Asker-Zade” as one of the dozens of people who donated between \$10,000 and \$24,999 as part of its Adopt-a-Bench program.

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Дано:

1. Госбанкир обожающий Путина
2. Ведущая пропагандистского госканала.

Вопрос: какой подарок может сделать госпропагандистка РФ госбанкиру РФ?

Ответ: табличку на скамейке в Центральном Парке Нью-Йорка за \$25

000. <https://t.co/GiWEK5KCb> pic.twitter.com/bd9nhmfrdg

— Alexey Navalny (@navalny) [December 2, 2019](#)

Scrubbing. The Kremlin denied knowledge of Navalny’s investigation. The state-run TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies published, then [deleted](#), stories about the Kremlin’s denial.

Views. 2.7 million people watched Navalny’s investigation on YouTube in the first 24 hours after it went live.

Native ads. Asker-Zade [reacted](#) with a tongue-in-cheek Instagram post, saying she “ordered native advertising from a popular blogger and didn’t realize it would become so popular. Welcome to my new followers!”

Asker-Zade has authored articles in The Moscow Times in the past.

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