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Navalny May Have Poisoned Himself, Putin Reportedly Tells Macron

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Alexei Navalny came out of a coma two weeks ago after what Germany says was poisoning by Novichok. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny may have poisoned himself with Novichok, Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly told French President Emmanuel Macron in a recent phone call.

Navalny, 44, who came out of a coma two weeks ago after falling violently ill on a flight in Siberia, mocked Putin's reported claims as illogical. Germany says it has evidence backed by French and Swedish scientists that Putin's fierce critic was poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent.

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The French daily Le Monde reported, citing unnamed sources, that Putin suggested to Macron that Navalny may have poisoned himself with Novichok for an unspecified reason.

In the two leaders' Sept. 14 phone call, Putin reportedly referred to his foe as an "internet troublemaker who has simulated illnesses in the past."

Russia maintains that Navalny was not poisoned. When urged to investigate the Aug. 20 incident, Russian officials complained that Germany hadn't shared its findings and that Navalny's aides took potential evidence out of the country.

Navalny reacted ironically to the Le Monde report, writing on Instagram that his "cunning plan" was to "cook Novichok in the kitchen, sip it quietly on a plane ... die in an Omsk hospital and end up in an Omsk morgue, where my cause of death would be established as 'he lived enough.'"

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"But Putin outplayed me," Navalny joked. "In the end, I spent 18 days in a coma like an idiot and didn't get what I wanted."

On Monday, Navalny demanded that the clothes he was wearing at the time of his illness be packed and sent to Germany as key evidence.

In a video address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Macron demanded a "swift and flawless" explanation from Russia regarding Navalny's poisoning, calling the use of chemical weapons a "red line."

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