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Blame Me for Novichok Poisoning, Kadyrov Tells Navalny

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Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov is a close ally of President Vladimir Putin. **Kremlin.ru**

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has said he should be blamed instead of President Vladimir Putin for the Novichok poisoning that incapacitated Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny for over a month.

The loyal Putin ally's remarks join a series of rebukes from Russian officials after Navalny blamed Putin for the incident that threatens to deteriorate Moscow's already strained ties with the West. Rights activists accuse Kadyrov, 43, of crushing dissent in his region and the families of slain Chechen activists and opposition politicians blame him for their killings.

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"Why didn't you name me as the executor or instigator to make it more convincing and plausible?" Kadyrov wrote on his Telegram page Friday.

“At least it wouldn’t look as ridiculous as the theory you provided,” Kadyrov said.

Navalny, 44, told Germany’s Der Spiegel news magazine Thursday that he sees “no other explanation” than Putin ordering the Aug. 20 poisoning that left him in a coma for over two weeks and in hospital for 32 days.

Authorities in Germany, where Navalny was evacuated for treatment, say they have unequivocal proof that Novichok was found in the anti-corruption campaigner’s system and have turned to Moscow for answers. Russia denies that Navalny was poisoned and accuses Germany of not sharing its findings, citing it as the reason why authorities have not yet opened an investigation.

Navalny’s comments blaming Putin for his poisoning sparked a wave of backlash within the halls of power, with the speaker of Russia’s parliament calling him a “shameless and mean man” Thursday.

The Kremlin later that day called the Putin critic’s accusations “absolutely groundless and unacceptable” and claimed that CIA instructors “are currently directly working with him.”

Russia’s head of coronavirus information also expressed his “disgust” with Navalny, taking umbrage at his criticism of the doctors in Siberia who treated him for two days before his evacuation and who had said they did not find any toxic substances in his system.

Kadyrov echoed that criticism, writing in his Telegram post that “no doctor would lift a finger to save your life and the German flight would not be allowed to land at Omsk airport if they wanted to kill you in Russia.”

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