The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Billionaire Arkady Rotenberg Says He Owns 'Putin Palace'

By AFP

January 30, 2021

President Putin's childhood friend, Rotenberg co-owns Russia's largest infrastructure construction firm with his brother Boris. **Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS**

Billionaire and Vladimir Putin ally Arkady Rotenberg said Saturday he owns a Black Sea coast property that Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny says costs over $1.5 billion and belongs to the Russian president.

Navalny claims the 17,691 square meter mansion sits on a property 39 times the size of Monaco and features a casino along with a theatre, an underground hockey arena, an aquatic disco and a hookah lounge complete with a pole-dancing stage.

Underscoring the grand price tag, Navalny noted in a two-hour video report that it features Italian-made toilet brushes estimated at $851 apiece.

Navalny's video has garnered over 100 million views on YouTube, helped spur the largest

street protests in Russia in years and forced Putin to deny that he or his relatives own the property.

Related article: Kremlin-Aligned Media Confirms 'Putin Palace' Still Under Construction

On Saturday, Putin's former judo partner Rotenberg said the property belonged to him.

"I have successfully concluded a deal with some creditors and I became the beneficiary of this site," Russian news agencies quoted Rotenberg as saying.

His media service said the billionaire wanted to turn it into an apartment hotel.

"Everything has been done with great care, efficiently and professionally," he said.

"I am hoping that we will finish work on the hotel in a few years," he said.

Russian state television on Friday rejected claims that the property was owned by Putin and dismissed reports that it had an aquatic disco, showing an empty fountain at the purported site.

But Navalny's allies say work is ongoing to rectify flaws due to "negligence" during initial construction.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/01/30/russian-billionaire-arkady-says-he-owns-putin-palace-a72783