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Navalny's Poisoning Could Have Been 'Staged' by West, Says Russian Foreign Minister

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Alexei Navalny was airlifted to Germany after being poisoned. **Markus Schreiber / AP / TASS**

The Russian government suspects the poisoning attack on Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny could have been "staged" by the West since it still hasn't received evidence from Germany, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a press conference Tuesday.

Lavrov's comments come as Navalny faces years in prison for allegedly violating his probation while recovering in Germany from What western experts said was poisoning with the Novichok nerve agent.

"We have not received any investigation results [from Germany] that would give real grounds for accusations toward Russian government officials," Lavrov said following a meeting with Swedish Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson Ann Linde, according to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

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Linde opened the bilateral meeting with Lavrov by expressing concern over the human rights situation in Russia and the handling of last weekend's pro-Navalny demonstrations by the authorities. She also called on Lavrov to engage in a transparent discussion about Navalny's poisoning.

Lavrov responded by accusing Sweden and Germany of "pursuing an anti-Russian political agenda" that is not grounded in real facts.

"If you are accusing us then you have to prove us guilty," Lavrov said. "If you are saying 'I won't say anything to you because it is top-secret information,' or because the patient himself does not allow you [to share investigation results], then we have all grounds to suspect that it was staged."

Navalny, 44, was immediately detained upon his Jan. 17 return to Russia from Germany, where he had spent months recovering from the near-fatal poisoning attack in Siberia that he claims was carried out on President Vladimir Putin's orders.

Germany's justice ministry said it responded to Moscow's request for assistance in its probe into Navalny's poisoning back in January.

Multiple Western leaders, including European Council chief Charles Michel, have expressed concern with Russia's handling of Navalny's case and called for his immediate release.

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