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Notorious Russian Pranksters Foiled in Latest Hoax — Navalny Aide

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Leonid Volkov. **Evgenij Razumnyj / Vedomosti / TASS**

A pair of notorious Russian pranksters who regularly target Kremlin opponents and world leaders with prank calls have failed in their latest trick, a senior aide to jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Thursday.

Vovan and Lexus, the moniker used by bloggers Vladimir Kuznetsov and Alexei Stolyarov, have made international headlines for duping figures including Prince Harry, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Navalny's aide Leonid Volkov wrote on social media that the pranksters had tried using his name to organize a conference call with a key European security body.

In February, they posed as Volkov in a call with Amnesty International to discuss the human rights group's removal of Navalny's "prisoner of conscience" status because of past nationalist rhetoric. Amnesty's acting head Julie Verhaar, who participated in the call, was replaced last week.

Volkov said the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly sent him an email saying: "We were contacted by a Leonid Volkov with a rather strange message, we want to check whether he really wrote it."

Related article: Russian Pranksters Trick Amnesty Heads in Navalny 'Prisoner of Conscience' Call

The fake Volkov email was "written in absolutely terrible English," the real Volkov wrote.

"It all became clear: it was Lexus and Vovan," Volkov said, deriding them as "cheap Kremlin scammers" and saying this was at least their tenth failed attempt to dupe international figures using his name.

Kuznetsov and Stolyarov have not yet commented on Volkov's allegations.

Volkov, who is wanted in Russia on charges of "inciting minors" to attend pro-Navalny rallies, said the attempt has led to him being invited to give a speech at the OSCE assembly.

"Thanks to Lexus and Vovan, who organized my appearance at an important international venue," he wrote.

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