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U.S. Says Preparing New Russia Sanctions Over Navalny Poisoning

By AFP

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Alexei Navalny in court in February 2021. **EPA / TASS**

The United States is preparing fresh sanctions against Russia over the near-fatal poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, a top White House advisor warned Sunday.

Jailed opposition leader Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, was arrested in January upon returning to Russia after recovering from a poisoning he says was orchestrated by Moscow.

"We have sanctioned Russia for the poisoning of Alexei Navalny ... We rallied European allies in a joint effort to impose costs on Russia for the use of a chemical agent against one of their citizens on Russian soil," U.S. President Joe Biden's national security advisor Jake Sullivan told CNN's "State of the Union."

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The United States in March imposed sanctions on the director of Russia's FSB security agency after finding it carried out the poisoning of Navalny.

"We are preparing another package of sanctions to apply in this case, as well. We've shown along the way we're not going to pull our punches," Sullivan added.

Moscow pushed back against the possibility of new sanctions and warned of a Russian response.

"The illegal actions of the United States have always been followed by a legitimate response from us," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Telegram. "It is strange that some people in Washington like to go around in circles and be confronted by the same obstacles endlessly."

Talk of the new sanctions comes days after Biden and Putin met in Geneva for their first summit, where the leaders sought to cool tensions in the combustible U.S.-Russian relationship.

After Biden likened Putin to a "killer," Russia in March took the rare step of recalling its ambassador Anatoly Antonov. The U.S. envoy, John Sullivan, likewise returned to Washington.

Putin rejected criticism of his treatment of opponents — many high-profile critics have been killed in Russia during his rule and the media is almost entirely muzzled — saying that the United States had bigger problems.

A day after the summit, the Kremlin was guarded about future dialogue with Washington.

"We are ready to continue this dialogue to the same extent as the American side is," Putin said in televised remarks.

The Russian leader said the meeting was "quite friendly" and that he and Biden "were able to understand each other on key issues."

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