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# Police Search 'Foreign Agent' News Site Chief Editor's Home

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Roman Dobrokhotov. **theirs.ru**

Russian law enforcement officers on Wednesday searched the home of Roman Dobrokhotov, the chief editor of the investigative news website The Insider, less than a week after it was labeled a "foreign agent."

"Apparently there's a search at mine. The police are knocking," Dobrokhotov tweeted early Tuesday.

Following several hours of searches, during which authorities seized his phones, laptop and passport, Dobrokhotov was taken to a police station for questioning.

The Insider was the 16th independent media outlet in Russia to be labeled a "foreign agent" Friday, a designation that imposes rigorous auditing requirements with steep fines for violations and threatens business models.

The outlet is best known for its work with U.K.-based Bellingcat in investigating the 2020

poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and the 2018 poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal in Britain.

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Dobrokhotov's colleague Sergei Yezhov tweeted that the chief editor was due to leave Russia on the day of the police searches.

The Insider's website linked the searches to its November 2020 investigative report alleging that Russia's GRU military intelligence was paying foreign reporters to spread misinformation about the downing of Flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine.

The Insider-Bellingcat investigation's target, Dutch blogger Max van der Werff, sued Dobrokhotov in January 2021 for libel, Russia's legal news website RAPSI reported at the time. Van der Werff's lawyer on Wednesday told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency that the police searches are linked to the lawsuit and that van der Werff sued Dobrokhotov personally.

Moscow police launched a criminal case into slander in April this year, The Insider said, "and searches began today at Dobrokhotov and his relatives' addresses."

Case materials cited by Russian media said that Dobrokhotov had "sought to tarnish the activities of the GRU, the Russian Defense Ministry and the Dutch journalist."

Dobrokhotov's lawyer Oksana Oparenko said Dobrokhotov is listed as a witness in the case surrounding a Nov. 12, 2020, tweet posted on Dobrokhtov's account, according to The Insider.

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