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Russia Jails TikToker for Damaging FSB Car During Navalny Protests

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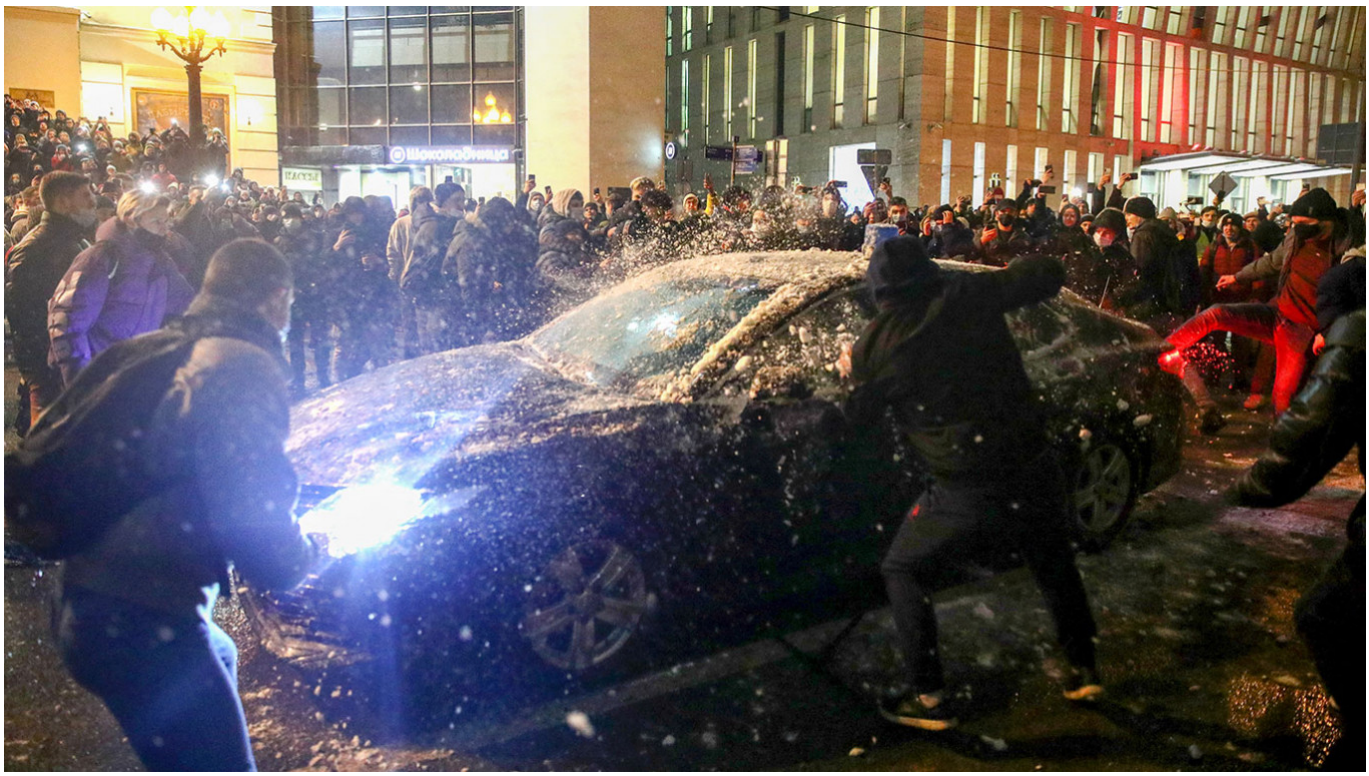

A group of Moscow demonstrators damaged a Federal Security Service (FSB)-owned Toyota Camry at this January's protests calling for Alexei Navalny's release. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

A popular Russian TikTok blogger has been sentenced to nearly three years in a prison colony for damaging a car belonging to the security services during anti-government protests in January.

Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in over 100 towns and cities across Russia on Jan. 23, 2021, to demand the release of jailed Putin critic Alexei Navalny.

Konstantin Lakeyev, 18, was accused of being part of a group of Moscow demonstrators who damaged a Federal Security Service (FSB)-owned Toyota Camry, first by throwing snowballs at it and then by kicking it and jumping on its hood.

Embed:

Moscow's Tverskoy district court found Lakeyev guilty of criminal property damage on Wednesday and sentenced him to two years and eight months.

He was also ordered to pay a fine of 337,850 rubles ($4,600).

Lakeyev, known as Kostya Kievsky on TikTok, has over 800,000 subscribers on the video-sharing platform that has gained popularity among young Russians in recent years.

Shortly after his January arrest, Russia's Investigative Committee published a video in which Lakeyev is seen admitting that he had thrown snowballs at the FSB squad car and kicked it several times, and offering his apology.

"I am very sorry and apologetic. I ask forgiveness from everyone affected by this: civil servants, police officers," he said.

Related article: Young Russians Flood TikTok With Navalny Protest Cries

Lakeyev subsequently rejected help from a lawyer provided to him by independent human rights groups and asked the press not to attract attention to his case.

His defense intends to appeal the verdict, the Baza Telegram channel reported.

Earlier this year, the TikTok app emerged as an unexpected platform for dissent as young Russians flocked there to post videos in support of Navalny, prompting the country's state censor to clamp down on the short-video app.

In April, a Russian court fined TikTok 2.5 million rubles ($32,700) for failing to delete calls to attend the January and February pro-Navalny protests.

Last month, a Russian state-owned media conglomerate announced the launch of a new video-sharing platform meant to rival the Chinese-made app.

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