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Small Fire Outside Italian Villa of Russian TV Anchor

By AFP

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A small fire on Wednesday outside the Lake Como villa of a Russian TV anchor close to President Vladimir Putin was likely a "demonstrative act" against the pundit, Italian authorities said.

Vladimir Solovyov's vacation home in the town of Menaggio, on the western side of the popular holiday destination in northern Italy, was seized last month by Italian financial police as part of sweeping Western sanctions on those close to Putin.

Solovyov, a prominent radio and television presenter, is considered the Kremlin's most prolific and enthusiastic propagandist. The villa is currently empty.

"Just one team of firemen put out the fire within a very short time," Como fire chief, Gennaro di Maio, told AFP.

"There is hardly any damage, it was burned tires that gave off visible black smoke," he said.

Menaggio's mayor, Michele Spaggiari, told Italy's AGI news agency that the fire appeared to be "a demonstrative act" causing little or no damage.

Spaggiari said Solovyev bought the property about five years ago.

Solovyev owns two houses on Lake Como that are worth a combined 8 million euros, according to the Italian government that announced the property seizures last month.

Police are investigating anti-Russian graffiti at the second property, Italian state news agency ANSA reported.

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