

Elites Allegedly Insulting Putin in Phone Call Cause Sensation in Russia

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Producer Iosif Prigozhin. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

An audio recording of a telephone conversation allegedly taking place between Russian music producer Iosif Prigozhin and billionaire former senator Farhad Akhmedov continued to send shockwaves through Russia's elites on Monday, as one media outlet publicly backed its authenticity.

The unusually frank discussion between two well-connected and wealthy members of the Russian elite, supposedly a wiretapped phone conversation, was posted to YouTube earlier this month but only began to receive close scrutiny on Friday, when its existence was reported by Ukraine's Channel 5.

Touching on frustrations with the current political situation in Russia and the Western sanctions against it, the conversation employs extremely crude language to criticize both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in an expletive-laden back-and-forth that has already raised eyebrows given the silence of the vast majority of Russia's elites over the war in Ukraine.

"[Putin] doesn't give a fuck about anything. And he doesn't give a fuck about the people. He's fucking Satan. Wimp ..," one of the pair says.

"How will we clean all this up later? Fascism will be here, a military dictatorship. You'll see. That's how it's going to end," a voice says, only for his interlocutor to agree.

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However, the authenticity of the recording remains far from certain, with Iosif Prigozhin perhaps unsurprisingly [claiming](#) the audio was a "fake" in his initial reaction to its publication on Telegram. Later, however, when speaking to Russian news website [Fontanka](#), Prigozhin accepted that the recording had been authentic in parts, while others had been entirely fabricated.

Independent investigative news outlet Important Stories, which currently operates from outside Russia, said it thought the leaked recording was authentic on Monday, citing a source in FSB.

The two voices can be heard discussing the dissatisfaction of some of Putin's closest associates including Rosneft head Igor Sechin, Rostec head Sergei Chemezov and National Guard head Viktor Zolotov with the Russian army and with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in particular, noting that Putin's associates had formed a coalition aimed at bringing Shoigu down.

"Look, they have teamed up — Igor Ivanovich [Sechin], Sergei Viktorovich [Chemezov], and [Viktor] Zolotov. They blame everything on Shoigu. They call him a dickhead — behind his back, of course — and they now have the task of tearing him the fuck down," the voice supposedly belonging to Prigozhin says.

Music producer Iosif Prigozhin and his wife and pop singer Valeria have been longtime public supporters of Vladimir Putin and even campaigned for him in the country's 2018 elections.

Farhad Akhmedov, a Russian billionaire of Azerbaijani origin, made his money in Siberia's gas industry in the 1990s and served as a Russian senator between 2004 to 2009. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Akhmedov had EU and U.K. sanctions imposed on him and currently lives in Baku.

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