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# Moscow Dismisses 'Speculation' About Navalny's Inclusion in Prisoner Swap

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Maria Zakharova. **Sergey Mikhailichenko / Roskongress**

Moscow will not discuss "speculation" about the inclusion of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in a list of candidates for a prisoner swap with the West, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Wednesday.

"This is speculation that requires neither official commentary nor informal discussion," Zakharova said at a briefing on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok.

A "possible" multilateral deal to swap Russian detainees in Western countries for Western citizens in Russia could also include dissidents like Navalny, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday, citing anonymous officials in several countries.

The jailed Kremlin critic was sentenced this summer to 19 more years in prison for "extremism" in addition to the nine-year sentence for fraud he is currently serving.

He and his allies have slammed both rulings as politically motivated.

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Navalny was imprisoned upon his January 2021 return to Russia after recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with what Western scientists determined was the banned military-grade nerve agent Novichok.

The activist's associates, who are now living in exile abroad, have not commented on whether Navalny would agree to be included in the kind of prisoner swap mentioned in WSJ’s reporting.

The Kremlin has refused to comment on Navalny’s possible swap.

Veteran Russia analyst Tatiana Stanovaya speculated Monday that President Vladimir Putin could be “ready to pay a high price” to return convicted Russian hitman Vadim Krasikov from Germany.

A German court sentenced Krasikov to life imprisonment in 2021 for the assassination of a former Chechen commander in a central Berlin park two years earlier.

“For Putin, Navalny is not an asset, nor is he a threat. He may agree to hand over Navalny for Krasikov, regardless of some concerns that may appear in his circle and among the secret services,” Stanovaya said.

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