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Navalny's Whereabouts Unknown After Possible Prison Transfer

By Moscow Times Reporter

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The prison in Melekhovo, Vladimir region where Alexei Navalny was being held. **f-atlas.ru**

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny is believed to have been transferred from the prison in central Russia where he was being held, his allies told The Moscow Times, but his whereabouts remain unknown.

“We don’t know where he could have been transferred,” Navalny’s spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh told The Moscow Times over text message Tuesday. “We currently have no information.”

Navalny, 47, was expected to be transferred from the IK-6 prison in the Vladimir region to a stricter "special-regime" colony after a court in August handed him a 19-year jail term, accusing him of creating an organization that undermined public security by carrying out "extremist activities."

“Prisoner transfers are dangerous primarily because, during this time, a person is deprived of all protection and assistance," Yarmysh told The Moscow Times.

Transferring inmates to new prison facilities can sometimes take weeks, and prisoners lose all contact with the outside world. The Federal Penitentiary Service is required to inform prisoners' families within 10 days of their arrival at a new facility.

"In Alexei's case, he's essentially alone with people who have previously tried to kill him, so the situation is very dangerous," Yarmysh said, referring to Navalny’s 2020 poisoning that he and his allies say was ordered by President Vladimir Putin — something the Kremlin denies.

The Baza Telegram channel reported later Tuesday, citing unspecified sources, that Navalny could have been transported to Moscow to undergo investigative actions in a fresh criminal case. This month, Navalny was informed that Russia’s Investigative Committee charged him with two counts of “vandalism.” According to Baza's sources, Moscow also may not be the final destination of the transfer.

Navalny’s allies said that the Baza report was not verified.

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Earlier, the jailed activist's allies warned that “his life is at great risk” after he reportedly experienced a “serious health-related incident.”

Navalny last met with his lawyer on Dec. 5, Yarmysh said. Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the jailed activist was once again absent from a scheduled court hearing.

His lawyer Leonid Solovyov told The Moscow Times that he could not comment on his case.

Navalny's team linked the timing of his possible transfer with Putin's announcement last week to run for re-election in next year's presidential race. The day before the widely anticipated announcement, the jailed activist urged Russians to “vote for any other candidate” besides Putin.

“It's no secret to Putin who his main opponent is in these ‘elections.’ And he wants to make sure that Navalny’s voice is not heard,” longtime Navalny ally Leonid Volkov said on X (formerly Twitter).

Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that the Kremlin has “neither the intention nor the ability to track the fate of prisoners and the process of their actual stay in the relevant institutions.”

Navalny was imprisoned in early 2021 after his return to Moscow from Germany, where he had been recovering from a nearly fatal poisoning attack with Novichok, a Soviet-designed nerve agent.

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