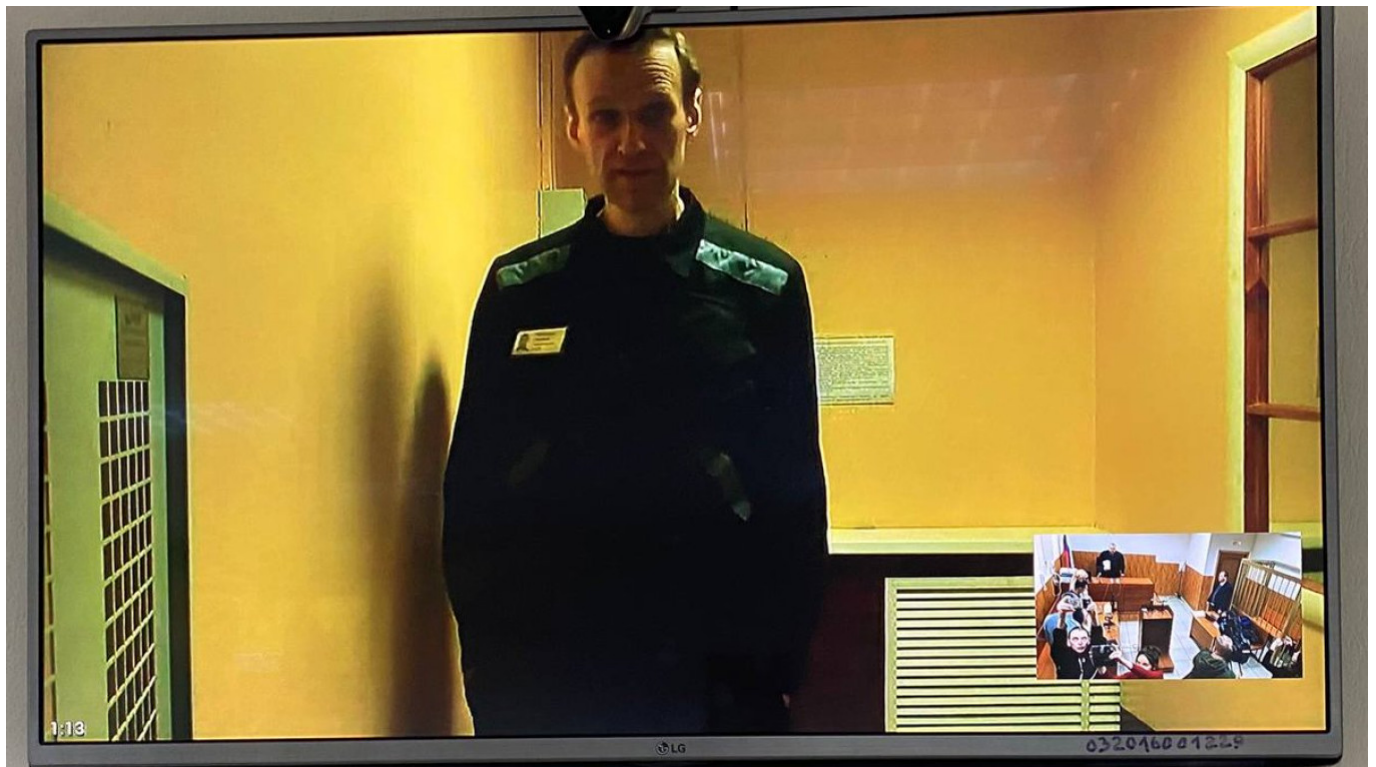


Putin Discussed Prisoner Swap Hours Before Navalny's Death – Agentstvo

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Alexei Navalny. @teamnavalny / X

President Vladimir Putin met with billionaire Roman Abramovich to discuss swapping the late opposition activist Alexei Navalny for Russians jailed in the West just hours before he died in an Arctic prison last month, the investigative outlet Agentstvo [reported](#) Friday, citing four sources familiar with the matter.

According to two of Agentstvo's sources, Putin and Abramovich met on Feb. 16 to discuss details of a planned prisoner swap involving Navalny, around four hours before prison authorities first reported that the activist had died.

Agentstvo's sources said that Moscow was ready to release Navalny along with Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan. Germany meanwhile indicated a willingness to hand over Vadim Krasikov, who is currently serving a life sentence for the 2019 murder of a Chechen-Georgian rebel commander in Berlin.

Another source claimed that businessman Vladislav Klyushin, who was [sentenced](#) to nine

years in prison by a U.S. federal court last year for hacking and securities fraud, may have also been considered for exchange.

Related article: [Navalny Was Killed Ahead of Planned Prisoner Swap, Allies Say](#)

Navalny's allies [claimed](#) last month that the activist was killed at the final stage of prisoner swap talks between Moscow and Western governments. Anonymous Western officials cited in subsequent media reports have differed in their assessment of how close the parties had come to reaching an agreement.

Longtime Navalny aide Maria Pevchikh said that the idea to exchange Navalny for Krasikov, a high-ranking Federal Security Service (FSB) colonel, came from the billionaire Abramovich.

Abramovich had previously acted as a mediator in failed peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv in the first months of the invasion of Ukraine.

Investigative journalist Christo Grozev, who was reportedly aware of plans to swap Navalny, told Agentstvo that Putin "probably agreed" to the exchange.

"I think that this was either a cover-up for murder plans or a strategic move to bring the negotiations almost to an end... since Germany agreed in principle to give up Krasikov," Grozev was quoted as saying by the outlet.

With Navalny out of the picture, Grozev said, Putin could strengthen Russia's position in the negotiations and offer to trade the convicted FSB colonel for someone of lesser importance being held in a Russian jail.

"Having learned that the West was ready to give Vadim Krasikov to Russia, Putin coldly ordered the murder of Navalny," one of Agentstvo's sources said.

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