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Kremlin Rejects European Accusations of Navalny Poisoning

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People lay flowers at the grave of Alexei Navalny in Moscow. **Hector Retamal / AFP**

The Kremlin on Monday rejected an assessment by five European countries that Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny died from poisoning in an Arctic prison two years ago.

"We naturally do not accept such accusations. We disagree with them. We consider them biased and baseless," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a daily briefing call.

"In fact, we strongly reject them," he said.

Peskov spoke after Britain, Sweden, France, Germany and the Netherlands on Saturday accused Russian authorities of killing Navalny with a rare toxin found in South American dart frogs, known as epibatidine.

Their claims, which they said were based on laboratory analysis of samples taken from Navalny's body, came ahead of the second anniversary of Navalny's death.

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On Monday, Navalny's relatives and supporters who remain in Russia, as well as foreign diplomats, gathered at his grave at Moscow's Borisovskoye Cemetery.

Navalny's mother, Lyudmila Navalnaya, called for justice following the European assessment that her son died of poisoning.

"We knew that our son did not simply die in prison. He was murdered," Navalnaya told reporters outside the heavily guarded cemetery.

"I think it will take some time, but we will find out who did it," she said.

Navalny, a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin, died on Feb. 16, 2024, at age 47 in the "Polar Wolf" penal colony under unclear circumstances while serving a 19-year sentence on "extremism" charges seen as political retribution for his anti-Kremlin opposition.

Moscow has not fully explained Navalny's death, saying only that he fell ill and collapsed during a walk in the prison yard in the remote town of Kharp in the Yamalo-Nenets autonomous district.

American intelligence assessments were previously reported to say that Putin, who was re-elected to his fifth presidential term a month later, "probably" did not personally order Navalny's death.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said "we don't have any reason to question" the European assessment that Navalny died from epibatidine poisoning.

AFP contributed reporting.

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