

# Russian opposition leader's Twitter gets hacked

June 26 2012, by NATALIYA VASILYEVA

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In this file photo taken on Wednesday, June 13, 2012, anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny speaks to the media as he arrives for questioning at the headquarters of the Russian Investigation committee in Moscow, Russia. Oppositionist Alexei Navalny, who was elected in the Aeroflot Board of Directors, intends to protect the interests of this company and the rights of its minority shareholders. He has made an entry to this effect in his LiveJournal. (AP Photo/Misha Japaridze, file)

(AP) — Hackers broke into a prominent Russian opposition leader's Twitter and email accounts, sending his followers abusive messages.

Alexei Navalny's spokeswoman, Anna Veduta, warned his quarter of a million Twitter followers early Tuesday that the stream of nasty notes was fake.

Late Tuesday night, she confirmed that Navalny had regained control over his Twitter account.

"I missed you all terribly, and also life without Twitter is HELL," he tweeted. "You have no idea what is going on and you have to get your news from the INTERNET!"

Among other things, the hackers had written "Alexei Navalny is a crook and thief 2.0" in his profile.

"I'm disbanding my sect, but I'm not going to give you your money back because I need it to party in Mexico, so you can all go to hell," one tweet read.

Navalny is a graft-fighting lawyer and popular blogger who has tapped into Russians' anger over the corruption that pervades public life. After he described President Vladimir Putin's political party as the "party of crooks and thieves," the catchphrase stuck.

Navalny has solicited donations to support the work of his website and a team of lawyers who study government tenders for evidence of corruption. He claims the government has withdrawn scandalous tenders for various goods and services worth millions of dollars after they were exposed by his site.

The 36-year-old opposition leader has been at the forefront of major anti-Putin protests in recent months. His home and office were raided and he was interrogated several times as part of a probe into violence at a May 6 opposition rally.

Navalny linked the hackings to his personal computer and iPad being seized by police in a raid on his apartment on June 11. In a Facebook message verified by The Associated Press, he wrote he was "sure that the

hacking was performed with the help of seized hardware" and pledged to demand that the hackers be found and charged.

But government investigators on Tuesday brushed off Navalny's accusations of being instrumental in the hacking.

Faced with a choice of unfollowing the opposition leader or putting up with a flood of abusive tweets, Navalny's followers seem to be opting for the former. Their number dwindled from more than 258,000 early Tuesday morning to fewer than 254,000 late afternoon Moscow time.

The hacking of Navalny's account follows the lawyer's election to the board of directors of Russia's largest airline, Aeroflot, on Monday.

Navalny was nominated by tycoon Alexander Lebedev, whose holdings include 15 percent of Aeroflot. Navalny's nomination was also supported by proxy advisory firms who work for minority shareholders.

Navalny first made his name a few years ago by using his rights as a minority shareholder to gather evidence of corruption at state-controlled oil and gas companies and banks. Cases he filed against some of the biggest names in Russian business have made little progress in court, but he exposed some seemingly outrageous practices.

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