

# Maria Butina, Russian who conspired to infiltrate U.S. groups, visits Navalny in jail, with video cameras in tow

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MOSCOW — Jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, on a hunger strike after being denied medical care, has been hoping for a visit from a doctor. Instead he got a less welcome visitor Thursday: Maria Butina, the Russian agent convicted and jailed for conspiring to infiltrate political organizations in the United States without registering with authorities.

According to a post by Navalny's team on his [Twitter account](#), Butina was reporting for the Kremlin-funded RT television network, formerly Russia Today.

Navalny is in Penal Colony No. 2, near Vladimir, 112 miles east of Moscow, where he says guards wake him up eight times a night and have punished him for numerous infractions. Among them: getting up 10 minutes early, wearing a T-shirt to meet his lawyer, declining to watch a video lecture and refusing to do morning exercises.

"Instead of a doctor, Butina, a wretched propagandist from RT channel, arrived today accompanied by video cameras," said a post Thursday on Navalny's [Twitter account](#). She was "shouting that this is the best and most comfortable prison."

The account said Navalny lectured her for 15 minutes in front of the other prisoners, calling her "a parasite and a servant of thieves."

Posts on Navalny's social media are made in his name by members of his team since he has no access to the Internet.

Discipline in Penal Colony No. 2 is enforced by prisoners called "activists" who cooperate with prison authorities and report infractions, often in return for privileges or reduced sentences.

According to Navalny's Twitter feed, Butina concluded her visit by interviewing "activists who told her how good everything is."

Navalny survived a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent, an attack widely blamed on Russian security agents — a charge the Kremlin denies. He was [jailed](#) when he flew back to Russia in January after treatment in Germany.

The 2½-year sentence was for breaching parole conditions in a 2014 fraud case, partly because he failed to report to authorities while being [treated](#) in Germany.

Butina's case came to light amid a scandal over Russian efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

She was arrested in 2018 and sentenced to 18 months in prison in the United States in April 2019. She pleaded guilty to conspiring with a senior Russian official to infiltrate the National Rifle Association and other groups without registering with the Justice Department as a foreign agent. She was released and deported in October 2019.

U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan of the District of Columbia said her effort to penetrate conservative U.S. political circles without disclosing she was working as an agent for the Kremlin was “dangerous” and “a threat to our democracy.”

She published a book, “Prison Diary,” in November about her jail time in the United States. She has appeared on Russian television describing the conditions, claiming that medical aid is not offered in U.S. prisons. She said in interviews that the light was switched on every four hours at night, waking her up.

In her book, she complained that she was locked in solitary confinement for breaking the rules, without being informed what she had done wrong. She claimed fellow inmates told her that prison authorities promised them reduced sentences if they reported her for doing “something bad.”

She also found it “unspeakable” that transgender people were in the prison.

She admitted to working under the direction of Alexander Torshin, a former Russian government official, in a scheme to establish unofficial lines of communications with Americans who could influence U.S. politics. Butina later claimed she admitted to the crime under pressure from authorities.

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