



# (U) Putin Declares Candidacy; Opposition Leader Unavailable for Comment

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**(U) This infographic provides an update to Russian political activity and serves as a warning for any readers considering a post-Army career in Russian opposition politics.** On December 8<sup>th</sup>, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he would seek a 5<sup>th</sup> term as Russian President in the upcoming elections to be held in 2024. On the same day, an associate of the currently incarcerated lead opposition figure Alexei Navalny reported his lawyers have been unable to contact him since Dec 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Navalny's whereabouts remain unknown in the latest of a long history of related suspicious activity toward him.

- In what the Kremlin has labeled a “completely spontaneous” announcement, Vladimir Putin declared his intent to seek the Russian Presidency for a 5<sup>th</sup> term at an event honoring Russian soldiers' bravery in Ukraine with Hero of Russia medals.
- The announcement followed a request from a leader of the illegally annexed Ukrainian territories for Putin to continue as the Russian President which was allegedly supported by the mother of a fallen Russian soldier.



*The enthusiastic candidate poses with a “hero of Russia”*

- Putin, 71, has been in power since 1999 and could potentially stay in power for life due to constitutional amendments that occurred under his leadership. He is the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's 30 years.
- Putin's reelection is all but certain given his control over the country's political scene and the severity of punishments for public dissent.
- However, critics may hope to use the campaign to erode public support for the Kremlin leader and his military action in Ukraine, likely at great personal risk.

## Opposition leader Alexei Navalny



- Navalny is of Russian and Ukrainian descent. He has organized anti-government demonstrations and run for office to advocate reforms against corruption in Russia, and against President Vladimir Putin and his government.
- The decision to oppose Putin has not benefited Navalny from a personal freedom and projected longevity perspective.
- On 20 August 2020 Navalny suddenly and violently fell ill during a flight to Moscow and was hospitalized in Omsk, Russia following the flights emergency landing.
- Navalny's family had him flown to Berlin for treatment and as a safety precaution. He remained in Germany during the lengthy recovery for exposure to Novichok, a chemical weapon nerve agent developed by the Soviet Union.
- A joint news agency investigation later released a recorded call in which a Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agent was tricked into confirming nerve agent was applied to Navalny's underwear and he only survived due to the flights unexpected diversion.

- On 17 January 2021, Navalny returned to Russia and was arrested for violating the terms of a previously suspended sentence due to his failure to report into Russian officials during his medically induced coma in Germany.
- His initial sentence was for 3.5 years; however, he was sentenced to an additional 9 years in a maximum-security penal colony for fraud and contempt charges that were added during his incarceration.
- During his time in prison, there have been multiple reports of his failing health and extended and frequent periods in solitary confinement.
- On December 8<sup>th</sup> he was unable to make a scheduled video appearance at a court appointment. It was later announced his lawyers had been unable to reach him since Dec 5<sup>th</sup>, and correctional officials stated he was no longer on the inmate roster and had been transferred to another unnamed facility.



*A slightly less dangerous career option than Putin political opponent*

- The loss of contact with Navalny likely signals a Kremlin effort to tighten his isolation while President Vladimir Putin runs for reelection and to prevent the release of critical statements in response to the recently announced reelection.

Sources:

[Alexei Navalny](#) (Wikipedia)  
[Navalny vanishes from view in Russia](#) (AP News)  
[Putin will seek another term as president](#) (AP News)  
[Navalny Bio](#) (Britannica)