

Putin Spokesman Dismisses Theory Russians Hacked Into White House

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. President Barack Obama

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov scoffed at a CNN report that claimed Russian hackers may have breached the White House's computer system and accessed sensitive information pertaining to U.S. President Barack Obama, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Wednesday.

“We know that blaming Russia for everything has turned into a sport,” Peskov told journalists when asked about the allegations, RIA reported. “At least they haven't looked for Russian submarines in [Washington's] Potomac River, as has been the case in a few other countries.”

Citing unnamed U.S. officials, the CNN news channel reported Wednesday that hackers had launched a series of cyber-attacks that allowed them to penetrate the State Department's computer system, ultimately paving the way to the White House's system. The hackers thus gained access to sensitive information, such as the president's schedule, according to the

report.

The unidentified sources reportedly told CNN that investigators had found compelling evidence that the hackers were working for Russian authorities.

Mark Stroh, spokesman for the U.S. National Security Council, would not confirm that the hack had been carried out by Russians, CNN reported.

Speaking with The Moscow Times on Wednesday, Andrei Soldatov, chief editor of Agentura.ru — an information site dedicated to security and intelligence issues — shed light on why CNN's sources may have drawn the Russian connection.

“From what I understand, the latest attack was part of a larger operation known as 'Pawn Storm,' which has remained ongoing in recent months. Some Russian opposition figures have been targeted by the operation. My understanding is that this is the reason why this latest attack has been attributed to Russian hackers,” he said.

Peskov downplayed CNN's claims on Wednesday, saying that the Kremlin's own computer system comes under attack “a few hundred times a day,” RIA reported. Attempts to block President Vladimir Putin's direct telephone line, mostly originating from beyond Russia's borders, were also common, Peskov said.

Russian hackers have often been accused of perpetrating cyber-attacks against networks operated by foreign states.

In October, U.S. IT security firm FireEye claimed that Russian-speaking hackers had obtained confidential data from NATO and the Georgian government.

In 2007, at a low point in Russian-Estonian relations, Russian hackers were accused of attacking a number of websites based in the Baltic country, including those of government institutions, banks, major newspapers and companies.

Last summer, Russian hackers were accused of having infiltrated the network of financial giant JPMorgan Chase & Co. and having stolen sensitive data, media reported at the time. The Federal Bureau of Investigation later debunked speculation that the incident was a possible retaliation for U.S. sanctions imposed against Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine last March.

Earlier this week, former defense intelligence chief Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn told Fox News on Tuesday that there was a “very high” chance that former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's e-mail account had been hacked by “adversarial” foreign intelligence agencies in Russia, China, Iran or North Korea.

Clinton, who is expected to announce her intention to run for U.S. president in the coming weeks, recently came under attack for using her private e-mail account for work correspondence during her time at the helm of the State Department, a practice she has defended as a matter of “convenience.”

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