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Kremlin Laughs Off Allegations of Possible U.K. Election Meddling

By Reuters

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The Kremlin views UK elections meddling ironically **Andy Rain / EPA / TASS**

The Kremlin said on Tuesday it viewed suggestions from Western researchers that Russian hackers may have leaked British-U.S. trade documents before Britain's election with derision, saying such allegations were often a ploy to deflect attention.

Moscow was reacting after experts said the leak and distribution of the classified documents online resembled a disinformation campaign uncovered this year that originated in Russia.

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The opposition Labour Party said on Nov. 27 that the classified documents showed the ruling Conservatives were plotting to offer up the state-run National Health Service for sale in trade

talks with Washington, something Prime Minister Boris Johnson has denied.

The NHS is much loved by Britons and has become an important issue in the Dec. 12 election, in which Labour trails the Conservatives despite cutting its lead in some opinion polls.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday it had become easy to demonize Russian hackers.

"Such a persistent term — Russian hacker — is practically used like a fetish in order to distract attention from one's own problems," Peskov told reporters.

"It's very convenient for demonization, to cover up one's own headache, and to use this fetish to frighten people with Russian hackers. We have repeatedly come up against this and we view it with a dose of derision."

Peskov said allegations related to Russian hackers were typically based on unconfirmed information and not backed by facts.

"So it's not possible to comment on these seriously," said Peskov.

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