

U.S. Intel Has ‘Low to Moderate’ Confidence in Reports of Russia-Taliban Bounties

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The Kremlin has long dismissed the reports that Russia offered bounties to the Taliban to kill American soldiers in Afghanistan. **U.S. Army / Flickr**

The U.S. intelligence community cannot conclusively say that Russian spies offered Taliban militants bounties to kill American soldiers in Afghanistan, the White House [said](#) Thursday.

Spokesperson Jen Psaki spoke of “low to moderate confidence” in the 2020 reports of the cash incentives based on anonymous sources as Washington widened sanctions on Russia for election interference and cyber attacks. The Biden administration explained Thursday that it wouldn’t levy specific measures in response to the bounty reports, but was instead dealing with them through “diplomatic, military and intelligence channels.”

Related article: [‘100% Bullsh*t’: Russia Blasts Reports of Taliban Bounties for Killed U.S. Troops](#)

“The reason that they [U.S. intelligence] have low to moderate confidence in this judgment is in part because it relies on detainee reporting,” Psaki said at a press briefing.

Psaki also attributed the low confidence in the reports’ accuracy to the “challenging operating environment in Afghanistan.”

She noted however that the U.S. intelligence community has “high confidence” in the assessment that Russia’s GRU military intelligence agency interacts with Afghan criminal networks.

“[T]he involvement of this GRU’s unit is consistent with Russia’s encouraging attacks against U.S. and coalition personnel in Afghanistan,” Psaki said, adding that this “puts the burden on the Russian government to explain their engagement.”

The Kremlin had dismissed the story as “100% bullsh*t” when The New York Times’ report [first broke](#) last June.

This week, U.S. President Joe Biden announced plans to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, satisfying the Taliban’s key demands and ending America’s longest war, by Sept. 11.

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