

# [***The UK government blames Russian intelligence for prolonged efforts to meddle in British politics***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69TH-85R1-JC5B-G1BD-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

LONDON — Russia's intelligence services have targeted high-profile British politicians, civil servants and journalists with cyberespionage as part of years-long attempts to interfere in U.K. ***politics***, Britain's government said Thursday.

The Foreign Office said Russia's FSB agency was responsible for a range of sustained cyberespionage operations in the U.K., including targeting British lawmakers from multiple parties from at least 2015 through to this year and selectively leaking and amplifying sensitive information to serve Russian interests.

Foreign Office minister Leo Docherty told lawmakers that a cybergroup called “Star Blizzard" — also known as Callisto Group or COLDRIVER, and which U.K. cybersecurity officials believe to be “almost certainly subordinate” to an FSB unit — created false identities to impersonate legitimate contacts and then delivered a malicious link to victims.

“They have been targeting high-profile individuals and entities with a clear intent — using information they obtain to meddle in British ***politics***," Docherty said.

“The targeting of this group is not limited to politicians, but public-facing figures and institutions of all types,” he added. “We have seen impersonation and attempts to compromise email accounts in the public sector, universities, media, NGOs and wider civil society.”

Russian officials didn't respond to a request seeking comment on the allegations.

British authorities said that Star Blizzard was responsible for the 2018 hacking of the Institute for Statecraft, a U.K. think tank that worked on defending democracy against disinformation. They said the group was also behind the hacking and leaking of U.S.-U.K. trade documents before the 2019 British general election.

The goal was to “undermine trust in ***politics*** in the U.K. and likeminded states," the government said.

The Foreign Office said that “while some attacks resulted in documents being leaked, attempts to interfere with U.K. ***politics*** and democracy have not been successful.”

It said the U.K. on Thursday imposed sanctions on Ruslan Aleksandrovich Peretyatko, a FSB intelligence officer, and Andrey Stanislavovich Korinets, a member of Star Blizzard, for involvement in the so-called spear-phishing operations.

The U.S. Justice Department announced separately on Thursday that it had brought criminal charges against both Peretyatko and Korinets in connection with the hacking conspiracy.

Besides accusing them in the 2019 hack-and-dump operation of emails in advance of the 2019 U.K. election, U.S. officials also allege that they and other unnamed conspirators targeted the accounts of government officials in the United States, including current and former employees of the U.S. Defense and State Departments and of the intelligence community.

U.S. officials said the hacking campaign targeted a broad range of information, including material related to diplomacy, foreign affairs and nuclear energy technology, and were in some instances successful.

Of particular concern to the FBI and the U.S. Justice Department, the officials said, is that the accused hackers were working with the section at the FSB that is supposed to be the FBI’s counterpart in fighting cybercrime. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Justice Department.

The Russian ambassador to the U.K. was summoned to express Britain's concerns over the interference, Britain's Foreign Office said.

“Russia’s attempts to interfere in U.K. ***politics*** are completely unacceptable and seek to threaten our democratic processes," Foreign Secretary David Cameron said in a statement. “Despite their repeated efforts, they have failed.”

Asked whether British officials have uncovered the full extent of the cyber interference, Docherty said he was confident but stressed that officials will continue to be vigilant before elections in the U.K. and U.S. next year.

U.S. officials say it’s not likely that the hackers will be prosecuted anytime soon, unless they travel outside Russia to a country that cooperates with the U.S. legal process. But both U.S. and British authorities said that one goal of making public such cases is to deter similar activity in the future.

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Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

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