**Putin Led a Complex Cyberattack Scheme to Aid Trump, Report Finds - The New York Times**

WASHINGTON ” President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia directed a vast cyberattack aimed at denying Hillary Clinton the presidency and installing Donald J. Trump in the Oval Office, the nations top intelligence agencies said in an extraordinary report they delivered on Friday to Mr. Trump. The officials presented their unanimous conclusions to Mr. Trump in a briefing at Trump Tower in New York that brought the leaders of Americas intelligence agencies face to face with their most vocal skeptic, the who has repeatedly cast doubt on Russias role. The meeting came just two weeks before Mr. Trumps inauguration and was underway even as the electoral votes from his victory were being formally counted in a joint session of Congress. Soon after leaving the meeting, intelligence officials released the declassified, damning report that described the sophisticated cybercampaign as part of a continuing Russian effort to weaken the United States government and its democratic institutions. The report ” a virtually revelation by the American intelligence agencies that undermined the legitimacy of the president who is about to direct them ” made the case that Mr. Trump was the favored candidate of Mr. Putin. The Russian leader, the report said, sought to denigrate Mrs. Clinton, and the report detailed what the officials had revealed to President Obama a day earlier: Mr. Trumps victory followed a complicated, multipart cyberinformation attack whose goal had evolved to help the Republican win. The report did not conclude that Russian involvement tipped the election to Mr. Trump. The public report lacked the evidence that intelligence officials said was included in a classified version, which they described as information on the sources and methods used to collect the information about Mr. Putin and his associates. Those would include intercepts of conversations and the harvesting of computer data from œimplants that the United States and its allies have put in Russian computer networks. Much of the unclassified report focused instead on an overt Kremlin propaganda campaign that would be unlikely to convince skeptics of the reports more serious conclusions. The report may be a political blow to Mr. Trump. But it is also a risky moment for the intelligence agencies that have become more powerful since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, but have had to fend off allegations that they exaggerated intelligence during the buildup to the Iraq war. The declassified report did describe in detail the efforts of Mr. Putin and his security services, including the creation of the online Guccifer 2. 0 persona and DCLeaks. com to release information gained from the hacks to the public. œPutin and the Russian Government aspired to help Trumps election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him, the report by the nations intelligence agencies concluded. Mr. Trump, whose resistance to that very conclusion has led him to repeatedly mock the countrys intelligence services on Twitter since Election Day, issued a written statement that appeared to concede some Russian involvement. But Mr. Trump said nothing about the conclusion that Mr. Putin had sought to aid his candidacy, other than insisting that he still believes the Russian attacks had no effect on the outcome. The s written statement came just hours after Mr. Trump told The New York Times in an interview that the storm surrounding Russian hacking was nothing more than a œpolitical witch hunt carried out by his adversaries, who he said were embarrassed by their loss to him in the 2016 election. Speaking by telephone three hours before the intelligence briefing, Mr. Trump repeatedly criticized the intense focus on Russia. œChina, relatively recently, hacked 20 million government names, he said, referring to the breach of computers at the Office of Personnel Management in late 2014 and early 2015. œHow come nobody even talks about that? This is a political witch hunt. Later, Mr. Trump sought to blame the Democrats for any cyberattacks that might have occurred. œGross negligence by the Democratic National Committee allowed hacking to take place, he said in a Twitter message posted about 11 p. m. œThe Republican National Committee had strong defense! Vice Mike Pence told reporters that he and Mr. Trump had œappreciated the presentation by the intelligence officials and described the conversation as œrespectful. Mr. Pence said the new administration would take aggressive action œto combat cyberattacks and protect the security of the American people from this type of intrusion in the future. Mr. Trump, who has consistently questioned the evidence of Russian hacking during the election, did so again Friday before he met with the intelligence officials. Asked why he thought there was so much attention on the Russian cyberattacks, the said the motivation was political. He also repeated his criticism of the American intelligence agencies, saying that œa lot of mistakes were made in the past, noting in particular the attacks on the World Trade Center and saying, as he has repeatedly, that œweapons of mass destruction was one of the great mistakes of all time. But after meeting with the intelligence officials, Mr. Trump appeared to moderate his position, conceding that œRussia, China, other countries, outside groups and people are consistently trying to break through the cyberinfrastructure of our governmental institutions, businesses and organizations, including the Democrat National Committee. The report described a broad campaign of covert operations, including the œtrolling on the internet of people who were viewed as opponents of Russias effort. While it accused Russian intelligence agencies of obtaining and maintaining œaccess to elements of multiple U. S. state or local electoral boards, it concluded ” as officials have publicly ” that there was no evidence of tampering with the tallying of the vote on Nov. 8. The report, reflecting the assessments of the C. I. A. the F. B. I. and the National Security Agency, stopped short of backing up Mr. Trump on his declaration that the hacking activity had no effect on the election. œWe did not make an assessment of the impact that Russian activities had on the outcome of the 2016 election, the report concluded, saying it was beyond its responsibility to analyze American œpolitical processes or public opinion. The intelligence agencies also concluded œwith high confidence that Russias main military intelligence unit, the G. R. U. created a œpersona called Guccifer 2. 0 and a website, DCLeaks. com, to release the emails of the Democratic National Committee and of the chairman of the Clinton campaign, John D. Podesta. When those disclosures received what was seen as insufficient attention, the report said, the G. R. U. œrelayed material it acquired from the D. N. C. and senior Democratic officials to WikiLeaks. The founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, has denied that Russia was the source of the emails it published. The role of RT ” the Russian news organization that American intelligence says is a Kremlin propaganda operation ” in the Kremlins effort to influence the election is covered in far more detail by the report than any other aspect of the Russian campaign. An annex in the report on RT, which was first written in 2012 but not previously made public, takes up eight pages of the reports main section. The reports unequivocal assessment of RT presents an awkward development for Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, who is Mr. Trumps choice to serve as national security adviser. Mr. Flynn has appeared repeatedly on RTs news programs and in December 2015 was paid by the network to give a speech in Russia and attend its lavish anniversary party, where he sat at the elbow of Mr. Putin. Mr. Flynn has since defended his speech, insisting that RT is no different from CNN or MSNBC. The report also stated that Russia collected data œon some targets, but did not disclose the contents of whatever it harvested. Intelligence officials who prepared the classified report have concluded that British intelligence was among the first to raise an alarm that Moscow hacked into the Democratic National Committees computer servers, and alerted their American counterparts, according to two people familiar with the conclusions. The British role, which has been closely held, is a critical part of the timeline because it suggests that some of the first tipoffs, in fall 2015, came from voice intercepts, computer traffic or informants outside the United States, as emails and other data from the Democratic National Committee flowed out of the country. The conclusions in the report were described on Thursday to President Obama and on Friday to Mr. Trump by James R. Clapper Jr. the director of national intelligence John O. Brennan, the director of the C. I. A. Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency and James B. Comey, the director of the F. B. I. The key to the public reports assessment is that Russias motives œevolved over the course of the campaign. When it appeared that Mrs. Clinton was more likely to win, it concluded, the Russian effort focused œon undermining her future presidency, with bloggers preparing a Twitter campaign with the hashtag #DemocracyRIP. It noted that Mr. Putin had a particular animus for Mrs. Clinton because he believed she had incited protests against him in 2011. Yet the attacks, the report said, began long before anyone could have known that Mr. Trump, considered a dark horse, would win the Republican nomination. It said the attacks began as early as July 2015, when Russian intelligence operatives first gained access to the Democratic National Committees networks. Russia maintained that access for 11 months, until œat least June 2016, the report concludes, leaving open the possibility that Russian cyberattackers may have had access even after the firm CrowdStrike believed that it had kicked them off the networks.

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