

US intel warns about threat of foreign interference

'Russia acting against Biden, China opposes Trump'

WASHINGTON, AUG 8, (AP) — US intelligence officials believe that Russia is using a variety of measures to denigrate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden ahead of the November election and that individuals linked to the Kremlin are boosting President Donald Trump's reelection bid, the country's counterintelligence chief said in the most specific warning to date about the threat of foreign interference.

US officials also believe China does not want Trump to win a second term and has accelerated its criticism of the White House, expanding its efforts to shape public policy in America and to pressure political figures seen as opposed to Beijing's interests.



Trump

The statement Friday from William Evanina is believed to be the most pointed declaration by the US intelligence community linking the Kremlin to efforts to get Trump reelected — a sensitive subject for a president who has rejected intelligence agency assessments that Russia tried to help him in 2016. It also connects Moscow's disapproval of Biden to his role as vice president in shaping Obama administration policies supporting Ukraine, an important US ally, and opposing Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Asked about the intelligence assessment Friday evening in Bedminster, New Jersey, Trump appeared to dispute the idea that Russia was disparaging Biden. "I think the last person Russia wants to see in office is Donald Trump because nobody has been tougher on Russia than I have — ever," he said.

But the president seemed to agree with the intelligence indicating China didn't want him reelected. "If Joe Biden was president, China would own our country," he said.

Evanina's statement, three months before the election, comes amid criticism from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other congressional Democrats that the intelligence community has been withholding from the public specific intelligence information about the threat of

foreign interference in American politics.

"The facts are chilling," Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., wrote in an op-ed published Friday evening in The Washington Post. "I believe the American public needs and deserves to know them. The information should be declassified immediately."

The latest intelligence assessment reflects concerns not only about Russia but China and Iran as well, warning that hostile foreign actors may seek to compromise election infrastructure, interfere with the voting process or call into question voting results. Despite those efforts, officials see it as unlikely that anyone could manipulate voting results in any sweeping way, Evanina said.

"Many foreign actors have a preference for who wins the election, which they express through a range of overt and private statements; covert influence efforts are rarer," said Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. "We are primarily concerned about the ongoing and potential activity by China, Russia and Iran."

Concerns about election interference are especially acute following a wide-ranging effort by Russia to meddle in the 2016 election on Trump's behalf through both the hacking of Democratic emails and a covert social media campaign aimed at sowing discord among US voters. Trump has routinely resisted the idea that the Kremlin favored him in 2016, but the intelligence assessment released Friday indicates that unnamed Kremlin-linked actors are again working to boost his candidacy on social media and Russian television.

The White House reacted to Friday's news with a statement saying "the United States will not tolerate foreign interference in our electoral processes and will respond to malicious foreign threats that target our democratic institutions."

Tony Blinken, a senior adviser to Biden's campaign, responded that Trump "has publicly and repeatedly invited, emboldened, and even tried to coerce foreign interference in American elections. ... Joe Biden, on the other hand, has led the fight against foreign interference for years."

Democrats in Congress who have participated in recent classified briefings on election interference have expressed

Virus aid talks collapse; no help for jobless now

WASHINGTON, Aug 8, (AP) — A last-ditch effort by Democrats to revive Capitol Hill talks on vital COVID-19 rescue money collapsed in disappointment at week's end, making it increasingly likely that Washington gridlock will mean more hardship for millions of people who are losing enhanced jobless benefits and further damage for an economy pummeled by the still-raging coronavirus.

President Donald Trump said Friday night he was likely to issue more limited executive orders related to COVID, perhaps in the next day or so, if he can't reach a broad agreement with Congress.

The day's negotiations at the Capitol added up to only "a disappointing meeting," declared top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer, saying the White House had rejected an offer by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to curb Democratic demands by about \$1 trillion. He urged the White House to "negotiate with Democrats and meet us in the middle. Don't say it's your way or no way."

alarm at what they have heard. They have urged the US intelligence community to make public some of their concerns in part to avoid a repeat of 2016, when Obama administration officials were seen as slow and overly deliberate in their public discussion of active Russian measures in that year's election.

Pelosi and Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, both California Democrats, said Friday that they were "pleased that Mr. Evanina heeded our call to make additional details public about Russia's malign interference campaign." But they also criticized him for naming Iran and China "as equal threats to our democratic elections."

When it comes to RUSa, US officials assess that it is working to "denigrate" Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia "establishment" among his supporters, Evanina said. US officials believe that

Trump may likely issue executive orders

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, "Unfortunately we did not make any progress today." Republicans said Pelosi was relying on budget maneuvers to curb costs and contended she has overplayed her hand.

Often an impasse in Washington is of little consequence for the public — not so this time. It means longer and perhaps permanent expiration of a \$600 per-week bonus pandemic jobless benefit that's kept millions of people from falling into poverty. It denies more than \$100 billion to help schools reopen this fall.

It blocks additional funding for virus testing as cases are surging this summer. And it denies billions of dollars to state and local governments considering furloughs as their revenue craters.

Ahead is uncertainty. Both the House and Senate have left Washington, with members sent home on instructions to be ready to return for a vote on an agreement. With no deal in sight, their absence raises the pos-

sibility of a prolonged stalemate that stretches well into August and even September.

Speaking from his New Jersey golf club Friday evening, Trump said "if Democrats continue to hold this critical relief hostage I will act under my authority as president to get Americans the relief they need."

Trump said he may issue executive orders on home evictions, student loan debt and allowing states to repurpose COVID relief funding into their unemployment insurance programs. He also said he'll likely issue an executive order to defer collection of Social Security payroll taxes, an idea that has less support among his Republican allies.

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said, "This is not a perfect answer — we'll be the first ones to say that — but it is all that we can do, and all the president can do within the confines of his executive power."

Friday's Capitol Hill session followed a combative meeting Thursday evening that for the first time cast

real doubt on the ability of the Trump administration and Democrats to come together on a fifth COVID-19 response bill. Pelosi summoned Mnuchin and Meadows in hopes of breathing life into the negotiations, which have been characterized by frustration and intransigence on both sides — particularly on top issues such as extending the bonus jobless benefit that expired last week.

Pelosi declared the talks all but dead until Meadows and Mnuchin give ground.

"I've told them 'come back when you are ready to give us a higher number,'" she said.

The breakdown in the negotiations is particularly distressing for schools, which have been counting on billions of dollars from Washington to help with the costs of reopening. But other priorities are also languishing, including a fresh round of \$1,200 direct payments to most people, a cash infusion for the struggling Postal Service and money to help states hold elections in November.

"Although China will continue to weigh the risks and benefits of aggressive action, its public rhetoric over the past few months has grown increasingly critical of the current Administration's COVID-19 response, closure of China's Houston Consulate, and actions on other issues," the statement said.

The top foreign policy adviser of China's ruling Communist Party, Yang Jiechi, said Friday that "China has no interest in meddling in US domestic politics."

On Iran, the assessment said Tehran seeks to undermine US democratic institutions as well as Trump and divide America before the election.

"Iran's efforts along these lines probably will focus on online influence, such as spreading disinformation on social media and recirculating anti-US content," Evanina wrote.



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Toyota passes 15 million hybrid electric vehicles global sales

"Pioneer and leader in hybrid electric technology, Toyota has crossed the symbolic milestone of 15 million hybrid vehicles sold since the 1997 launch of the iconic Prius, the first full hybrid mass-produced car"

In January 2020, Toyota passed the milestone of more than 15 million hybrid electric vehicles (HEV) sales worldwide since the Prius was first launched in 1997.

Toyota's decision to develop hybrid electric vehicles started over 25 years ago when Takeshi Uchiyamada led a team to develop a car for the 21st century, one which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful pollutants. The first-generation Prius was launched in 1997 around the time of the Kyoto Protocol signing, which gave new momentum to the environmental movement.

Today, 15 million hybrid sales later, Toyota has made a significant contribution to the environment as its hybrid electric technology has reduced CO2 emissions by more than 120 million tonnes worldwide to date compared to sales of equivalent petrol vehicles. The company's original vision has allowed Toyota to be the leader in meeting increasingly stringent emissions regulations around the world.

Across this period, Toyota has seen demand for its hybrid electric vehicles soar as the company has combined this innovative technology with emotional design enabled by the roll-out of its TNGA global platforms. Beyond the current 4th generation hybrid system, Toyota is continuing to refine its hybrid technology to achieve even lower emissions and ever-better fuel efficiency. Today, hybrid electric vehicles are affordable, accessible and convenient for customers in the Middle East.

"Toyota's hybrid electric technology has reduced CO2 emissions by more than 120 million tonnes worldwide"

Hybrid naturally leads to BEV and FCEV

While Toyota believes that HEVs are an essential part of the future overall mix of electrified vehicles, two decades of electrification experience also feed into the company's multi-powertrain strategy. The company provides and will continue to provide various types of electrified vehicles to reduce emissions based on regulations, market infrastructure and ultimately customer demand. Toyota does not see a one "winner takes all" scenario but a future where the different electrified technologies, including hybrids and plug-ins (PHEV), fuel cell (FCEV) and battery electric (BEV) vehicles, all play a part.

As a result of its long hybrid electric vehicle experience, the company has deep transferable expertise in the core electrification technologies which are common across all form of electrified powertrains, putting them in pole position for an electrified future. Over two decades of continuous development of electric motors, batteries and power control units has taught Toyota how to manage and reuse energy efficiently, providing a range of electrified options for customers through HEVs, PHEVs, BEVs and FCEVs.

In Kuwait since launching the Prius HEV model in February 2016, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons has launched 6 popular Toyota HEV models including the recently launched Toyota C-HR Cross-over and Highlander SUV.