

Former US intelligence officials say Israel spied on the White House

By Kevin Reed
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A report in *Politico* early Thursday said the US government had determined within the past two years that Israel was “most likely behind the placement of several cell phone surveillance devices” near the White House and at other locations in Washington DC.

Politico said the information was provided by “three former senior US officials with knowledge of the matter,” some of whom had “served in top intelligence and national security posts.”

The surveillance devices—known as StingRays, or IMSI-catchers (short for International Mobile Subscriber Identity-catchers)—were originally discovered during tests in the US capital conducted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in late 2017. At that time, the *Politico* report says, DHS was unable “to attribute the devices to specific entities.”

The unnamed senior officials said that the DHS findings were shared “with relevant federal agencies,” and, following a forensic analysis, the FBI’s counterintelligence division and “other agencies working on the case felt confident that Israeli agents placed the devices.” The other agencies involved, according to *Politico*, were likely the National Security Agency and the CIA, with DHS and the Secret Service playing a supporting role.

It is significant that reports of Israeli spying on the US government initially discovered more than two years ago are just now coming to light. The muted official response to the revelations stands in stark contrast to the witch-hunting campaign by the military-intelligence complex, the corporate media and the Democratic Party based on unsubstantiated claims of Russian “meddling” in the 2016 presidential elections and continuing “interference” in US political life.

The StingRay or IMSI-catcher devices are small units

developed originally by US military-intelligence and domestic law enforcement for the purpose of mimicking wireless carrier cell phone towers. The devices can be mounted anywhere and are regularly used by the US military on vehicles, airplanes, helicopters and drones. They force all nearby mobile devices to connect to them and enable eavesdropping on phone conversations and the extraction of data and other communications content between devices.

Quoting one of the unnamed senior government officials, the *Politico* report said forensic analysis of the surveillance devices helped determine “a little about their history, where the parts and pieces come from, how old are they, who had access to them, and that will help get you to what the origins are.” One of the senior officials said, “It was pretty clear the Israelis were responsible.”

The *Politico* report went on to explain that the Israeli surveillance was likely intended to spy on President Trump, who is known to be “lax in observing White House security protocols.” Trump administration officials refused to comment on the *Politico* report, along with the FBI, DHS and Secret Service. However, speaking to the press on the White House lawn later on Thursday, Trump said, “I don’t think the Israelis are spying on us. I really would find that hard to believe.”

Following publication of the *Politico* story, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied his government’s involvement, saying, “We have a directive, I have a directive: No intelligence work in the United States, no spies... It is a complete fabrication, a complete fabrication.”

Touching upon the political issues behind Israeli surveillance of the US government, *Politico* quotes one of its anonymous intelligence sources as saying, “The Israelis are pretty aggressive ... They’re all about

protecting the security of the Israeli state and they do whatever they feel they have to to achieve that objective.”

Another former senior intelligence official said that once the US agencies concluded that the Israelis were most likely responsible for the spying, the Trump administration did nothing. Clearly comparing Trump to the administration of Democrat Barack Obama, the official is quoted saying, “The reaction... was very different than it would have been in the last administration... With the current administration, there are a different set of calculations in regard to addressing this.”

The Israeli intelligence service known as Mossad is well known for its history of criminal and murderous operations around the world against opponents of both the state of Israel and US imperialism. Mossad, which is exempt from constitutional laws within Israel itself, has a director who reports directly and only to Prime Minister Netanyahu.

There have been numerous previous instances of Israeli intelligence spying on the US government. The most notorious is the case of former intelligence officer Jonathan Pollard, who pleaded guilty to providing top-secret US classified information to Israel in 1987, for which he received a life sentence.

In the present situation, the *Politico* revelations may be aimed at influencing the foreign policy of the Trump administration following the departure of National Security Advisor John Bolton. Bolton, a warmongering supporter of the state of Israel, was fired by Trump on September 10 following disagreements on US policy in Afghanistan.

Strains over policy toward Iran between Trump and Netanyahu, who has long pushed for war against Tehran, may also be involved in the leaking of the spying allegations. As noted in a report by the *Foreign Policy Group*, the departure of Bolton “has some Israelis worried that President Donald Trump would now pursue a more vigorous policy of detente with Iran, leaving Israel on its own to fight Iranian influence in the region, according to analysts.”

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