

Taliban, Moscow, White House All Reject NYT's Reporting on Afghanistan Bounties

Democrats slam Trump for not taking action after receiving a briefing that might not have happened, NYT doubles down

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On Friday, [The New York Times reported](#) that Russia offered Taliban-linked militants bounties for killing US troops in Afghanistan last year. The Times story was based on information they received from anonymous intelligence officials who were “briefed on the matter.” The report also claimed President Trump was briefed on the findings, a claim that was quickly rejected by the White House.

“While the White House does not routinely comment on alleged intelligence or internal deliberations, the CIA Director, National Security Advisor, and the Chief of Staff can all confirm that neither the President nor the Vice President were briefed on the alleged Russian bounty intelligence,” White House Press Secretary **Kayleigh McEnany** [said in a statement on Saturday](#).

President Trump also denied receiving a briefing on alleged Russian bounties [in a tweet on Sunday](#).

Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe also [rejected the Times report](#).

“I have confirmed that neither the President nor the Vice President were ever briefed on any intelligence alleged by the New York Times in its reporting yesterday,” Ratcliffe said in a statement on Saturday.

[Russia also denounced the Times story on Saturday](#) and called the accusations “baseless and anonymous.” The Russian Embassy said on Twitter that the report has led to “direct threats to the life of employees of the Russian Embassies in Washington DC and London.”

For their part, [the Taliban also rejected the claims](#).

“The nineteen-year jihad of the Islamic Emirate is not indebted to the beneficence of any intelligence organ or foreign country,” the Taliban said in a statement.

The group also reiterated their commitment to the peace deal signed with the US earlier this year.

Although fighting between the Kabul government and the Taliban is still raging, [recent reports indicate](#) the Trump administrations is ahead of schedule on troop drawdowns agreed to in the deal, and plan on reducing the number of troops on the ground to 4,500, which would be the lowest number since 2001.

Despite the widespread denial of the *Times* reporting, President Trump’s political rivals jumped on the story. [Joe Biden slammed Trump on Saturday](#) for not taking action after allegedly receiving a briefing on the intelligence. “I’m quite frankly outraged by the report,” Biden said. The former vice president promised that if he is elected in November “Putin will be confronted and we’ll impose serious costs on Russia.”

Speaker of the House **Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA) [chimed in on the news](#) and accused President Trump of wanting to “ignore” any allegations against Moscow. The speaker said “all roads lead to Putin” when it comes to Trump. Pelosi said she had never been briefed on the intelligence herself, but seems to believe the claims. “Russia has never gotten over the humiliation they suffered in Afghanistan, and now they are taking it out on us, our troops,” Pelosi said.

On Sunday, [the Times doubled down](#) on the dubiously sourced report, and published another story that claims US intelligence officers and special forces in Afghanistan “alerted their superiors as early as January to a suspected Russian plot to pay bounties to the Taliban to kill American troops.” This story again cites anonymous officials “briefed on the matter.” Missing from the *Times* second bounty story is any comment from CIA, DNI, or Pentagon officials, who all declined to comment on the issue. Both stories say the intelligence was gathered during interrogations of captured “militants and criminals” in Afghanistan.

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