

Trump's Defense Argument Comes From an Alleged Russian Military Intelligence Officer

During the impeachment proceedings, congressional Republicans—especially ranking member Devin Nunes—have repeatedly advanced the [conspiracy](#) that the real collusion in 2016 was between the Democrats and Ukraine. This theory matches a conspiracy that President Donald Trump appeared to be referencing during his now-infamous [call](#) with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on July 25.

But Trump didn't come up with this theory on his own: Recently revealed Mueller investigation documents indicate that it is part of a Russian disinformation campaign that came directly from an alleged Russian intelligence officer.

According to underlying evidence from the Mueller probe, alleged Russian intelligence officer Konstantin Kilimnik was advancing this theory to the Trump campaign from as far back as 2016.

- New documents [revealed](#) FBI notes, or “302 reports,” from an [April 2018 interview](#) with Trump's former deputy campaign chairman Rick Gates. In these documents, Gates named Kilimnik as the source of this conspiracy theory:

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[Redacted]

(U//FOUO) Richard Gates Interview 04/10

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Gates advised Trump Jr. and Manafort also had contacts with, "Russia types." Gates clarified by saying Manafort's connection with Russians was minimal aside from his relationship with Oleg Deripaska. Gates said Manafort primarily had contacts with Ukrainians. Gates recalled Manafort saying the hack was likely carried out by the Ukrainians, not the Russians, which parroted a narrative Kilimnik often supported. Kilimnik also opined the hack could have been perpetrated by Russian operatives in Ukraine.

- Gates makes clear that Kilimnik was pushing the notion that “the hack could have been perpetrated by Russian operatives in Ukraine” and that Trump's former campaign chair Paul Manafort, in turn, [claimed](#) that “the hack was likely carried out by the Ukrainians.”

Kilimnik has ties to Russian intelligence and is under indictment in the United States.

- Mueller [described](#) Kilimnik as an individual “who the FBI assesses to have ties to Russian intelligence” and [noted](#) that [Kilimnik](#) “has ties to a Russian intelligence service and had such ties in 2016.”

THE MOSCOW PROJECT

- Even the Trump campaign [thought](#) Kilimnik was a spy: According to the Mueller report, “Gates suspected that Kilimnik was a ‘spy,’” and this was “a view that he shared with Manafort.” Manafort, however, told investigators that “he did not believe Kilimnik was working as a Russian ‘spy.’”
- Kilimnik was [indicted](#) by Mueller in June 2018 on charges of alleged obstruction of justice related to [witness tampering](#).
 - Kilimnik has [denied](#) all allegations against him, including allegations of his association with Russian intelligence and the allegations brought against him in Mueller’s indictment.

Kilimnik isn’t tied to just any Russian intelligence service; he’s [allegedly](#) tied to the GRU, Russia’s military intelligence agency, which the U.S. intelligence community has assessed was the major force behind the attack on the 2016 U.S. election

- According to Alex van der Zwaan, Gates [reportedly stated](#) that Kilimnik was “a former Russian intelligence officer with the GRU.”
- Most importantly, the GRU is the Russian intelligence service that the U.S. intelligence community has assessed was [behind](#) the Democratic National Committee [hacks](#) that Trump is trying to pin on Ukraine.

President Trump is trying to blame Ukraine for an attack that appears to have been carried out by Russia—specifically, the GRU—and, in doing so, is peddling a conspiracy originally pushed by an alleged Russian intelligence operative.