

NEWS

Ex-CIA chief warned of Russian contact with Trump campaign officials

By [Marisa Schultz](#)

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EPA

WASHINGTON – Former CIA Director John Brennan was worried last year that Russian officials were trying to corrupt members of the Trump campaign but he doesn't know whether their contacts amounted to collusion to sway the presidential election.

Brennan said he was concerned about the interaction between Russian officials and people involved in Donald Trump's presidential campaign and encouraged the federal investigation. He declined to name the Trump officials, citing classified information.

"I encountered and I am aware of information and intelligence that revealed contacts and interactions between Russian officials and US persons involved in the Trump campaign that I was concerned about because of known Russian efforts to suborn such individuals and it raised questions in my mind, again, whether or not the Russians were able to gain the cooperation of those individuals," Brennan told the House Intelligence Committee Tuesday.

Pressed by Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC) whether he saw evidence that Trump officials colluded with the Kremlin, Brennan said "I don't know."

"I don't know whether or not such collusion – and that's your term – such collusion existed," Brennan said. "I don't know. But I know that there was a sufficient basis of information and intelligence that required further investigation by the bureau (FBI) to determine whether or not US persons were actively conspiring, colluding with Russian officials."

Speaking before the panel for its ongoing investigation in Russian interference, Brennan said he personally warned the head of the Russian intelligence service, the FSB – Alexander Bortnikov – on Aug. 4, 2016, that Russian meddling “would destroy” any prospects of improving US-Russian relations.

Bortnikov denied any Russian interference, Brennan said, but relayed the message to President Vladimir Putin.

Alarmed by the Russian efforts, Brennan coordinated experts from the CIA, National Security Agency and FBI in late July to focus on the presidential election, he said.

Brennan said he tipped off top members of Congress – The Gang of Eight – about his concerns and about the ongoing intelligence between August and September 2016.

“It should be clear to everyone that Russia brazenly interfered in our 2016 presidential election process,” Brennan said. “And they undertook these activities despite our strong protests and explicit warning that they not do so.”

President Trump has **repeatedly denied any collusion** between his campaign and Russian officials.

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