

Politico: Israel 'Most Likely' Tried to Spy on White House

"The U.S. government concluded within the last two years that Israel was most likely behind the placement of cell-phone surveillance devices that were found near the White House and other sensitive locations around Washington, D.C.," reports *Politico*, citing "three former senior U.S. officials with knowledge of the matter" as its sources.

In a sign, perhaps, of the especially close relationship between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, *Politico* reports that one of the former officials said that "unlike most other occasions when flagrant incidents of foreign spying have been discovered on American soil, the Trump administration did not rebuke the Israeli government, and there were no consequences for Israel's behavior."

This, despite the fact that, according to one of the former officials cited in the report, "the devices were likely intended to spy on President Donald Trump ... as well as his top aides and closest associates."

It remains unclear whether the Israeli efforts were successful, says *Politico*.

"These allegations are absolute nonsense. Israel doesn't conduct espionage operations in the United States, period," said Elad Strohmayor, spokesman at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

"President Trump is reputed to be lax in observing White House security protocols," reports *Politico*, but adds that "a former official said Trump has had his cell phone hardened against intrusion."

The miniature surveillance devices are “colloquially known as ‘StingRays,’” says the American political news outlet.

The devices “mimic regular cell towers to fool cell phones into giving them their locations and identity information,” it says, adding that “they also can capture the contents of calls and data use.”

“It was pretty clear that the Israelis were responsible,” said a former senior intelligence official cited by *Politico*.

A senior Trump administration official told the news outlet that the administration doesn’t “comment on matters related to security or intelligence.”

The FBI declined to comment, while the Department of Homeland Security and Secret Service did not respond to requests for comment, *Politico* said.

In a possible reference to the tense relationship between Netanyahu and Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama, a former senior intelligence is cited as saying that “the reaction ... was very different than it would have been in the last administration.”

However, the source adds that, in general, the Trump administration works differently than previous administrations have in this realm.

“I’m not aware of any accountability at all,” said the former official critically, as quoted by *Politico*.

Despite the close Trump-Netanyahu relationship, Israel became a prime suspect in this case, according to a former senior intelligence official, because “the Israelis are pretty aggressive” in their intelligence-gathering operations, *Politico* reported. {eo}

This article originally appeared at World Israel News.