

Trump did not pass any secrets to Russia, says Putin; offers to provide notes of meeting

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Sochi: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday said that US President Donald Trump had not passed any secrets onto Russian Foreign Minister and offered to turn over to Congress the records of discussions held between the two leaders.

Photo: AP. Trump did not pass any secrets to Russia, says Putin

In a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Trump is said to have disclosed classified information.

The White House has played down the importance and secrecy of the information Trump gave to the Russians, which had been supplied by Israel under an intelligence-sharing agreement. Trump himself said he had "an absolute right" as president to share "facts pertaining to terrorism" and airline safety with Russia. Yet US allies and some members of Congress expressed concern bordering on alarm.

Speaking at a joint news conference with the visiting Italian prime minister, Putin said he would be willing to turn over notes of Trump's meeting with the Russian diplomats if the White House agreed. He dismissed outrage over Trump's disclosures as U.S. politicians whipping up "anti-Russian sentiment."

Putin dismissed the US politicians, whom he did not identify, as either being "stupid" or "dangerous and unscrupulous" who are wittingly "causing the damage to their own country."

Asked what he thinks of Trump presidency, Putin said it's up to the American people to judge but his performance can only be rated "only when he's allowed to work at full capacity," implying that someone is hampering Trump's efforts.

He said that Moscow initially viewed debates about Russia's meddling in US politics as "funny" but said Moscow is now "concerned because it's hard to imagine what the people who produce such nonsense can come up with next."

The White House has defended Trump's disclosure of classified information to senior Russian officials. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said the president's comments were "wholly appropriate." He used that phrase nine times in his briefing to reporters.

The highly classified information about an Islamic State plot was collected by Israel, a crucial source of intelligence and close partner in the fight against some of the America's fiercest threats in the Middle East. Trump's disclosure of the information threatened to fray that partnership and piled pressure on the White House to explain the apparently on-the-spot decision to reveal the information to Russian diplomats in the Oval Office.

A U.S. official who confirmed the disclosure to The Associated Press said the revelation potentially put the source at risk.

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