

2016 Presidential election

The president's intense resistance to the assessment of U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia systematically interfered in the 2016 campaign – and the blame he cast instead on a rival country – led many of his advisers to think that Putin himself helped spur the idea of Ukraine's culpability, said the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe internal discussions.

One former senior White House official said Trump even stated so explicitly at one point, saying he knew Ukraine was the real culprit because “Putin told me.”

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