

# World News: Israeli Source Seen as Key to Countering ISIS Threat

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## ABSTRACT

Publicly, Israeli officials have played down the significance of Mr. Trump's conversation with the Russian visitors, Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, and Sergei Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the U.S. But privately, Israeli intelligence officials are fuming, one of the U.S. officials said, having worried for months that Mr. Trump would expose state secrets, even unwittingly, because of his lack of experience in handling classified information and his propensity to shoot from the hip.

## FULL TEXT

WASHINGTON -- The classified information that President Donald Trump shared with Russian officials last week came from an Israeli source described by multiple U.S. officials as the most valuable source of information on external plotting by Islamic State.

These officials, who are privy to intelligence about the terrorist group's efforts, said the source of information was particularly valuable for tracking Islamic State's attempts to place explosive devices on commercial airplanes.

However, the officials disagree over how much damage Mr. Trump may have caused to counterterrorism efforts by discussing information gleaned from Israel with the Russians during an Oval Office meeting last week.

One official said that now that the Russians are aware of the source, there is greater risk that the source could be compromised in some way. That makes it less likely that U.S. officials will trust the information, the official said.

But others disagreed on how much damage Mr. Trump may have caused to counterterrorism efforts by discussing information gathered by Israel. Another official doubted that the Russians would be able to identify the nature of the source based on Mr. Trump's statements, though Moscow might learn more about where in Syria the intelligence was coming from.

While not the only source of information on the threat to airlines, it was considered the most important, the officials said. Based on cumulative intelligence, the U.S. has barred carry-on laptop computers and other consumer electronic equipment from 10 airports in the Middle East and is considering expanding the ban.

To avoid further damage, the U.S. officials declined to specify whether the source of information is an individual or part of a technological system. But their unanimous agreement on the importance of the source to one of Washington's top national security objectives -- countering international plots by Islamic State -- underscores the gravity of the Oval Office conversation and the potential repercussions for Mr. Trump of sharing information that

was supposed to be restricted to the U.S. and Israel.

The difficulty in assessing the fallout from Mr. Trump's decision to share the information is likely to be a subject of debate within the intelligence community. A third official said it could take some time to know if the source had been so compromised that it's no longer useful.

All the officials agreed that the president's impromptu revelation had shaken career intelligence officers' confidence in Mr. Trump's ability to keep secrets and exacerbated long-standing tensions between him and the intelligence community.

Publicly, Israeli officials have played down the significance of Mr. Trump's conversation with the Russian visitors, Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, and Sergei Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the U.S.

But privately, Israeli intelligence officials are fuming, one of the U.S. officials said, having worried for months that Mr. Trump would expose state secrets, even unwittingly, because of his lack of experience in handling classified information and his propensity to shoot from the hip.

Mr. Trump's top aides have defended his actions, and some U.S. officials consider the ensuing news coverage an overreaction. The U.S.-Israeli relationship, they say, will remain intact because it is mutually beneficial.

Credit: By Shane Harris

## DETAILS

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