
US Attorney John Durham looking into Ukrainian involvement in 2016 election

by Jerry Dunleavy | September 25, 2019 12:52 PM

The Justice Department revealed that U.S. Attorney John Durham, picked by Attorney General William Barr to look into the origins of the Trump-Russia investigation, is investigating whether Ukraine was involved in any 2016 election efforts.

“A Department of Justice team led by U.S. Attorney John Durham is separately exploring the extent to which a number of countries, including Ukraine, played a role in the counterintelligence investigation directed at the Trump campaign during the 2016 election,” DOJ spokeswoman Kerri Kupec said Wednesday. “While the Attorney General has yet to contact Ukraine in connection with this investigation, certain Ukrainians who are not members of the government have volunteered information to Mr. Durham, which he is evaluating.”

Durham has been Barr's [right hand](#) as the two look into the [complicated and classified issues](#) surrounding how an investigation into the Trump campaign's alleged ties with Russia — dubbed “Crossfire Hurricane” — got its start, though the U.S. attorney from Connecticut has been virtually silent since his selection.

The DOJ's statement comes as the White House [released a transcript](#) of the [controversial July 25 phone call](#) between President Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in which Trump suggests that Ukraine should investigate Biden and his son Hunter, who was on the board of a company owned by Ukrainian oligarch Mykola Zlochevsky. Zlochevsky was being investigated by top prosecutor Viktor Shokin, though it is in dispute how serious that investigation was. Trump also suggested that Ukraine should look into issues surrounding the [alleged involvement](#) of some Ukrainians in interfering in the 2016 presidential election.



Biden boasted in 2018 that, as vice president, he threatened to withhold \$1 billion in U.S. loan guarantees if Ukraine didn't fire Shokin, which [Trump's allies have said](#) was because of [the investigation](#), but [Democrats have said](#) was part of a U.S. and European effort to oust Shokin as

ineffective and a hindrance to
Ukraine's anti-corruption

investigations. Ukraine removed Shokin in 2016.

DOJ also made it clear that Trump never told Barr to contact Ukraine [about any investigation](#) of Biden, nor did Barr ever discuss these issues with Ukraine or with Trump's attorney, Rudy Giuliani.

Trump gave Barr “ [full and complete authority](#) to declassify information” related to the origins of the Trump-Russia probe in May after Barr had infuriated Democrats when he said “spying did occur” on the Trump campaign and refused to backtrack. Republicans have alleged that foreign intelligence agencies, like those in Western Europe, may have played a role in eavesdropping on or otherwise monitoring Trump campaign associates in 2016.

Durham's investigation is separate from the one that was just finished by DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz. The DOJ watchdog investigated [allegations of abuses](#) of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act by the DOJ and FBI, and [Horowitz has spoken with Durham](#), who is handling any criminal referrals from Horowitz's investigation.