

LEGAL

DOJ confirms foreign outreach in probe of 2016 election



Attorney General William Barr. | Drew Angerer/Getty Images

By **MATTHEW CHOI**

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The Justice Department confirmed on Monday that Attorney General William Barr had asked President Donald Trump for introductions to foreign officials as part of a probe into intelligence gathering surrounding the 2016 presidential election that eventually led to the Russia investigation.

The department statement followed a [report](#) from The Washington Post hours earlier that Barr had contacted British and Italian officials and that the Trump administration reached out to their Australian counterparts as part of an investigation into U.S. intelligence activities around Trump's election. The New York Times also [reported](#) Monday that Trump called Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia to urge him to help Barr in the Justice Department investigation. Both publications cited unidentified U.S. officials and people familiar with the matter for their reports.

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Trump sees the investigation, which is headed by U.S. Attorney John Durham of Connecticut, as a way to counter the scrutiny and allegations of foreign interference he has faced surrounding the 2016 election.

“As the Department of Justice has previously announced, a team led by U.S. Attorney John Durham is investigating the origins of the U.S. counterintelligence probe of the Trump 2016 presidential campaign,” a department spokeswoman, Kerri Kupec, said in a statement. “Mr. Durham is gathering information from numerous sources, including a number of foreign countries. At Attorney General Barr's request, the President has contacted other countries to ask them to introduce the Attorney General and Mr. Durham to appropriate officials.”

The reports come as Trump faces an impeachment inquiry from House Democrats following accounts by a [whistleblower](#) in the intelligence community and numerous news publications that Trump pushed President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine to investigate his Democratic rival Joe Biden for dirt that could help Trump in the 2020 election. A [readout](#) of a July phone call between the two presidents revealed that Trump asked Zelensky to “do us a favor” and get in contact with Barr and look into Biden’s activities in the country.

Trump and his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani have repeatedly denied wrongdoing, both characterizing the impeachment inquiry as another “witch hunt,” after special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe into the 2016 election.

Darren Samuelsohn contributed reporting.

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