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Putin Says U.S. Hacking Scandal Not In Russia's Interests

“They started this hysteria.”

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The scandal that erupted in the United States over allegations Russia hacked Democratic Party emails has not been in Moscow's interests and both sides in the U.S. election campaign are just using Russia to score points, Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday.

The U.S. government on Friday formally accused Russia for the first time of a campaign of cyber attacks against Democratic Party organizations ahead of the Nov. 8 presidential election.

And the White House said on Tuesday it would consider a variety of responses to the alleged hacks.

“They started this hysteria, saying that this (hacking) is in Russia's interests. But this has nothing to do with Russia's interests,” President Putin told a business forum in Moscow. Putin said the accusations were a ploy to divert U.S. voters' attention at a time when public opinion was being manipulated.

“Everyone is talking about ‘who did it’ (the hacking),” said Putin. “But is it that important? The most important thing is what is inside this information.”

The Kremlin said earlier on Wednesday it took a negative view of White House statements about a planned “proportional” response to the alleged cyber attacks.

Putin complained that all sides in the U.S. presidential race were misusing rhetoric about Russia for their own ends, but said Moscow would work with whoever won the election “if, of course, the new U.S. leader wishes to work with our country”.

“About a decade ago, they wouldn’t mention Russia at all, because it was not even worth talking about, such a third-rate regional power and not interesting at all. Now Russia is problem number one in the entire election campaign,” said Putin.

“All they do is keep talking about us. Of course it’s pleasant for us, but only partly because all participants are misusing anti-Russian rhetoric and poisoning our bilateral relations.”

On Tuesday, the Russian ambassador to the U.S. told an audience in Washington that his country bears **no responsibility** for email leaks affecting the U.S. presidential race.