

High-ranking U.S. official sabotaged the Kremlin Report, Aslund alleges **Opinion**

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Analyst: "Trump's Russia foreign policy team consists of neo-conservative hawks, including Kurt Volker, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster and Defense Secretary James Mattis. So their statements and actions in the coming days will help to determine whether Russia-allied saboteurs are working within the high ranks of the U.S. government."

WASHINGTON, Feb 1, 2018 - A high-ranking U.S. government official was responsible for deliberately sabotaging the work of experts in preparing the Kremlin Report on Russian officials to be targeted for sanctions, Concorde Capital informed clients based on a Jan. 30 report by Anders Aslund, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington. The Kremlin Report, which was made public by the U.S. State Department on Jan. 29, was supposed to have consisted of senior foreign political figures and oligarchs who made their fortune on illicit contacts with the Kremlin, he said. Among other things, it was supposed to have reported on their assets, net worth and their closeness to the Putin regime, he said. Instead, "somebody high up — no one knows who at this point — threw out the experts' work and instead wrote down the names of the top officials in the Russian presidential administration and government, plus the 96 billionaires on the Forbes list," Aslund reported on his UkraineAlert blog. "In doing so, this senior official ridiculed the government experts who had prepared another report, rendering the Combating America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act ineffective and mocking U.S. sanctions on Russia overall. By signing this list, the secretary of the treasury took responsibility for it." As his response to the brewing scandal, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin assured the U.S. Congress that the Trump administration will impose financial sanctions on Russian officials and oligarchs despite President Trump declining a congressional deadline to do so. "This should in no way be interpreted as we're not putting sanctions on anyone in that report," Mnuchin told the U.S. Senate Banking Committee at a hearing the same day. He added that the Kremlin Report is not a substitute for financial restrictions that Congress mandated in a bill approved in August. The Trump administration refrained from imposing those mandated sanctions. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "If Aslund's claims are true, they imply that the Russian elites have agents within the high ranks of the U.S. government, likely the White House, that are sabotaging the effort to impose sanctions on their behalf. That would have enormous implications for U.S. national security. These claims could be used to open a new investigation into the Trump administration's alleged ties to Russia. It's worth noting that the publication of the Kremlin Report, and the possible sanctions to follow, are a separate matter from the sanctions mandated by Congress in August but were not imposed this week by the Trump administration. The president's Russia foreign policy team consists of neo-conservative hawks, including Kurt Volker, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster and Defense Secretary James Mattis. So their statements and actions in the coming days will help to determine whether Russia-allied saboteurs are working within the high ranks of the U.S. government.

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