
RUSSIA DENIES TARGETING FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER

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Russia has denied that it was behind media and internet attacks on Emmanuel Macron, while the French presidential frontrunners campaign renewed the charges against Russian media and a hackers' group operating in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, replying to a question on a daily conference call, said on Tuesday that charges made a day ago by Macron's party chief, Richard Ferrand, were absurd.

"We did not have and do not have any intention of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, or in their electoral processes in particular," Peskov told reporters.

France election: Le Pen, Macron rally support in Lyon

He said that there was a hysterical campaign against Russian President Vladimir Putin in certain countries abroad.

Ferrand said on Monday that the French centrist politician, who leads the opinion polls for the vote in May, had become a "fake news" target of Russian media and that his campaign was facing thousands of internet attacks.

Macron's party chief also said that Moscow looked favourably on the policies of far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centre-right candidate Francois Fillon, who are election rivals of Macron. He added that both had been "mysteriously spared" from Russian media criticism.

Macron's strong pro-Europe stance was not to Russia's liking, however, he said.

Le Pen, who heads the National Front and is Macron's closest competitor in the race for the Elysee, wants to take France out of the EU and supports Russia's policy on Ukraine.

French media accused

On Tuesday, Ferrand renewed those charges, saying that the databases and email boxes of Macron's En Marche! (Onwards) party were under attack.

"If these attacks succeeded, the campaign of En Marche would become extremely difficult, if not impossible," Ferrand said in Le Monde online.

He said about half of those thousands of attacks came mainly from Ukraine and had been organised and coordinated by a "structured group" and not by lone hackers.

Ferrand again pointed the finger at Russian state-controlled media Russia Today and Sputnik, saying they were spreading "the most defamatory" rumours about Macron, including some relating to his private life and the financing of his campaign.

Both Russia Today and Sputnik have denied spreading fake news about Macron and say Ferrand's allegations are unfounded.

Sputnik, in a comment on Tuesday, said Ferrand's accusations were false and lacked any evidence, and represented an attempt at spinning public opinion.

Kaynak/Source: