

# Russia interfering with US elections: FBI

**Washington:** Russia is determined to interfere in US elections despite sanctions and other efforts to deter such actions before the next presidential election in 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray says.

“The Russians are absolutely intent on trying to interfere with our elections,” Wray said during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Tuesday.



Christopher Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.*CREDIT: BLOOMBERG*

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Wray appeared at an oversight hearing a day before Robert Mueller, the former special counsel, was due to testify publicly before Congress about his two-year investigation of Russian interference to sway the 2016 presidential race toward President Donald Trump.

“Everything we’ve done against Russia has not deterred them enough?” asked Senator Lindsey Graham, the Republican committee chairman. “All the sanctions, all the talk, they’re still at it?”

“Yes. My view is until they stop they haven’t been deterred enough,” Wray responded.

Mueller’s investigation disclosed an elaborate campaign of hacking and propaganda during the 2016 presidential race and resulted in indictments that charged 25 Russian individuals and three Russian companies.

The United States has imposed election-related sanctions on Russian oligarchs and military intelligence officials and there is a push for legislation threatening tougher sanctions in the US Congress.

The Russia investigation cast a shadow over Trump’s White House tenure and the president has repeatedly downplayed the Kremlin’s role in trying to help him win.

At last year’s summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, he sided with Moscow over US intelligence agencies.

In his most recent meeting with the Russian leader, in June, Trump appeared to make light of the issue, wagging his finger at the laughing Russian leader as he said, “Don’t meddle in the election, please.”

Senator Amy Klobuchar, who is seeking the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, criticized Trump for joking about the issue.

“Have you personally briefed the president about these threats,” she asked Wray.

“We have had a number of meetings with others in the (White House) National Security Council,” to discuss Russian efforts to interfere with the elections, he replied.

Wray includes efforts to interfere in US elections in a broader category of foreign influence campaigns in which foreign governments to affect US political sentiment or discourse.

He told the Council of Foreign Relations in April that he viewed the 2018 congressional elections as a “dress rehearsal for the big show in 2020”.

Wray told senators the FBI was working with private sector platforms about “different forms of foreign influence messaging, whether it’s propaganda and fake news”.

## Reuters

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