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## **U.S. Senators Seek Military Ban on Kaspersky Lab Products Amid FBI Probe**

U.S. senators sought on Wednesday to ban Moscow-based cyber security firm Kaspersky Lab's products from use by the military because of fears the company is vulnerable to "Russian government influence," a day after the FBI interviewed several of its U.S. employees as part of a probe into its operations. Federal Bureau of Investigation agents visited the homes of Kaspersky employees late on Tuesday in multiple U.S. cities, although no search warrants were served, according to two sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the FBI probe. Kaspersky Lab confirmed in a statement on Wednesday that FBI agents have had "brief interactions" with some of its U.S. employees, discussions that the company described as "due diligence" chats. The FBI declined to comment. The interviews were followed on Wednesday by the release of a defense spending policy bill passed by the Senate Armed Services Committee, which would prohibit the U.S. Defense Department from using Kaspersky software platforms because the company "might be vulnerable to Russian government influence," according to a summary of the legislation. Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen, who amended the spending bill to include the Kaspersky language, said in a statement that "ties between Kaspersky Lab and the Kremlin are very alarming." A consensus in Congress and among Trump administration officials believed Kaspersky "cannot be trusted to protect critical infrastructure, particularly computer systems vital to our nation's security," Shaheen said. The bill would need to pass

the full Senate and House of Representatives and be signed by President Donald Trump in order to become law. Last month, senior U.S. intelligence officials said in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee that they were reviewing government use of software from Kaspersky Lab.

Lawmakers raised concerns that Moscow might use the firm's products to attack American computer networks, a particularly sensitive issue given allegations by U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia hacked and leaked emails of Democratic Party political groups to interfere in the 2016 presidential election campaign. Russia denies the allegations. It was unclear whether the probe into Kaspersky Lab was related to an investigation led by special counsel Robert Mueller into Russian election meddling and possible collusion with associates of then-Republican Party candidate Donald Trump.

In response to U.S. lawmakers' concerns, Kaspersky founder and Chief Executive Eugene Kaspersky had said during a question-and-answer session on Reddit that he would be willing to appear before the Senate to dispel any concerns about his company's products. Kaspersky's anti-virus software is popular in the United States and around the world, though U.S. officials have long been suspicious that the company may have ties to Russian intelligence agencies. In a separate statement on Wednesday, the company said, "Kaspersky Lab believes it is completely unacceptable that the company is being unjustly accused without any hard evidence to back up these false allegations." It said that in its 20-year history, the company has abided by "the highest ethical business practices."

U.S. intelligence agencies believe that the company and its president have had close ties to Russian political and intelligence officials since at least 2012, when a major shakeup of the firm's executive ranks brought in new members with ties to Russia's three main intelligence agencies, said one U.S. official familiar with the investigation.

