

2. CIA report: Mohammed bin Salman ordered Khashoggi killing



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed. Photo: Albin Lohr-Jones/Pacific Press/LightRocket via Getty Images

The CIA has concluded with "high confidence" that the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi was ordered by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the Washington Post reports, citing people familiar with the matter.

The big picture: MBS has repeatedly stood by his claims that he was not involved in the murder and said he would punish those responsible. The CIA report is "the most definitive to date linking Mohammed to the operation and complicates the Trump administration's efforts to preserve its relationship with a close ally," per the Post.

The details: Per the Post, "the CIA examined multiple sources of intelligence, including a phone call that the prince's brother Khalid bin Salman, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, had with Khashoggi. ... Khalid told Khashoggi, a contributing columnist to The Washington Post, that

he should go to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul to retrieve the documents and gave him assurances that it would be safe to do so." It is unclear whether Khalid was aware of Khashoggi's fate.

What they're saying: A spokesperson for the Saudi embassy in D.C. told the Post that Khalid and Khashoggi didn't talk about "anything related to going to Turkey... [the claims in the CIA's] purported assessment are false. We have and continue to hear various theories without seeing the primary basis for these speculations."

The U.S. has sanctioned 17 people for the killing of Khashoggi including Saudi Consul General Mohammad Alotaibi, who oversaw the Istanbul consulate, and Maher Mutreb, a senior Saudi official who allegedly coordinated the attack.

- Saudi Arabia has previously announced it would seek the death penalty against five people who allegedly played a role in the killing.

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