

NATIONAL REVIEW

No, Hillary, 17 U.S. Intelligence Agencies Did Not Say Russia Hacked Dem E-mails

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Hillary Clinton in last night's presidential debate tried to avoid talking about the substance of the damaging WikiLeaks disclosures of DNC and Clinton campaign officials by claiming 17 U.S. intelligence agencies determined that Russia was responsible for this. After Clinton made this claim, she scolded Trump for challenging U.S. intelligence professionals who have taken an oath to help defend this country.

What Clinton said was false and misleading. First of all, only two intelligence entities – the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – have weighed in on this issue, not 17 intelligence agencies. And what they said was ambiguous about Russian involvement. An unclassified October 7, 2016 joint DNI-DHS statement on this issue said the hacks

. . . are consistent with the methods and motivations of Russian-directed efforts. These thefts and disclosures are intended to interfere with the US election process. Such activity is not new to Moscow — the Russians have used similar tactics and techniques across Europa and Eurasia, for example, to influence public opinion there. We believe, based on the scope and sensitivity of these efforts, that only Russia's senior-most officials could have authorized these activities.

Saying we think the hacks “are consistent with the methods and motivations of Russian-directed efforts” is far short of saying we have evidence that Russia has been responsible for the hacks. Maybe high-level officials would have authorized them if Russian hackers were responsible, but the DNI and DHS statement did NOT say there was evidence Russia was responsible.

My problem with the DNI/DHS unclassified statement is that it appeared to be another effort by the Obama administration to politicize U.S. intelligence. Make no mistake, U.S. intelligence agencies issued this unprecedented unclassified statement a month before a presidential election that was so useful to one party because the Clinton campaign asked for it. The Obama administration was happy to comply.

Clinton tried to defend the DNI/DHS statement by repeating the myth that U.S. intelligence officers are completely insulated from politics. She must think Americans will forget how the CIA crafted the politicized Benghazi talking points in 2011 and how SOUTHCOM intelligence analysts were pressured to distort their analysis of ISIS and Syria to support Obama foreign policy. And that's just under the Obama administration. Politicization of intelligence goes back decades, including such blatant efforts by CIA officers to interfere in the 2004 presidential election that the Wall Street Journal referred to it as "The CIA Insurgency" in an August 2004 editorial. I discussed the problem of the politicization of U.S. intelligence and the enormous challenge a Trump administration will have in combating it in an August 18, 2016 National

Maybe the Russians are behind the WikiLeaks hacks of Democrat e-mails, possibly to influence the 2016 presidential election. I'm not convinced of this. I'm more concerned that these constant leaks of Democratic e-mails demonstrate that Democratic officials appear to have no understanding of the need for Internet security. This makes me wonder if John Podesta's e-mail password is "password." These are the people Clinton will be giving senior jobs with high-level security clearances. That is the real security scandal that no one is talking about.

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