

WHY DOES FRANCE GET PUBLICLY-REPORTED PHONE CALLS?

The White House just released a readout of a call between President Obama and French President François Hollande pertaining to the spying revealed yesterday by Le Monde.

Readout of the President's Call with President Hollande of France

The President spoke today with President Hollande of France. The United States and France are allies and friends, and share a close working relationship on a wide range of issues, including security and intelligence. The President and President Hollande discussed recent disclosures in the press – some of which have distorted our activities and some of which raise legitimate questions for our friends and allies about how these capabilities are employed. The President made clear that the United States has begun to review the way that we gather intelligence, so that we properly balance the legitimate security concerns of our citizens and allies with the privacy concerns that all people share. The two Presidents agreed that we should continue to discuss these issues in diplomatic channels moving forward. The two leaders also discussed the ongoing violence in Syria and the importance of a political solution to the crisis.

Such releases tend to be blather, so I don't take all that much from the content of the readout.

But I am interested that they released it.

Remember, this is not the first conversation with an angry world leader Obama has had about

the runaway NSA. Angela Merkel, Dilma Rousseff, and Enrique Peña Nieto have as well. And while Obama was in Germany not long after the initial Germany releases, and saw Rousseff at the G20 in Russia not long after the worst of the Brazilian stories, I don't see any call with Peña Nieto. Plus, we know there was a follow-up call between Obama and Rousseff on September 16 (he was supposed to report his findings about the nature of NSA's spying on Brazil and Rousseff; she called off her State Visit the day afterwards).

I assume the Obama-Rousseff call couldn't be spun into a happy message like this one.

But what of the call to Peña Nieto? Or did he already know about the spying they did before he was elected, because content from it has been used to pressure him to keep the DEA presence in Mexico?