

YOU'RE DOING COUNTER-PROPAGANDA WRONG, HAND-PICKED JOURNOS EDITION

I've been so buried in Netroots Nation and related issues I've only followed the top-line coverage of the MH17 shoot-down. I think the version the Administration released yesterday – that Ukrainian rebels shot down the airliner by mistake – is the most plausible explanation, though I'm aware of questions about that story.

All that said, there's something about yesterday's dog-and-pony show offered at the Office of Director of National Intelligence that seriously discredits the US story.

As the WSJ account of it makes clear, the reporters brought in for that dog-and-pony were explicitly told the dog-and-pony was being held to “not let[] a Russian narrative get out there.”

The Russian government is making a “full-court press” to spread a Russian version of events that try to pin the shoot-down on the Ukrainians, which is “not plausible to us,” one senior intelligence official said.

A key goal of Tuesday's presentation, said one senior intelligence official was “not letting a Russian narrative get out there,” said one senior U.S. intelligence official.

(Apparently this senior intelligence official is not honest enough to admit both sides are already in a game of full court pressing – and John Kerry has already gotten beyond what the government released yesterday.)

Here's the thing. While the Russians have not offered as much proprietary intelligence as the

US offered yesterday, the presentation this dog-and-pony show is meant to rebut involve their Ministry of Defense providing a televised briefing on their questions about the event.

By contrast, noted liar James Clapper's office invited hand-picked journalists in, and swore them to silence about who actually gave the briefing, and only afterwards released a transcript and other materials on the briefing. Spencer Ackerman was among the obvious journalists who should have been but was not invited.

Some of the evidence provided by US intelligence – whose fiscal 2013 budget was \$68bn – included Facebook posts. “After it became evident that the plane was a civilian airliner, separatists deleted social media posts boasting about shooting down a plane and possessing a Buk (SA-11) surface-to-air missile system,” a senior intelligence official said in the briefing, held on condition of anonymity. The Guardian was not invited to the briefing, a transcription of which was later made available.

Look, if the US government has a case, they can release it publicly. But what they appear to be doing instead is creating their own official press corps and presenting their case there.

That's especially true given that something else said at the briefing undermines the US case against the rebels.

They noted that it can be difficult to track the transportation of weapons because they are often moved at night, and the Russians have provided the separatists with types of weapons that the Ukrainians also have in order to maintain “plausible deniability.”

If the Russians have gone to some length to hide

their role in arming rebels, why would they also give them a weapon that would draw so much attention (the Ukrainian government has them as well, but they haven't used them)? (Though I actually think the point is they have been fired, but weren't considered so fancy until they took down a civilian jet.)

I suspect at this point both sides are hiding interesting details they know. But the US has the more plausible case, thus far. So why are they unwilling to present their case publicly?