

NOW THE SPOOKS ARE LEAKING CRITICISM OF OBAMA'S SOLE USE OF THE "RED PHONE"

NBC, which seems to be sharing the role of spook leak central with WaPo, has [upped the ante](#) on previous leaks. Last night, it revealed that on October 31, Obama used the "Red Phone" (which is in reality an email system) designed to avert disasters with Russia for the first time in his Administration to warn Vladimir Putin not to fuck with our election process.

A month later, the U.S. used the vestige of an old Cold War communications system – the so-called "Red Phone" that connects Moscow to Washington – to reinforce Obama's September warning that the U.S. would consider any interference on Election Day a grave matter.

This time Obama used the phrase "armed conflict."

The reason we're getting this leak seems fairly clear. Not only are Democrats peeved that Obama didn't manage to recall or suppress documents already leaked to WikiLeaks, but one "senior intelligence official" is angry that Obama laid down no bright line.

A senior intelligence official told NBC News the message ultimately sent to the Russians was "muddled" – with no bright line laid down and no clear warning given about the consequences. The Russian response, said the official, was non-committal.

I'm pretty favorable to leaks (though not their use to preempt deliberative assessment of intelligence). They serve an important check on

government, even on the President.

But it alarms me that someone decided it was a good idea to go leak criticisms of a Red Phone exchange. It would seem that such an instrument depends on some foundation of trust that, no matter how bad things have gotten, two leaders of nuclear armed states can speak frankly and directly.

Without that conversation being broadcast to the entire world via leaks.

It would seem such a leak might lead Putin to take such exchanges less seriously in the future knowing that the spooks reviewing the exchange don't take the gravity of it all that seriously.

Ah well. Good things these spooks are so successfully combatting the inappropriate leak of information by leaking more information.