

WHY ARE NINE SOURCES COMING FORWARD NOW ON FLYNN'S CONVERSATIONS WITH RUSSIA?

WaPo had a huge scoop last night. Contrary to the Administration's public claims, National Security Advisor Mike Flynn did discuss US sanctions on Russia when he spoke with Russia's Ambassador to the US on December 29.

Flynn on Wednesday denied that he had discussed sanctions with Kislyak. Asked in an interview whether he had ever done so, he twice said, "No."

On Thursday, Flynn, through his spokesman, backed away from the denial. The spokesman said Flynn "indicated that while he had no recollection of discussing sanctions, he couldn't be certain that the topic never came up."

[snip]

"They did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose censure against Russia," Pence said in an interview with CBS News last month, noting that he had spoken with Flynn about the matter. Pence also made a more sweeping assertion, saying there had been no contact between members of Trump's team and Russia during the campaign. To suggest otherwise, he said, "is to give credence to some of these bizarre rumors that have swirled around the candidacy."

Neither of those assertions is consistent with the fuller account of Flynn's contacts with Kislyak provided

by officials who had access to reports from U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies that routinely monitor the communications of Russian diplomats. Nine current and former officials, who were in senior positions at multiple agencies at the time of the calls, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

The most interesting detail in the story is that Sergei Kislyak refused to say how long he had been in contact with Flynn.

The ambassador would not discuss the origin of his relationship with Flynn.

The article describes Flynn claiming he first worked with Kislyak in conjunction with a trip to Russia he made in 2013 while in charge of DIA. But Kislyak's silence raises questions for me about that. (Note, the Russian press was reporting even before this story that Kislyak would be replaced by Anatoly Antonov.)

But the bigger question for me is why WaPo's astounding *nine* sources for this story, described as people who were in senior positions in what must be, at a minimum, FBI and CIA, are coming forward now? As WaPo notes, someone told David Ignatius (who is not bylined on yesterday's story) about the call by January 12, but at that point didn't share the damning contents of it. It also describes that Obama officials pulled the intercepts of Kislyak to attempt to explain why Putin didn't respond more aggressively to the sanctions imposed on December 28. So presumably top people knew that Flynn had discussed the new sanctions within days after the conversation.

And yet we're only hearing about it – and we are hearing about it – from a veritable flood of anonymous sources.

Perhaps the sources have decided that Flynn

can't be charged under the Logan Act (as the article notes, that's never been done before, and doing so would criminalize conversations that are fairly normal), so now want to apply political pressure to get rid of him. Perhaps, too, the spooks have decided that Flynn's recent actions – including an attempt to gin up war with Iran based off false claims that it launched a missile this week and struck a Saudi ship off Yemen – have become too dangerous and he must be targeted. Perhaps, even, this is retaliation for stuff related to the failed raid in Yemen.

Whatever it is, it is remarkable to see so many knives come out for Flynn in one story.