

December 12, 2016

Seventeen, Again

The first I heard of an actual enumeration of federal “intelligence agencies” was from Hillary Clinton. In the final presidential debate, she claimed that the truths spilling out of the Podesta emails had been revealed courtesy of Russian hackers, and she knew this because *all 17* U.S. “intelligence agencies” had briefed her.

Seventeen!

The number, at least, does not come from a secret source. *Business Insider* had popularized it. “These 17 Agencies Make Up The Most Sophisticated Spy Network In The World,” Paul Szoldra informed us three-and-one-half years ago in a fascinating listicle.



Call me paranoid . . . but if I am told that the government has 17 spy agencies, I wonder about one more: The Really, Really Secret Infodump Agency. There is, after all, no official definition of “government agency”; the federal government doesn’t even publish an official overall count, intelligent or otherwise.

Besides, the prime number 17 just seems too . . . contrived. Sixteen or 18? Boring numbers. But 17? Its numerological magic lends plausibility to “the most sophisticated spy network in the world.”

Of course, when Mrs. Clinton insisted that all 17 had concurred that the Russians were on Trump’s side, I did not believe her. And now that mainstream media outlets — in an apparent frenzy to prove themselves a more reliable fake news source than the Twittersphere, blogosphere, Facebook-o-sphere and *Breitbart* combined — run with nearly the same story, I don’t believe them, either.

It is as if they’ve had their talking points delivered in a secret dossier.

Reasons for doubt? All the anonymous sources, all the hedges on the order of “may be linked to” and “one step’ removed.”

Fake news. Brought to you by the number 17.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

On the web at: thisIsCommonSense.com

Think Freely Media, 180 West Adams Street, 6th floor, Chicago, IL 60603 | FAX: 703-910-7728